

ARISTOTLE'S ACCOUNT OF *AKRASIA*

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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and the work of other persons is appropriately acknowledged.

Signed:

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Abstract.

Aristotle proposes two different accounts of *akrasia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in *De Anima*. According to what may be called the ignorance account, *akrasia* involves a cognitive failure. According to what may be called the motivational-conflict account, *akrasia* involves a conflict of desires. In this thesis, I try to demonstrate that Aristotle's ignorance account and motivational-conflict account are not irredeemably incoherent. I argue that the akratic's ignorance consists in a failure of *phantasia*, and that this failure is also the source of the akratic's desire to perform a blameworthy action that goes against her best decision. In order to support this argument, I first analyse the role of *phantasia* in Aristotle's theory of desire formation in *De Anima* and in the *Rhetoric*. Second, I provide an explanation of Aristotle's syllogistic account of *akrasia* in the seventh book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in light of the suggestion that the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*. In conclusion, I note that if my interpretation is correct it can clarify further the differences between the virtuous, the vicious, the akratic and the enkratic in Aristotle's Ethics.

Introduction

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle gives an account of *akrasia* (lack of self control) as well as an interesting classification of the different forms it can assume: he distinguishes between weak and impetuous *akrasia*, and between *akrasia* caused by *thumos* and *akrasia* caused by bodily desires.

One type of *akrasia* is impetuosity, while another is weakness. For the weak person deliberates, but then his feeling makes him abandon the result of his deliberation; but the impetuous person is led on by his feelings because he has not deliberated.¹

Akrasia about *thumos* is less shameful than *akrasia* about bodily desires. For *thumos* would seem to hear reason a bit, but to mishear it. It is like overhasty servants who run out before they have heard all their instruction, and they carry them out wrongly.²

It is not surprising that a philosopher like Aristotle, concerned with giving a detailed account of vice, virtue and human flourishing, devoted a great deal of attention to *akrasia*. In the first place, he was certainly aware of the different outlooks of his most prominent predecessors on that phenomenon. Socrates believed that *akrasia* was impossible, for no one can deliberate that action x is better than action y and subsequently do action y.³ Plato, on the other hand, allowed for the possibility of *akrasia*, interpreting it as a victory of the desiderative or of the “spiritual” part of the soul over the rational part.⁴ Second, Aristotle recognized that *akrasia* occupies a middle ground between vice and virtue, thus granting it a relevant role in his fascinating research concerning the human good.

What has seemed surprising, even puzzling, to both modern and ancient commentators is that Aristotle provides an explanation of *akrasia* which appears incoherent. On the one hand, in *De Anima* and in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle proposes what may be dubbed the *motivational conflict account of akrasia*⁵:

¹NE1150b20-23. Translations of the NE are based on those of Irwin 1999, unless otherwise indicated. I left the term *akrasia* untranslated.

² NE 1149a 25-30.

³ Plato, *Protagoras*, 352c 4-7 and 358d 1-2. NE1146 24-26

⁴ Plato, *Republic* 439 a-440b.

⁵ see Moss 2009, who calls it the *struggle account*. P 120

Sometimes desire overcomes and moves rational desire, as one sphere moves another; or desire influences desire, whenever *akrasia* occurs.⁶

In the akratic and in the self-controlled (*enkrates*) we praise the reason, that is to say, the [part] of their soul that has reason, because it exhorts them correctly and towards what is best; but they evidently also have in them some other [part] that is by nature something apart from reason, clashing and struggling with reason.⁷

The motivational conflict account is derived from Plato, and represents *akrasia* as involving a conflict of desires or a struggle between rational and irrational impulses.

In another passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,⁸ on the other hand, Aristotle seems to adopt a more Socratic approach to *akrasia*, according to which it necessarily involves ignorance:

Clearly, then, we should say that akratic people have knowledge in a similar way to these people (the mad, the drunk, etc.). Saying the words that come from knowledge is no sign [of fully having it]. For people affected in this way even recite demonstrations and verses of Empedocles, and those who have just begun to learn something do not yet know it, though they string the words together;[...] so we must suppose that those who are acting akratically also say the words in the way that actors do.⁹

According to this second account, which we can call the *ignorance account*,¹⁰ the akratic seems to suffer a cognitive failure. When she sighs 'I shouldn't be eating this' as she reaches for a third piece of cake, she does not really know what she means by her utterance.

The ignorance account and the motivational conflict account, at first sight, seem to contradict each other. How can the akratic be torn between two conflicting desires, if she is unaware that she is doing something wrong? In other words, if the akratic's ignorance corresponds to an intellectual impairment, she cannot be urged 'towards what is best' by the rational part of her soul. Hence she does not experience any motivational struggle, but only an irrational desire for what is *not* best.

To resolve this incoherence in Aristotle's account of *akrasia*, ancient and contemporary commentators have adopted different strategies. In light of Aristotle's insistence on the akratic's ignorance, many have argued that, despite appearances, Aristotle held a Socratic view of

⁶ DA III.11 434a12–14. Translations of DA are based, sometimes loosely, on Hett 1936, unless otherwise indicated

⁷ NE 1102 b15–19.

⁸ NE VII 3. (EE VI 3)

⁹ NE 1147a 20–25.

¹⁰ See Moss 2009, 119–156.

practical reasoning. Thus they have either neglected the motivational conflict account¹¹, or they have tried to explain it away, arguing that the akratic experiences a struggle of desires, although her intellectual faculties are impaired.¹² Many others, however, have considered this Socratic version of Aristotle's view deeply unappealing, and have therefore tried to downplay the role of ignorance in Aristotle's explanation of *akrasia*. In order to explain Aristotle's reference to the akratic's ignorance, these commentators have usually pursued one of the following strategies. On the one hand, some have claimed that Aristotle is mistaken in mentioning ignorance in his account of *akrasia*, and they have attempted to construct a plausible account that explains why Aristotle made this error.¹³ On the other hand, others have provided a speculative account of the nature of the akratic's ignorance according to which it consists not in an intellectual failure, but in a failure to desire what is best.¹⁴ Hence they sketched a desire-based picture of Aristotle's account of practical reasoning, in which the differences in valuational judgements between the akratic and the virtuous man are explained by the differences between their desires.¹⁵

In this thesis I will suggest a different solution to the alleged incoherence of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. I will try to show that we can reconcile the ignorance account with the motivational conflict account if we interpret the cognitive failure of the akratic as a failure of the faculty of *phantasia*, and not as a failure of the intellect. This solution, which derives from an analysis of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *De Anima* and *De Motu Animalium*, is meant to occupy a middle ground between the desire-based account and the Socratic account of *akrasia*. In order to introduce my positive solution to the apparent incoherence of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*, in the first chapter of the thesis I will try to demonstrate that an interpretation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia* which is neither desire-based nor Socratic is both plausible and needed.

In the second chapter I will introduce the suggestion that the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*. I will argue that the akratic is "ignorant" in so far as she has a non-doxastic mistaken representation, which coexists with her correct beliefs about what she should or shouldn't do. It is because of the conflict between her mistaken, non-doxastic *phantasiai* and her correct beliefs, then, that she experiences a conflict of motives and eventually doesn't abide by her deliberation. Hence, her ignorance is the cause of her desire to perform the akratic action, and the ignorance account is the necessary counterpart of the motivational conflict account. If this interpretation is

¹¹ See Mele 1999

¹² Cf. Moss 2009 and Lorenz 2006.

¹³ Wiggins 1980b. It is important to underline that, although he explains away the ignorance account, Wiggins does not provide a purely desire-based interpretation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*.

¹⁴ Charles 1984.

¹⁵ See Ibidem, 162 for this definition of the desire-based account.

plausible, then the ignorance account and the motivational conflict account are not incoherent, but necessarily complete one another.

In the third chapter I will justify the assumption that the akratic's mistaken non-doxastic representation is the product of her malfunctioning *phantasia*. I will analyze the role of the faculty of *phantasia* in Aristotle's account of desire formation, arguing that *phantasiai* are significantly different from beliefs, and that they can sufficiently cause, as well as being constitutive elements, of desires. I will also clarify that the failure of *phantasia* is an evaluative failure, and not a descriptive failure.

In the fourth and conclusive chapter I will employ the suggestion that the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia* to explain Aristotle's syllogistic account of *akrasia*. In virtue of this explanation, I will conclude that if the interpretation of *akrasia* I proposed is correct, it suggests that we should turn to Aristotle's account of moral habituation in order to determine whether the akratic could ever become virtuous.

Chapter 1: the Socratic Interpretation and the desire-based Interpretation of *Akrasia*

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will try to demonstrate why Aristotle's account of *akrasia* resists both the desire-based interpretation and the Socratic interpretation. Thus, I will firstly criticize the Socratic account, underlining that it contradicts Aristotle's remarks on the weak akratic in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In order to pursue my critique, I will focus on the version of the Socratic account Jessica Moss proposes in "*Akrasia* and Perceptual Illusion".¹⁶

Secondly, I will point out the weaknesses of the accounts that "downplay" the role of ignorance in Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. Hence, I will discuss David Charles' view and David Wiggins' view. Indeed, while Wiggins argues that Aristotle introduced ignorance in his account of *akrasia* because he was misled by his analysis of human flourishing (*eudaimonia*), Charles proposes a view according to which the failure of the akratic is a desiderative failure.

If my critiques against these views are consistent, they will help envisage the possibility for an alternative solution of the problem that *akrasia* poses in Aristotle's philosophy. The "logical space" for a third way between the desire-based and the Socratic interpretation has been proposed by David Charles in a series of recent articles.¹⁷ Hence, I will conclude my analysis by highlighting a problematic feature of Charles' third way: its inability to explain Aristotle's apparent endorsement of the view that ignorance is the cause of the akratic's blameworthy desire.

1.2 The "Socratic" solution

In the former section, I pointed out that the commentators who are inclined towards a Socratic account of *akrasia* tend either to disregard Aristotle's remarks on the struggle of the desires of the akratic¹⁸, or to "explain them away". The first strategy is obviously problematic, for it contradicts textual evidence not only in *De Anima*, but also in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Moreover, Aristotle presents the ignorance account of *akrasia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but doesn't refer to it in the *De Anima*. Hence, against the Socratic reading, it is clear that in *De Anima* Aristotle

¹⁶ Moss 2009

¹⁷ Charles 2011, 2007 and 2009.

¹⁸ See for example Mele 1999, 199 ff

stresses the importance of the motivational conflict account, and he doesn't abandon it in his Ethical works. The first reference to *akrasia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* refers clearly to the motivational struggle experienced by the akratic:

they (the akratics) evidently also have some other [part] that is by nature something apart from reason, clashing and struggling with reason¹⁹

It seems highly unlikely, therefore, that Aristotle would have completely neglected the motivational conflict account later on in the very same work, where he claims that *akrasia* involves ignorance and concludes that "the results Socrates was looking for seem to come about"²⁰.

What an advocate of the Socratic account should do, therefore, is try to explain away the motivational struggle of the akratic in order to render it compatible with her intellectual failure. Jessica Moss pursues this line of reasoning in her paper "*Akrasia and Perceptual illusion*"²¹. In order to explain the motivational conflict account, Moss draws a parallel between *akrasia* and perceptual illusion referring to *De Anima* III.10. She then explains that, if we accept the latter parallel, the ignorance account must be seen as a completion of the motivational conflict account, because it provides an explanation of how the non-rational desire overpowers the rational one by "undermining its cognitive basis"²². In order to analyze it, I will divide Moss' argument in two parts: firstly I will focus on the various features of the parallel between *akrasia* and perceptual illusion, which consists in presenting the struggle of motives as if it coincided with the conflict between perception and beliefs in experiences of "perceptual illusion". Secondly, I will propose some objections that Moss' view seems to face.

In *De Anima* III. 3 428b 2-4, Aristotle describes perceptual illusory experiences as follows:

but we may have a false appearance about things about which we have at the same time a true supposition; for instance when the sun appears to measure a foot across, but we are convinced that it is greater than the inhabited globe.²³

These experiences seem to present a cognitive dissonance between how things appear and what one believes. In Aristotle's terms, this dissonance is explained by the fact that the appearance (*phantasia*) and the belief are the product of two different cognitive faculties: *phantasia* and rational thought. The starting point of Moss's explanation of *akrasia*, then, consists in claiming

¹⁹ NE 1102b 20

²⁰ NE 1147b 16

²¹ Moss 2009.

²² Ibidem, 122

²³ DA 428b 2-4

that in *De Anima* III.10 we see Aristotle applying the distinction between these two faculties to the practical realm, or to practical cognition.²⁴ The result of this application is a complex explanation of how reason and desire cause action. Moss suggests that Aristotle understands the interaction of reason and desire in a “non-Humean way”. This is to say that Aristotle doesn’t believe that desire sets the goal towards which our action is directed and reason determines the means with the help of which this goal is achieved. Rather, reason, both the form of the intellect and *phantasia*, plays a fundamental role in setting the action’s goal: the intellect and *phantasia* contribute in recognizing things as good or not good, and thereby incline us to pursue or to avoid them.²⁵ However, in Moss’ interpretation, whilst *phantasia* represents only “apparent goods”, the intellect is directed towards genuine goods.²⁶ Therefore, as it happens in cases of perceptual illusion, *phantasia* and the intellect can conflict, representing the very same thing as good and not good at the same time. This, in turn, produces conflicting desires in the agent.

In order to understand Moss’s account of the conflict of desires the akratic experiences, it might be useful to look back at the “glutton example” I mentioned in the introduction. In Moss’ view, the glutton akratic may apprehend (by means of her *phantasia*) the third piece of cake as being good and desirable while also representing it (using her intellectual faculty) as unhealthy and undesirable.

Moss, therefore, is able to explain the reason and the sense of the akratic’s ignorance in light of the parallel between *akrasia* and perceptual illusions. When an agent experiences a perceptual illusion, insofar as she can exercise both rational thought and *phantasia*, she would undoubtedly know that she should follow the indications of the former rather than the latter: we see the sun as being a foot wide, but we would never act on this appearance, for example, by trying to catch it with a net.²⁷ Indeed, our intellect or rational thought “tells us” that the sun is wider than the earth, and makes it evident that the appearance produced by *phantasia* is illusory. What makes it the case, then, that we sometimes act on mere appearances, disregarding the advice of intellect? For the case of perceptual illusion, Moss argues, Aristotle seems to provide a very clear explanation of this phenomenon. In *De Anima* 429a5-8, he writes:

Animals do many things in accord with *phantasia*, some because they have no intellect, i.e. beasts, some because their intellect is sometimes covered by *pathos* or diseases or sleep, i.e. people.

²⁴ Ibidem, 124

²⁵ Ibidem

²⁶ Ibidem, p 128

²⁷ Ibidem, p 131

Hence, we follow *phantasia* when our intellect is somehow impaired by some psychophysical affection, or by some *pathos*. Moreover, according to Moss's interpretation, when we are in the grip of a *pathos*, we do not seem to assent to the representations of *phantasia*: our rational faculty is blinded or impaired, and therefore simply silent with regard to the truth or falsehood of the appearance²⁸. As far as the faculties of *phantasia* and rational thought are also applied to the practical realm, then, we have a good reason to maintain that Aristotle would provide the same sort of explanation of how it is possible, for a rational agent, to be driven by a desire for the apparent rather than the genuine good. Indeed, even in the "practical case", the intellectual faculty must be somehow impaired by a *pathos*, thereby leaving "full scope" to *phantasia* and to the akratic behaviour.

If the parallel between *akrasia* and perceptual illusion is sound, then there seems to be an evident connection between the "motivational conflict account" and the "ignorance account" of *akrasia*. Indeed, as far as *phantasia* can take over rational thought only when the latter is obnubilated by a *pathos*, it is clearer why akratic behaviour should involve "some sort of ignorance". The akratic agent is ignorant because she is in the grip of an overwhelming *pathos*, and she is temporarily unable to discern what is genuinely good for her. The fact that the impairment of the intellectual faculty is temporary is of great significance for this account. Indeed, insisting on the temporariness of the akratic's ignorance, Moss is able to account for her motivational struggle. In her view, the struggle occurs before the agent's intellect is overcome by a *pathos*, and it is therefore prior to her intellectual failure. Hence, Moss solves the incoherence between the ignorance account and the struggle account emphasizing that they are not meant to stand as complete and mutually incompatible accounts of akratic behaviour. Rather, they refer to different *stages* of the akratic's practical deliberation, and contribute together to a plausible explanation of her behaviour.

The comparison with perceptual illusion leads Moss to emphasize the important role *phantasia* plays in Aristotle's account of practical reasoning. Thus, she is able to explain Aristotle's account of the formation of desires in a way which is neither quasi-Humean, nor purely intellectualist. The quasi-Humean explanation is ruled out because as long as the intellect is actively involved in the formation of rational motives, its role cannot be confined to the mere determination of means towards an end which is set by desires.²⁹ On the contrary, the intellect is essential for the formation of rational desires. The purely intellectualist account, on the other hand, is undermined by the attention Moss devotes to *phantasia*. In her view, *phantasia* is a non-rational cognitive faculty which produces "appearances" of the good, thereby carrying out a

²⁸ Ibidem, p 135

²⁹ Ibidem, p 131

desire-forming activity parallel to the one of the intellect³⁰. Hence, her account *prima facie* seems immune to the objection of overstating the role of the intellect in Aristotle's theory of desire formation. Indeed, as opposed to most "Socratic" interpreters, she doesn't identify the formation of the desires with the "workings" of the intellectual faculty, but devotes the required attention to the non-intellectual cognitive faculty of *phantasia* as well.³¹

The very same analogy with perceptual illusions, however, seems to raise a number of worries for Moss's account, the most important of which is the assumption that the intellect (*nous*) is an infallible faculty. The assumption that the intellect is infallible presents two parallel sides: on the one hand, it involves the view that the intellect is always correct. As Moss notes, according to this view Aristotle would employ the term "intellect" as a "success term". Hence, Aristotle would grant that "if one makes an error, one turns out not to have been exercising intellect, but mere thinking"³². On the other hand, the infallibility of the intellect implies that the workings of the (healthy, or non-impaired) intellect are always necessary and sufficient to determine correct human action. This is to say that if an agent performs an action contrary to the correct reason, then her intellect must be dormant or impaired.³³

The assumption that, in Aristotle's view, the intellect is always correct can be warranted in the case of perceptual illusion. There, the agent is assumed to have a correct, scientific belief (*doxa*) that, for example, the sun is larger than the earth. When applied to the "practical realm", however, this assumption is less plausible. Aristotle, after all, states that (practical) deliberation

is not scientific knowledge. It is clearly some sort of correctness. But it is not correctness in scientific knowledge or in belief. For there is no correctness in scientific knowledge, since there is no error in it either.³⁴

Furthermore, Moss's view that the intellect is always correct seems in tension with Aristotle's response to the following sophistical refutation:

foolishness, combined with *akrasia* is virtue. For *akrasia* makes someone act contrary to what he supposes [is right], but since he supposes that good things are bad that it is wrong to do them, he will do good actions, not the bad³⁵.

³⁰ Ibidem, pp 125-126

³¹ See, for example, Nussbaum 1994.

³² Moss 2009, fn 23

³³ Ibidem, fn 29

³⁴ NE1142b 10. See also DA 433a 25, where Aristotle writes that the mind (*nous*) is always correct. In the theoretical realm Aristotle may indeed grant that when one has a false scientific belief one has exercised not the intellect, but mere thinking. Since the starting point of practical reasoning is appetite, and appetite can be wrong the practical mind, as opposed to the theoretical one, can also be wrong. Hence, Moss' argument that it is in the nature of rational cognition to hit the truth realm is implausible in the practical. Cf Moss 2009, fn 23

Aristotle responds to this sophistic challenge discussing the case of Neoptolemus, one of the protagonists of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. In the tragedy Neoptolemus is a honest warrior who is persuaded by Odysseus to deceive Philoctetes in order to steal his bow. At the beginning, Neoptolemus stands by his *choice* and tries to follow Odysseus' advice. Nevertheless, he is eventually overcome by the shame and regret he feels for having deceived the infirm Philoctetes, and fails to observe Odysseus' command. According to Aristotle, Neoptolemus is *not* an akratic, although a *pathos* induces him to follow pleasure instead of reason. Indeed, although he is unable to follow the dictates of his intellect, he is in the grip of a noble pleasure, and therefore he is neither akratic nor blameworthy.³⁶

Moss' illusion account of *akrasia* would struggle to incorporate Aristotle's view on Neoptolemus. Indeed, Moss' view can only allow two equally unpalatable interpretations of the behaviour of the Sophoclean hero. The first interpretation grants that Neoptolemus' intellect is mistaken, for it urges him to lie to Philoctetes. This interpretation, which seems to be the one Moss favors, contrasts however with her own assumption that the intellect is always right or infallible³⁷. The second interpretation, on the other hand, concedes that Neoptolemus's intellect is right, but entails contra Aristotle that Neoptolemus is to be considered akratic. Indeed, he goes against his own best (and correct) judgement because his intellect is covered over by a *pathos*.

In the same way the assumption that an healthy, non-impaired intellect is always necessary and sufficient to produce correct human action is plausible in the case of perceptual illusions. It is true that as long as her intellect qualifies an appearance as false, the agent wouldn't act on it. Returning to Moss' example, we see the sun as being a foot wide, but as long as our intellect qualifies this appearance as false we would never act on it, for example, by trying to catch it with a net.³⁸ In the "practical realm", however, the assumption that the intellect is always necessary and sufficient for correct human action yields a result that seems to be in contrast with the textual evidence in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: the exclusion of the so called "clear-eyed" akratic. The agent that Moss dubs clear-eyed akratic is someone who acts akratically although she is not in the grip of a strong passion. The clear-eyed akratic, therefore, is the specific subject of

³⁵ NE 1146a 29-31

³⁶ "οἷον ἐν τῷ Φιλοκτῆτῃ τῷ Σοφοκλέους ὁ Νεοπτόλεμος: καίτοι δι' ἡδονὴν οὐκ ἐνέμεινεν, ἀλλὰ καλῆν: τὸ γὰρ ἀληθεύειν αὐτῷ καλὸν ἦν, ἐπίσθη δ' ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀδυσσεύος ψεύδεσθαι. οὐ γὰρ πᾶς ὁ δι' ἡδονὴν τι πράττων οὔτ' ἀκόλαστος οὔτε φαῦλος οὔτ' ἀκρατής, ἀλλ' ὁ δι' αἰσχροῦ." NE 1151b19-24.

³⁷ In Moss 2009, fn 29, Neoptolemus' case leads her to revise the assumption that the intellect is always correct with the idea that the intellect tends in most cases to be correct. But if the parallel with perceptual illusions is to be granted, the assumption that the intellect is correct has to be at play.

³⁸ Ibidem, p 131

Davidson's and Austin's investigations on *akrasia*, presented by the famous example of the bombe-hogger:

I am very partial to ice cream, and a bombe is served divided into segments corresponding one to one with persons at high table; I am tempted to help myself with two segments and do, thus succumbing to temptation and even conceivably going [...] against my principles. But do I lose control of myself? [...] Not a bit of it. We often succumb to temptation with calm and even with finesse.³⁹

In "*Akrasia and the Perceptual Illusion*", Moss writes that

Aristotle's akratic agent is closer to Socrates' than many have thought. She is far from 'clear-eyed': her intellect, the eye of her soul, is not merely clouded but actually covered over. In the grips of the *pathos* she loses the ability to distinguish how things appear from how they are⁴⁰.

The exclusion of the clear-eyed akratic is clearly a consequence of the infallibility of the intellect, and in particular of the assumption that the workings of the intellect are necessary and sufficient to determine correct human action. If the intellect was always capable of contradicting and dominating the irrational desiderative motives, the victory of a non-rational motive over a rational one could be made possible only by a cognitive failure of the intellect. This conclusion, however, is in great tension with Aristotle's view, for he seems to admit the possibility of clear-eyed *akrasia*.

There are at least two passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle allows for the possibility of clear-eyed *akrasia*. The first one is in the first chapter of book VII in which Aristotle, following his usual method, defines the subject of enquiry (*akrasia*) and lists the opinions and the claims people make about it⁴¹. There, Aristotle notes that it is widely claimed that

the akratic knows what he does is bad, but does it because of what affects him, while the self controlled person, knowing that his appetites are bad, because of reason does not follow them⁴².

In order to judge whether Aristotle agrees with those who claim that the akratic is aware that her action is bad, or that the akratic acts knowingly against her own best judgement, we must

³⁹ Austin 1961, p 146

⁴⁰ Moss 2009, p 153

⁴¹ "τὰ μὲν οὖν λεγόμενα ταῦτ' ἐστίν." NE 1145b 5

⁴² "καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀκρατὴς εἰδὼς ὅτι φαῦλα πράττει διὰ πάθος, ὁ δ' ἐγκρατὴς εἰδὼς ὅτι φαῦλαι αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ διὰ τὸν λόγον." NE 1145b 11-14

therefore focus on the details of his own view, which is stated in the following chapters. In Chapter 3, we find the first hint that Aristotle indeed agrees with the common assumption regarding the possibility of clear-eyed *akrasia*. His aim in this section is to establish whether the akratic ‘acts with knowledge’⁴³. Therefore, he compares her with the intemperate, and writes that the intemperate (ἄκόλαστος) believes that she should pursue pleasure and she therefore follows its dictates. It is the very belief concerning the opportunity of pursuing a certain pleasure, according to Aristotle, that differentiates the akratic and the intemperate. The akratic, indeed, thinks she shouldn’t pursue pleasure, but nevertheless follows it.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Aristotle seems to restate this assumption in NE 1150 b36-37, where he writes that “an agent is not aware of his vice, whereas he is of his *akrasia* (ἄκρασία οὐ λανθάνει). But if Aristotle thinks that *akrasia* οὐ λανθάνει (literally that *akrasia* doesn’t hide, or doesn’t escape notice) the exclusion of the clear-eyed akratic from Moss’s reconstruction of Aristotle’s view on *akrasia* seems very problematic.

In this section, I argued that both the standard Socratic interpretation and Moss’ sophisticated Socratic interpretation of Aristotle’s account of *akrasia* seem to be in tension with the *Nicomachean Ethics*. What emerges from this discussion is that the Socratic accounts misrepresent *akrasia* because they give a questionable account of the role of the intellect in Aristotle’s conception of practical reasoning. Indeed, the standard Socratic view relies on a purely intellectualist account of desire formation, and therefore assumes that the akratic doesn’t act against her best judgement, but rather “changes her mind” and deliberates to do a wrong or blameworthy action. Moss’ sophisticated view, on the other hand, doesn’t assume an intellectualist account of the formation of desires, but relies on the problematic assumption that the intellect is always correct, as well as necessary and sufficient for correct actions. In the next section I will consider the desire-based account of Aristotle’s view on *akrasia*, trying to demonstrate that it is as problematic as the Socratic one.

1.3 The desire-based account.

In the introduction I noted that those who endorse the desire-based interpretation of Aristotle’s account of *akrasia* stress the importance of the motivational conflict account, whilst downplaying the role of the ignorance account. In parallel with the Socratic views, the desire-based views usually pursue one of the two following strategies: either they consider the

⁴³ "οὐκ ὄν σκεπτόν ποτερον εἰδότες ἢ οὐ, καὶ πῶς εἰδότες." NE 1146b 9-10

⁴⁴ "ὁ μὲν (the intemperate) γὰρ ἄγεται προαιρούμενος, νομίζων ἀεὶ δεῖν τὸ παρὸν ἢ δὴ διώκειν· ὁ δ' οὐκ οἶεται μὲν, διώκει δέ." NE 1146b 23-26

reference to ignorance in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as one of Aristotle's mistakes, or they re-interpret the ignorance account as a desiderative failure. What characterizes the desire-based interpretations is that desires and motivational states are at the basis of the order of explanation of akratic, continent (enkratic) and temperate action. In other words, the interpreters who endorse this view rely on a desire-based account of Aristotelian moral psychology, which leads them to provide a desire-based account of *akrasia*. This approach is summarized very clearly by Charles, who defines the desire-based account as one in which

the "differences in motivational states (and not beliefs) explain differences in valuational thoughts, beliefs and intellectual perceptions and differences in action between the akratic, enkrates and virtuous agent."⁴⁵

In this section I will firstly question Wiggins' dismissal of the ignorance account of *akrasia* in 'Weakness of the Will, Commensurability, and the Objects of Deliberation and Desire.' Although Wiggins doesn't fully endorse the desire-based account⁴⁶, he argues that Aristotle was mistaken in introducing the ignorance account. If his argument is correct, therefore, it could provide the desire-based views with a reason to disregard the ignorance account of *akrasia*. Secondly, I will turn to Charles' desire-based interpretation in order to emphasize the difficulties faced by his reduction of the akratic failure to a desiderative failure. If my remarks are correct, I will be able to draw some conclusions from my discussion of the desire-based and Socratic approach, making room for an alternative interpretation of Aristotle's view on *akrasia*.

In conclusion, therefore, I will note that Charles, after proposing a version of the desire-based view, has acknowledged the need of a "third way" between the Socratic and the desire-based account of *akrasia*.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, I will highlight that Charles' "third way" contradicts one of the assumptions Aristotle seems willing to preserve in his account of *akrasia*.

Wiggins's starting point in "Weakness of the Will Commensurability, and the Objects of Deliberation and Desire" is grounding what seems to be, at least *prima facie*, a correct description of *akrasia*. This description entails that

when a person is weak-willed, he intentionally chooses that which he knows or believes to be the worse course of action when he could choose the better course; and that, in

⁴⁵ Charles 1984, pp 161-162

⁴⁶ Wiggins emphasizes the role of "executive virtues" in order to explain the difference in action between the akratic and the enkratic. See below.

⁴⁷ Charles 2009, 2007 and 2011

acting this way, the weak-willed man acts not for *no* reason at all- that would be strange and atypical- but irrationally⁴⁸.

Wiggins's point, then, is that a correct account of *akrasia* shouldn't revise this correct description, but recognize it and explain it. He believes, furthermore, that Aristotle came very near to giving the required correct account of *akrasia* when he noticed that it involves a conflict of desires. Indeed, in Wiggins's view, Aristotle laid the foundations for a theory in which the struggle between rational and irrational desires involved neither a battle of "blind motives", nor the assumption that rational desire always wins over irrational desire. Rather, he acknowledged that the akratic experiences a struggle of motives, and explained the victory of the irrational motive over the rational one referring to the akratic's dispositions, or executive virtues.⁴⁹ Thus, Aristotle didn't fall prey to the temptation of treating moral psychology as a discipline which predicts what different agents will do in different situations. Rather, he acknowledged that the akratic experiences a struggle of motives, and explained the victory of the irrational motive over the rational one by referring to the akratic's dispositions of character, or executive virtues.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Wiggins maintains that Aristotle failed to complete his picture when he introduced the ignorance account in his explanation of *akrasia*. Indeed, he deems Aristotle's ignorance account "inconsistent with common sense, and almost as inconsistent as Socrates' own account was with the account we should naturally give"⁵¹.

Wiggins assigns to the akratic's dispositions of character, or executive virtues, a prominent role in Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. What explains the victory of the akratic's blameworthy desire over the desire to avoid the akratic action is the akratic's character, which in turn is constituted by her upbringing, her habits and her natural dispositions.⁵² Hence, Wiggins doesn't endorse a pure desire-based interpretation: not only the akratic's desires, but also her "executive virtues" explain her actions. Nonetheless, since he regards the ignorance account as one of Aristotle's mistakes, his view could offer to the desire-based interpreter a reason to disregard Aristotle's claim that akratic agents are ignorant. Indeed, Wiggins maintains that although Aristotle had grasped the real nature of *akrasia*, he was prevented from explaining it correctly by his conception of happiness (*eudaimonia*).⁵³ Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*, according to Wiggins, is a cluster of distinctive and compelling reasons for acting. Hence, once one has grasped the conception *eudaimonia*, she must understand its claims and act in accordance with them. If this is the case, however, *akrasia* is clearly in tension with Aristotle's account of

⁴⁸ Wiggins 1980b, p 251

⁴⁹ Ibidem, § II

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p 258

⁵¹ Ibidem, p 261

⁵² Ibidem, § II

⁵³ Ibidem, p 264 ff

eudaimonia. Indeed, the akratic understands “what is best” and she has the right understanding of “human excellence”. But if the akratic understands the compelling and distinctive reasons for acting that characterize *eudaimonia*, how can she possibly fail to do what is best? In order to resolve this puzzle, according to Wiggins, Aristotle had to admit that the akratic is in some sense ignorant, thus obscuring his initial insights concerning akratic behaviour.⁵⁴

Wiggins’s account of *eudaimonia* as a practical ideal seems to be a compelling interpretation of Aristotle’s moral philosophy. In the same way, he seems to be right in arguing that if an agent is *eudaimon*, she cannot be *akratic*. Nevertheless, his suggestion that *eudaimonia* is a “cluster of reasons” we only need to intellectually grasp in order to become virtuous is questionable. At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle describes *eudaimonia* as a state of the soul in accord with virtue⁵⁵, a state in which we *are* good, *know* what is good and *wish* for the good. Then, he discusses how we can reach *eudaimonia* and virtue: “virtue, then, is of two sorts, virtue of thought and virtue of character. Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching. Virtue of character (*ethos*) results from habit (*ethos*); hence its name ethical, slightly varied from *ethos*”⁵⁶. Although Aristotle’s view on how we acquire virtue is the origin of many controversies and debates, what seems to be clear in these passages is that he doesn’t think that “grasping” or “learning” what is good is sufficient for becoming virtuous and happy (*eudaimon*). Indeed, virtue (and in particular ethical virtue) requires habituation as well as understanding⁵⁷. If this is the case, however, Aristotle’s remarks on *eudaimonia* do not appear to justify his insistence on the ignorance of the akratic. Indeed, the akratic, who knows what is good but doesn’t attend to it, doesn’t necessarily constitute a problem for his picture of *eudaimonia* if the latter picture involves virtues of character as well as virtues of thought. It is perfectly possible for the akratic to grasp what is good and yet not be good or wish for the good. Hence, although Wiggins is right in emphasizing that taking into account Aristotle’s conception of *eudaimonia* can shed some light on his account of *akrasia*, his attempt to explain away the ignorance account referring to *eudaimonia* seems to rely on an over-intellectualist reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

In *Aristotle’s Philosophy of Action*,⁵⁸ Charles shares Wiggins’ aim to explain away the ignorance account. Rather than considering it mistaken, however, Charles tries to interpret it in a way that makes it compatible with his desire-based interpretation of *akrasia*. He maintains that Aristotle’s explanation of *akrasia* is one in which differences in beliefs, valuational thoughts and intellectual perceptions between the akratic and the non-akratic must be explained by

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ NE 1102a

⁵⁶ NE 1103a15-20

⁵⁷ NE 1103a 25-26

⁵⁸ Charles 1984

differences in their motivational states.⁵⁹ Thus, he reinterprets the failure of the akratic, and in particular of the weak akratic, as a failure in desiring the conclusion of a correct practical syllogism. For example, the akratic, similarly to the virtuous, knows perfectly well that:

1. She shouldn't eat sweet things
2. This piece of cake is sweet
3. She shouldn't eat this piece of cake

Nevertheless, as opposed to the virtuous, she fails to desire to avoid the piece of cake. It is this very failure, then, that corresponds to the akratic's ignorance. Hence, the akratic is perfectly aware that her action is wrong, but she fails to abide to her judgement because of her faulty motivational state.

The assumption that the ignorance of the akratic consists in a failure in her desires is the key that allows Charles to resolve the inconsistency between the ignorance account and the motivational conflict account. Nevertheless, this solution can provoke an initial disappointment. Indeed, it seems unclear why Aristotle should have called "ignorance" what in fact was a desiderative failure. In order to solve this initial perplexity, therefore, Charles proposes a parallel between theoretical and practical knowledge, according to which affirmation and denial in theoretical reasoning are similar to pursuit and avoidance in practical reasoning. Thus, the nature of the akratic' ignorance is a failure in desiring the conclusion of the practical syllogism appropriately, which is parallel to the failure to affirm the conclusion of a theoretical syllogism. This analogy with theoretical reasoning, however, is not perfect, for the failure of desire of the akratic is

distinctive of desire and practical reasoning, which is separate from the irrationality (self-deception, temporary blindness, gross intellectual failure) which affects beliefs within theoretical reasoning.⁶⁰

It is in virtue of this imperfect analogy, according to Charles, that Aristotle calls the failure of the akratic ignorance, and writes that the akratic lacks knowledge in the same way as the drunk, the student and the actor lack it:

For people affected in this way even recite demonstrations and verses of Empedocles, and those who have just begun to learn something do not yet know it, though they string

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p 162

⁶⁰ Ibidem, p 191

the words together; [...] so we must suppose that those who are acting akratically also say the words in the way that actors do.⁶¹

Charles' explanation is very insightful, but the assumptions on which it relies are controversial. The analogy between affirmation and pursuit and denial and avoidance he proposes is not immediately evident in the Aristotelian corpus. In *De Anima*, Aristotle does write that

perception is like mere saying and thinking: when the object is pleasant or painful, the soul pursues or avoids it- as it were asserting or denying⁶². To feel pleasure or pain is to adopt an attitude with the sensitive mean towards what is good or bad as such.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that Aristotle really grouped desires into the same category of assertions, considering them modes of acceptance of a proposition. In other words, it is not immediately evident that the proposition "this is pleasant" can be either just "perceived" or "said" without committing to its truth, or really accepted because it is affirmed or because the object it qualifies as pleasant is *desired*. Indeed, the passage in *De Anima* doesn't necessarily suggest a parallel between merely saying and asserting a proposition, in the theoretical context, and merely perceiving and desiring an object in the practical one. Perceiving that something is pleasant may simply prompt the agent to pursue the pleasant thing, without requiring (or implying) her acceptance or committal to the truth of the proposition that "this is pleasant". Thus, the analogy in DA 431a 8-11 might simply concern the attributes of pleasant and painful, conceived as the origin of (respectively) a positive or negative desire.⁶³ Furthermore, in DA 438a 8-11, Aristotle may not be emphasizing a difference between saying and asserting. The view that Aristotle is not stressing a technical difference between saying and asserting in this passage of *De Anima*, indeed, is supported by the fact that a few lines before he uses the two terms as synonyms: "saying, like affirming, states an attribute of a subject, and is always either true or false"⁶⁴. If, in this passage, desire and assertion aren't necessarily understood as modes of acceptance of a proposition, then Charles' imperfect analogy between practical and theoretical reasoning seems less plausible.

Charles' attempt to attribute to Aristotle's conception of practical cognition two separate components (the thought component and the desire component), then, would solve the tension between the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account of *akrasia*: the akratic's

⁶¹ NE 1147a 20-25

⁶² "τὸ μὲν οὖν αἰσθάνεσθαι ὅμοιον τῷ φάναι μόνον καὶ νοεῖν· ὅταν δὲ ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρόν, οἷον καταφᾶσα ἢ ἀποφᾶσα διώκει ἢ φεύγει· καὶ ἔστι τὸ ἡδεσθαι καὶ λυπεῖσθαι τὸ ἐνεργεῖν τῇ αἰσθητικῇ μεσότητι πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν, ἣ ἴσα ἴσα." DA 431a 8-11

⁶³ Charles 1984, p 191 and Kenny 1979, p 94 have a similar view on this point.

⁶⁴ "ἔστι δ' ἡ μὲν φάσις τι κατὰ τινος, ὡσπερ καὶ ἡ ἀπόφασις, καὶ ἀληθοῦς ἢ ψευδοῦς πᾶσα" DA 430b 26-28

ignorance would simply correspond to her failure to desire appropriately to perform the non-akratic action. Hence, she would at the same time be ignorant and torn by a conflict of desires. Nevertheless, the distinction between the thought component and the desire component seems to be based on an interpretation of the role desires play in practical cognition which is not compelling. This objection, combined with the initial suspicion that a desiderative failure couldn't really be considered a case of ignorance, gestures towards the need for a different interpretive strategy.

1.4 Conclusion

If the analysis of the Socratic and desire-based interpretations of Aristotle's view on *akrasia* I proposed in the last two sections is correct, it emerges that both these views face strong objections. Neglecting the struggle account or treating the ignorance account as mistaken evidently contradict the *Nicomachean Ethics* in various different sections. Hence, we must presuppose that Aristotle was aware of the importance of both accounts when writing his ethical works. Explaining away the motivational conflict account by claiming that it occurs before the akratic's intellectual failure, in turn, renders clear-eyed *akrasia* impossible, and praiseworthy *akrasia* possible, thus drawing two consequences Aristotle wanted to avoid. Reducing the akratic's failure to a desiderative failure, in conclusion, leaves unexplained the reason why Aristotle considered the akratic "ignorant".

In a series of articles⁶⁵ published after *Aristotle's Philosophy of Action*, Charles recognizes the faults of both the Socratic and desire-based interpretation. Thus, he proposes a "third-way" between these two approaches, according to which the knowledge failure of the akratic is a "distinctive type of state"⁶⁶. Focusing on the weak akratic, he writes that her

failure in practical knowledge is not simply a failure in intellectual confidence, nor yet simply a failure in desire. [...] Rather, it is best seen as a *sui generis* state which, although describable (roughly) either as a form of desire or as a form of intellect (or opinion), is properly speaking neither (nor yet a complex of the two).⁶⁷

In the second chapter of this work, I will pursue a similar strategy, trying to look for a third way between the Socratic interpretation and the desire-based interpretation. Although I maintain that Charles is right in individuating the need for a third way, I will try to propose an alternative

⁶⁵ Charles 2007, 2009, 2011

⁶⁶ Charles 2009, p 65

⁶⁷ Ibidem

to his account. This departure from his interpretation is motivated by the fact that it seems to contradict Aristotle's suggestion that ignorance is not only the cause of the akratic's action, but also of her blameworthy affection (*pathos*) or desire. Indeed, Charles sees the failure of the akratic as being the cause of the victory of her "sensual desire":

there is a conflict between sensual desire and a distinctive state of practical opinion. Sensual desire is victorious because the agent lacks proper practical confidence in his conclusion (understood as a distinctive type of failure in practical understanding)⁶⁸.

Among the *phainomena* that Aristotle seems to be willing to preserve in the VII book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, we find the assumption that ignorance is "the cause of the akratic's affection (*pathos*)", and thereby not only of her action:

if ignorance *causes* the affection [of the akratic], we must look for the type of ignorance it turns out to be; for it is evident, at any rate, that before he is affected the person who acts incontinently does not think [he should do the action he eventually does]⁶⁹

What I will suggest, therefore, is that the ignorance account should be seen as the source of the akratic's conflict of desires, and not only as the cause of the victory of her sensual desire. In this interpretation, the motivational conflict account is a description of the akratic's state, while the ignorance account is Aristotle's explanation of how the akratic gets to that very state. Hence they continue to play two distinct (or at least distinguishable) roles in Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. However, rather than being in tension with one another, they are intimately linked.

⁶⁸ Ibidem

⁶⁹ "δέον ζητεῖν περὶ τὸ πάθος, εἰ δι' ἄγνοιαν, τίς ὁ τρόπος γίνεται τῆς ἀγνοίας. ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ οἴεται γε ὁ ἀκρατευόμενος πρὶν ἐν τῷ πάθει γενέσθαι, φανερόν." NE 1145 b26-32

Chapter 2: Reconciling the Ignorance Account and the Motivational conflict Account of *Akrasia*: Is the Akratic's Failure a Failure of *Phantasia*?

2.1 Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that both the Socratic interpreters and the desire-based interpreters fail to give a convincing reconciliation of the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account. If my critiques are right, then they indicate that a “third way” between the Socratic Solution and the desire-based solution is needed. I concluded the first chapter by noting that the need for a third way between the desire-based and Socratic interpretation has been individuated by David Charles⁷⁰ in a series of recent articles. However, I emphasized how Charles' third way doesn't take into account that ignorance is the cause of the akratic's affections, and not directly of her action.

In this chapter I will suggest a different solution to the alleged incoherence of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. I will try to show that we can reconcile the ignorance account with the motivational conflict account if we interpret the failure of the akratic as a failure of *phantasia*, and not as a failure of the intellect. This solution, which derives from an analysis of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *De Anima* and *De Motu Animalium*, is meant to occupy a middle ground between the desire-based account and the Socratic account of *akrasia*.

In order to present my interpretation, I will firstly list a set of requirements a convincing explanation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia* should meet. These requirements are extrapolated from the critique of the Socratic interpretation and of the desire-based interpretation I presented in the first chapter, and will constitute both the guide and a preliminary test for my explanation. Secondly, I will concentrate on book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle presents the ignorance account of *akrasia*. I will suggest that the ignorance account doesn't necessarily involve an intellectual failure on the akratic's behalf, and that it is on the basis of this mistaken assumption that some interpreters proposed the Socratic interpretation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. Then I will present a more detailed interpretation of the ignorance account according to which the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*. My interpretation is to some extent speculative, for Aristotle doesn't characterize in detail the nature of the akratic's ignorance in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Nevertheless, the view is at least suggested by some

⁷⁰ Charles 2007, 2009 and 2011.

important remarks in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and it is supported by Aristotle's account of *phantasia* in *De Anima*. Once I have presented the textual evidence that supports my view, I will strengthen my interpretation by showing that it resolves the incoherence between the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account and that it meets the requirements I listed at the beginning of this chapter. In conclusion I will present and indicate the response to what I consider to be the most powerful objection that can be raised against my view.

2.2 Requirements for a Plausible Reconciliation between the Ignorance Account and the Desire Based Account

The aim of this chapter is to introduce a reconciliation of the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account of *akrasia* which escapes the criticisms that can be directed against the Socratic view and the desire-based view. Before presenting this reconciliation I will list and explain a set of requirements that the proposed account will have to meet in order to be a plausible interpretation of Aristotle's text. Most of these requirements are extrapolated from the critiques of the Socratic and desire-based view, with some additional points derived from a close reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The first requirement of a satisfactory reconciliation between the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account arises immediately from an analysis of the Socratic and desire-based interpretations. The most evident problem of both the desire-based view and the Socratic view is that an explanation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia* should not "downplay" the role of the akratic's motivational conflict and cognitive failure. It seems evident that the attempt to 'explain away' either the ignorance account or the motivational conflict account contradicts the textual evidence in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De Anima*.⁷¹ Hence, if the alleged conflict between the two accounts cannot be resolved without subverting what Aristotle says about the akratic's ignorance and motivational conflict, it is perhaps better to admit the substantial incoherence of his account of *akrasia*.

Second, the reconciliation should not fall prey to the temptation to rely on a questionable conception of Aristotelian practical reason (*phronesis*) and intellect (*nous*). When analyzing Aristotle's conception of the intellect or his definition of practical reason, many interpreters are inclined to attribute to him a form of intellectualism which seems to distort his ethical theory in general, and his account of *akrasia* in particular. As I noted in the first chapter, this charge seems to threaten Wiggins' and Moss' views respectively: while the former assumes that grasping the

⁷¹ Cf. NE1102b20, NE VII3, DA 433b 5-7.

correct conception of the good is sufficient to reach *eudaimonia*, the latter suggests that Aristotle, when discussing *akrasia*, treats (practical) 'intellect' as a faculty which is in principle infallible and a faculty whose workings are always necessary and sufficient to determine correct human action.⁷²

Third, a plausible account of Aristotle's understanding of *akrasia* should make sense of a number of claims Aristotle intends to make with respect to its different possible instantiations. Aristotle distinguishes between weak akratics, impetuous akratics, akratics with respect to pleasure and akratics with respect to spirit (*thumos*). Weak akratics, for example, include smokers or gluttons who decide to quit but cannot rid themselves of their bad habits: they 'deliberate, but fail to stand by their choice.'⁷³ Impetuous akratics, on the other hand, are extremely susceptible, and therefore do not deliberate when in the grip of *pathos*.⁷⁴ They are similar to Paolo and Francesca in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, who are abruptly seized by an illegitimate passion for one another (Paolo is the brother of Gianciotto, Francesca's husband) while reading together the story of Lancelot and Guinevere.⁷⁵

A convincing explanation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*, therefore, should make sense of the distinction between impetuous and weak akratics, as well as accounting for the difference between akratics *simpliciter* and akratics with respect to spirit. The former are those who succumb to pleasure, or to the dictates of the desiderative part of the soul. The latter are those who succumb to spirit (*thumos*), and are therefore called akratics only metaphorically. Indeed, in Aristotle's view spirit as opposed to appetites 'listens to reason', but, being naturally hasty, it rushes off without paying the due attention to its instructions.⁷⁶

In conclusion, a satisfactory reconciliation between the ignorance account and the desire-based account should not be in tension with Aristotle's view on which actions count as "akratic" and which actions do not. In particular, it shouldn't contradict Aristotle's remarks on the possibility of clear-eyed *akrasia*, which suggest that some akratics are aware that their actions are wrong or bad *while they are doing them*.⁷⁷ Moreover, it should explain why Aristotle rejects the sophistic challenge which contends that 'foolishness combined with *akrasia* is not virtue.'⁷⁸ Indeed, Aristotle denies that Neoptolemus, who has been persuaded by Odysseus to tell a lie but refrains from doing so because he feels pain or shame, can be considered an akratic.

⁷² Moss 2009 and Wiggins 1980b

⁷³ NE 1150b.

⁷⁴ NE 1149a25–35.

⁷⁵ Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia, Inferno* Canto V, vv 127–138.

⁷⁶ NE 1150a 25–30.

⁷⁷ 'An agent is not aware of his vice, whereas he is of his *akrasia* (*ἀκρασία οὐ λανθάνει*)' (NE 1151a).

⁷⁸ NE 1146a 27–28.

The requirements listed above suggest that an explanation of what Aristotle means by *akrasia* and how he intends to explain it does not depend solely on a reconciliation of the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account. Rather, such an explanation should account for a number of related remarks Aristotle makes with respect to akratic actions. Understanding these remarks as a set of requirements for a plausible explanation of *akrasia* is not the same as providing a set of principles from which this explanation can be deduced. The requirements do not cohere in a fully fledged account of *akrasia*, and some speculative work is needed to combine them into a richer and more satisfactory picture. In the next section I will therefore construct such a picture of *akrasia*, relying on several texts of the Aristotelian corpus. The requirements I have spelled out above will both guide the reconstruction and provide a preliminary test for its plausibility.

2.3 Could the Akratic's Ignorance Be a Failure of *Phantasia*?

In this section, I will suggest that the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account can be reconciled by interpreting the akratic's ignorance as a failure of *phantasia*, rather than as a failure of the intellect (*nous*). This suggestion is to some extent speculative. When Aristotle presents the ignorance account in the seventh book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he mentions the faculty of *phantasia* only once⁷⁹. The discussion of the role played by *phantasia* in practical thought is carried forward mostly in the third book of *De Anima*, and more briefly in *De Motu Animalium*.⁸⁰ In order to pave the way for the introduction of *phantasia* into the ignorance account, therefore, I will first propose an analysis of NE VII. III that clarifies why the failure of the akratic is not necessarily intellectual. Then I will turn to the account of *phantasia* in DA III. X to explain why an impairment of the latter faculty provides a suitable explanation of the akratic's ignorance. In conclusion, I will strengthen my thesis by underlining how this explanation of the ignorance account not only renders it compatible with the motivational conflict account, but also meets the requirements I set out at the beginning of this chapter.

Aristotle introduces the ignorance account among a series of puzzles that concern *akrasia*. The origin of the 'ignorance puzzle', as he notes, is certainly found in the doctrine attributed to Socrates, according to which it is impossible to act against one's own best judgement. Hence when we act akratically our action conflicts with what is best only because we are ignorant of the conflict.⁸¹ The Socratic conclusion, however, is obviously problematic, for it seems to

⁷⁹ NE1150b 28

⁸⁰ MA 700b 15- 702a 20

⁸¹ see NE 1145b28.

patently contradict our everyday experience. After all, akratic action seems to be so precisely because the agent knows that what she is doing is wrong!⁸² However, Aristotle does not wish to abandon the Socratic account completely. Rather, he intends to solve Socrates' problem by enquiring into the nature of the ignorance that causes the akratic's *pathos*.⁸³

Aristotle begins analysing the nature of the ignorance that causes the akratic's *pathos* in an indirect way. Instead of discussing immediately the way in which the akratic is ignorant, he analyses the way in which she 'has knowledge',⁸⁴ and notes that when we speak of people who 'know'⁸⁵ we do so in a twofold sense. We may refer to those who 'have knowledge and use their knowledge, or to those who have knowledge but do not use their knowledge'.⁸⁶ Clearly, then, the akratic is someone who has knowledge but does not use it, for if she used her knowledge she would not act against it. In order to explain the state of someone who knows but does not use her knowledge, Aristotle refers to his theory of the practical syllogism, and proposes the following (quite peculiar) example:

Since there are two types of premises, someone's action may well conflict with his knowledge if he has both types of premises, but uses only the universal and not the particular premise.[...]For instance, someone knows that dry things benefit every human being, and that he himself is a human being, or that this sort of thing is dry; but he either does not have or doesn't activate the knowledge that this particular thing is of this sort.⁸⁷

The state of having but not using knowledge, however, seems to be only the genus to which the specific knowledge (or ignorance) of the akratic belongs. Aristotle continues his analysis of the phrase "having knowledge without using it" by explaining that it "can include different types of having". Among these "different types of having" there is a distinctive type which characterizes the drunk, the mad and the sleeping, i.e. a type of having which involves "both having knowledge in a way and not having it".⁸⁸ The subsequent discussion clarifies that the akratic, too, has knowledge and does not have it, in a similar way to the sleeping, the mad and the drunk. Aristotle notes, moreover, that sometimes akratic agents talk *as if* they possessed knowledge. For example, gluttons or smokers are perfectly able to enumerate the reasons why eating sweets or smoking is bad for them. Nevertheless, comparing akratics to students, drunkards, actors, the sleeping and the mad Aristotle emphasizes that this ability shouldn't be mistaken for actual possession of knowledge:

⁸² Ibidem

⁸³ NE 1145b29.

⁸⁴ ἔχειν τὴν ἐπιστήμην.

⁸⁵ ἐπίστασθαι.

⁸⁶ "Ὁ ἔχων μὲν οὐ χρώμενος δὲ τῇ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ὁ χρώμενος λέγεται ἐπίστασθαι." NE 1147a38.

⁸⁷ NE 1147a 1-9.

⁸⁸ NE 1147a 14-15.

[the fact that the akratic] says the words that come from knowledge is no sign [of fully having it]. For people who are in those states (the mad the sleeping and the drunk) even recite demonstrations and the verses of Empedocles. And those who have learned something do not yet know it, though they string the words together; for it must grow into them, and this takes time. And so we must suppose that those who are acting akratically also say the words in the way actors do.⁸⁹

Thus the akratic has knowledge and does not have it in the same way as the drunk, the mad and the sleeping. Moreover, she speaks the words of knowledge without fully having it, in the same way as actors and students do. In other words, the akratic is in the same state of ignorance as the drunk, the mad, the sleeping, the student and the actor. But what precisely does this state of ignorance consist in? Many commentators have supposed that the phrase 'both having and not having knowledge' corresponds to the phrase 'having knowledge but not using it'. This assumption, in turn, supports some versions of the desire-based interpretation, according to which the akratic's failure concerns not the status of her knowledge, but the use she makes of it, or the way in which her desires arise in accordance with what she knows or thinks. Other commentators note that the state of having and not having knowledge, in Aristotle's text, is distinguished from the state of having and not using knowledge. In other words, they interpret that state of knowing and not knowing as providing a justification for, or an explanation of, the fact that the akratic does not use her knowledge. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that they are too hasty in interpreting the parallel with the drunk, the mad and the sleeping as implying that the way in which the akratic 'does not have knowledge' corresponds to an impairment or temporary dysfunction of her intellectual faculties.⁹⁰

Rejecting the desire-based account, we deny that having and not having knowledge is equivalent to having knowledge only potentially. In the same way, rejecting the Socratic account, we deny that having and not having knowledge means knowing that something is the case, and subsequently forgetting it when *akrasia* occurs. Hence, we need to look for another way in which it is possible for the akratic to have and not have knowledge (ἔχειν πῶς καὶ μὴ ἔχειν τὴν ἐπιστήμην). An interesting starting point for this enquiry can be found, as Anthony Kenny has noted⁹¹, in the Topics 148a8. There, Aristotle characterizes ignorance as a state that involves more than having forgotten that something was the case or having only potential knowledge.

⁸⁹ NE1147a 19–24.

⁹⁰ Moss, 2009, p 136-138, p 153 and Lorenz 2006, pp 197-198.

⁹¹ Kenny 1966, P 165

Ignorance involves being wrong about some state of affairs, or having a “positively mistaken belief”⁹²:

For what is generally thought to be ignorant (ἀγνοεῖν) is not that which lacks knowledge, (μὴ ἔχον ἐπιστήμην), but rather that which has been deceived (τὸ διηπατημένον), and for this reason we do not talk of inanimate things or of children as ‘being ignorant’. ‘Ignorance’, then, is not used to denote a mere privation of knowledge.⁹³

In order to clarify the state of ignorance of the akratic, then, we can refer to Aristotle’s clarification of what it means to be ignorant and to lack knowledge. We know the akratic is not fully ignorant, for she has not been deceived, and she doesn’t believe that it right to perform the akratic action. We also know that she doesn’t lack knowledge entirely. Rather she “has it and doesn’t have it”. Could her partial lack of knowledge and her partial ignorance, then, correspond to a mistaken representation, which doesn’t have the status of a belief? This interpretation, indeed, would be coherent with the idea that the akratic has knowledge in the form of a cluster of correct beliefs about the situation she finds herself in, but at the same time she in a way lacks knowledge and is ignorant.

In order to test this suggestion, it may be helpful to consider whether it is consistent with Aristotle’s most debated example of *akrasia*: the glutton’s syllogism.

Suppose then, that someone has the universal belief hindering from tasting; he has the second belief, that everything is pleasant and this is sweet, and this belief is active; but turns out that appetite is present in him. The belief, then, [...] tells him to avoid this, but appetite leads him on, for it is capable of moving each of the bodily parts. The result then is that in a way reason and belief make him act akratically. The second belief is contrary to correct reason, but only coincidentally, not in its own right.⁹⁴ For the appetite, not the belief, is contrary to correct reason.⁹⁵

In the fourth chapter of this work I will focus on the syllogistic account of *akrasia* more closely. For the purposes of this analysis of the akratic’s ignorance, however, it suffices to note that this passage can provide an explanation of how it is possible to be ignorant in virtue of a positively mistaken representation, which doesn’t have the status of a belief. Aristotle clarifies here that the akratic does not have a mistaken belief. The “second belief”, indeed, is not contrary to correct

⁹² Ibidem.

⁹³ “τὸ γὰρ μὴ ἔχον ἐπιστήμην οὐ δοκεῖ ἀγνοεῖν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὸ διηπατημένον· διὸ οὔτε τὰ ἄψυχα οὔτε τὰ παιδιά φαμὲν ἀγνοεῖν. ὥστ’ οὐ κατὰ στέρησιν ἐπιστήμης ἢ ἀγνοια λέγεται.” Topics 148a 8-10 (trans Tredennick 1960)

⁹⁴ οὐκ ἐναντίας δὲ καθ’ αὐτήν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

⁹⁵ ἢ γὰρ ἐπιθυμία ἐναντία, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἡ δόξα. NE1147b33-35.

reason in its own right, but only coincidentally. What is contrary to correct reason, then, is the desire. The desire however, shouldn't be considered as a blind urge which is not based on the akratic's cognitive appraisal of her predicament. Rather, it is based on the akratic's mistaken representation of this particular thing as desirable or good.

These remarks gesture towards the idea that the akratic has knowledge because her beliefs are correct, and doesn't have knowledge because she also has a non-doxastic misrepresentation of her predicament. Thus, they suggest that her cognitive appraisal of a certain object (the sweet) is conflicted: she believes she should avoid the cake, but she also sees it as good or desirable. This cognitive conflict, then, is the source of her motivational conflict. Thus, this interpretation sets up the starting point of a reconciliation between the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account. Indeed, it envisages the ignorance of the akratic as the cause of blameworthy desire she experiences.

The view that the failure of the akratic consists in a non-doxastic misrepresentation, in turn, can shed some light on Aristotle's ambiguous claim that the failure of the akratic involves "perceptual knowledge":

the *pathos* does not occur as a result of the presence of what seems to be knowledge in the strict sense, nor is this very same knowledge that is dragged about by the *pathos*, but as a result of the presence of perceptual knowledge (and this is the knowledge that is dragged about by the *pathos*).⁹⁶

The root of the ambiguity of this passage depends on the interpretation of the genitive absolute "τῆς κυρίως ἐπιστήμης εἶναι δοκούσης παρούσης" and on the verb to which the negation οὐ should refer. While some translators (Rakham, Irwin, Moss) read οὐ εἶναι and interpret the genitive absolute as expressing a temporal relation, others (Kenny) read οὐ γίνεται and render the genitive absolute with a causal relation. Thus the former translate the passage as follows:

for the knowledge that is present when *akrasia* occurs, and that is dragged about on account of *akrasia*, is not the sort that seems to be fully knowledge, but it is only perceptual knowledge.⁹⁷

This translation supports an interpretation that considers the failure of the akratic as strictly intellectual, for it suggests that *akrasia* occurs in the absence of knowledge. Indeed, this translation seems to support a negative existential claim with respect to the knowledge of the

⁹⁶οὐ γὰρ τῆς κυρίως ἐπιστήμης εἶναι δοκούσης παρούσης
γίνεται τὸ πάθος, οὐδ' αὕτη περιέλεκεται διὰ τὸ πάθος, ἀλλὰ τῆς αἰσθητικῆς. NE1147b 17-19.

⁹⁷ Trans based on Irwin 1998.

akratic. When *akrasia* occurs, there seems to be no knowledge in the strict sense, "τῆς κυρίως ἐπιστήμης οὐ εἶναι δοκούσης". The latter translators, on the other hand, give a translation similar to the one I proposed above in order to support the conclusion that the failure of the akratic is not intellectual but desiderative: "the *pathos* does not occur as a result of the presence of what seems to be knowledge in the strict sense, nor is this very same knowledge that is dragged about by the *pathos*, but as a result of the presence of perceptual knowledge (and this is the knowledge that is dragged about by the *pathos*)"⁹⁸. According to these interpreters⁹⁹, this passage simply shows that the akratic's emotional upheaval is not causally connected with the presence of knowledge in the strict sense. Hence, the passage leaves open for the akratic the possibility to have knowledge when *akrasia* occurs. If the akratic has knowledge in the strict sense when *akrasia* occurs, however, she may be seen as failing *to desire* what is best for her. Thus, in this interpretation, she undergoes not an intellectual failure, but a *desiderative* failure.

In the introduction I noted that both the intellectualist and the desire-based interpretations of the akratic's failure are in tension with a number of remarks Aristotle makes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is interesting to notice, however, that the translation favoured by the desire-based account is coherent with an interpretation that sees the failure of the akratic as involving a non-doxastic mistaken representation. Indeed, Aristotle may have in mind the faculty of *phantasia* when he says that the *pathos* doesn't occur because of a failure of knowledge in the strict sense, but because of a failure of 'perceptual knowledge'.

The discussion on Aristotle's account of *phantasia* has been the object of many controversies. In this chapter I will only sketch a list of features that can support the thesis that *phantasia* is responsible for the akratic's cognitive failure. In the third chapter, in turn, I will propose a more detailed account of the role of *phantasia* in Aristotle's conception of practical thought. The first feature of *phantasia* which seems relevant for this discussion is the fact that *phantasia* is a 'close cousin of perception,'¹⁰⁰ for it is 'a movement that arises from the workings of perception'¹⁰¹ and it is not present in animals which lack perception.¹⁰² Being to some extent related to perception, however, does not prevent *phantasia* from being a distinct cognitive faculty:

⁹⁸ Kenny 1966, 183–84.

⁹⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁰ Moss 2009, p.125.

¹⁰¹ DA 429a 1 ff

¹⁰² DA 433b 27-32

phantasia is distinguished from perception and thought; it does not arise without perception and it is required by judgement. But clearly *phantasia* and judgement are different modes of thought.¹⁰³

A further sign of Aristotle's characterization of *phantasia* as a 'mode of thought' is the remark on its capacity to be either right or wrong:

it is the process by which we say an appearance is presented to us, it is one of these states of mind by which we make distinctions and are either right or wrong.¹⁰⁴

Even though *phantasia* is a mode of thought, however, Aristotle seems to distinguish the status of beliefs and *phantasiai*: In DA 428 a 20-25, we are told that the representations produced by *phantasia* are non-doxastic. Since *phantasia* is both a 'mode of thought' and a faculty closely related to 'the workings of perception', it may be seen as party to what Aristotle calls 'perceptual knowledge'.

The second relevant feature of *phantasia* is its important role in Aristotle's account of desire formation. Both animals and humans are incapable of desire without *phantasia*.¹⁰⁵ *Phantasia* can produce appearances which are rich enough to give rise to desires, both in irrational animals and in human beings. In other words, *phantasia* is capable of characterizing certain objects as good or bad, thus rendering them proper 'objects of desire'. Moreover, it seems that the very appearances produced by *phantasia* must be the objects of practical thought: 'The thinking soul never thinks without a mental image'¹⁰⁶.

If this brief sketch of the role of *phantasia* in practical reasoning is correct, then it allows us to reconsider the failure of the akratic. In particular, we can recall the assumption that the ignorance of the akratic consists in knowing and not knowing at the same time, and see that it can now be traced back to a failure of *phantasia*. If the akratic represents the cake as being desirable or good by means of her *phantasia*, she is exercising a 'mode of thought'. She does not simply perceive the cake, but she actively qualifies it as 'good' or 'desirable'. This representation, however, is wrong or mistaken: a virtuous person, or someone who is fully good, would not make the same cake an object of desire. The mistaken representation coexists without contradiction with the correct belief that the cake is sweet. This belief, once combined with the maxim 'everything sweet should be avoided', leads the agent to believe, correctly, that the cake

¹⁰³ DA 427b 18–19.

¹⁰⁴ DA 428a 1–5.

¹⁰⁵ DA 433b 29.

¹⁰⁶ DA 431a.

should be avoided. The mistaken representation and the correct belief thus are also the objects of two conflicting desires: the desire to avoid the cake, and the desire to eat it.

As long as the akratic has the mistaken representation of the cake as desirable or good, therefore, she does not have knowledge. Nevertheless, she also has knowledge (in a way), for she is right in thinking that the cake should be avoided. But as Aristotle notices, the akratic is also someone who knows and yet does not use her knowledge. Hence, although she formulates the correct judgement, she follows the temptations of the mistaken appearance and the corresponding blameworthy desire. Once her state of ignorance is understood as a state which involves a failure of *phantasia*, however, there is no need to explain the fact that she does not use her knowledge as a further failure of the intellect. The impairment of *phantasia* opens the logical possibility of an action that goes against reason but does not depend on a belief that contradicts reason. The intellect functions perfectly well: it is the agent's malfunctioning *phantasia* that produces a mistaken, yet motivationally potent and causally masking appearance. Once he has made room for this possibility, Aristotle can explain the fact that some agents do not abide by their correct deliberation by underlining how their mistaken appearances give rise to an irrational desire which is stronger than the rational desire to stand firm in the face of temptation. If the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*, Aristotle can avoid the burdensome Socratic picture in which the akratic's intellect is 'clouded' or 'covered over'. Moreover, as opposed to the desire-based account, this interpretation clarifies why Aristotle follows Socrates in considering the akratic ignorant in a way. Indeed, as long as *phantasia* is a 'mode of thought'¹⁰⁷, its failure can be defined as a form of ignorance.

Interpreting the akratic's cognitive failure as a failure of *phantasia* also seems to meet the requirements I presented at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, since in this view the failure of the akratic gives rise to conflicting desires, this view justifies Aristotle's remarks on the akratic's motivational struggle. By emphasizing that the failure of *phantasia* is the failure of a 'mode of thought', it does not "downplay" the role of the ignorance account.

This interpretation, moreover, focuses on the faculty of *phantasia* and doesn't run the risk of reading Aristotle's moral psychology, and thereby his account of *akrasia*, as a form of rigid intellectualism. At the same time, by granting that the akratic does not experience an intellectual failure, it allows for the possibility of clear-eyed *akrasia*. In the same way, interpreting the failure of the akratic as a failure of *phantasia* allows us to clarify why Aristotle denies the existence of praiseworthy *akrasia*, and therefore does not consider Neoptolemus an akratic. Neoptolemus is someone whose non-doxastic representations are perfectly right: he is not

¹⁰⁷ DA 427b 18-19

mistaken to regard lying to Philoctetes as bad and shameful thing to do. Rather, his mistake is purely intellectual, for he has been misled by Odysseus's 'sophistical' arguments, and he wrongly believes that lying is just or excusable.

In conclusion, if the akratic's failure is a failure of *phantasia*, we can make sense of the distinctions Aristotle draws between the weak and the impetuous akratic, as well as the differences between the akratic with respect to spirit and that with respect to pleasure. The weak akratic corresponds to the clear-eyed akratic: she has time to deliberate correctly, but she experiences a conflict of motives. Thus the weak akratic does not abide by her deliberation because her *phantasia* is mistaken, and she is overcome by 'shameful pleasure'. The malfunctioning of *phantasia* is the source of a motivationally potent appearance that renders her choice, i.e. the result of her deliberation, inactive or idle. The impetuous akratic, in turn, immediately follows the mistaken appearance, without even trying to deliberate in accord with reason: she is in such haste to follow her pleasures that she does not pause to consider whether these pleasures are blameworthy or shameful. The akratic with respect to spirit, similarly, is someone who does not pause to deliberate calmly. She rushes off and overreacts when, for example, she feels insulted. Nevertheless, she is akratic only metaphorically, because the pleasures that lead her to overreact do not entirely depend on a mistaken representation. Indeed, at least in Aristotle's view, these akratics' appearances are at least partially correct: their mistake consists in giving them too much importance. 'Some people are overcome by, or pursue, some of these naturally fine and good things to a degree that goes against reason; they take honour, or children, or parents (for instance), more seriously than is right.'¹⁰⁸

2.4 Conclusion: Objections and Responses

In the previous section I suggested that the contradiction between the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account of *akrasia* can be resolved by interpreting the akratic's ignorance as a failure of *phantasia*. The gist of this suggestion is that the akratic is ignorant because her *phantasia* mistakenly represents or qualifies a certain object as 'desirable or good'. It is by virtue of this misrepresentation that she experiences a blameworthy desire and eventually performs an akratic action. In the next chapters I will try to support this suggestion analyzing in detail Aristotle's theory of desire formation and his syllogistic account of *akrasia*. This discussion, I hope, will complete and clarify my account of the role played by *phantasia* in Aristotle's conception of practical reasoning. Before engaging in this task, however, I will

¹⁰⁸ NE 1148a 30–32.

conclude this first sketch of my positive proposal by trying to indicate a response to the most obvious potential objection against it.

In the interpretation I have proposed, the akratic's state of ignorance is one in which she has knowledge and does not have it at the same time, because she has a mistaken appearance which coexists with her correct beliefs. Having knowledge and not having it at the same time, in turn, is what leads the akratic to experience two conflicting desires. This interpretation, then, seems to assimilate the state of the akratic to that of her counterpart: the enkratic (continent). The enkratic too is someone who experiences a conflict of desires. Hence, similarly to the akratic, she must have a wrong or mistaken appearance. Nevertheless, as opposed to the akratic, the enkratic doesn't act on her mistaken appearance. How, then, can my interpretation account for this difference between the akratic and the enkratic? Moreover, my interpretation may seem to obscure the reason why Aristotle insists on comparing the akratic to the drunk, the mad and the sleeping. Indeed, it seems intuitive that this comparison is meant to show that the akratic's cognitive faculties are damaged in a way that involves more than a mere failure of *phantasia*.

These two concerns are, I think, interconnected. It has usually been assumed that the comparison of the akratic with the drunk, the sleeping and the mad is meant to underline that her intellect, unlike the enkratic's (or continent's) intellect, is impaired or 'clouded'.¹⁰⁹ This assumption, however, is not entirely warranted. One of the main aims of Aristotle's discussion of *akrasia* and *enkrateia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to distinguish these two conditions from virtue and vice. Besides warning us not to conflate *enkrateia* with virtue or *akrasia* with vice, however, Aristotle points out that *akrasia* and *enkrateia* are more similar than we may think:

we must not suppose that continence and *akrasia* are concerned with the same state as virtue and vice, or that they belong to a different kind.¹¹⁰

Further evidence for the assimilation of *akrasia* and *enkrateia* can be found in Aristotle's discussion of 'prudence' (*phronesis*). In NE VI 12, Aristotle discusses the nature of prudence, and writes that

prudence is not cleverness, though it requires this capacity. [Prudence], this eye of the soul, requires virtue in order to reach its fully developed state.¹¹¹

Cleverness and prudence, in turn, are 'in the part of the soul that has belief', while natural virtue and full virtue are in the part of the soul that has character.¹¹² Since prudence requires virtue in

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Moss 2009

¹¹⁰ NE 1145b 37-39.

¹¹¹ NE 1144a 29-31

¹¹² NE 1144b 14-17

order to achieve its fully developed state, we should not fall prey to Socrates' mistake and think that virtues are instances of prudence. Rather, we should envisage the state of the virtuous and that of the prudent as a single state, for 'one has all the virtues if and only if one has prudence, which is a single state.'¹¹³

If Aristotle considers virtue and prudence as two complementary definitions of the same state, it becomes clearer why he does not draw a significant difference between 'intellectual health' of the akratic and that of the enkratic. The enkratic is neither prudent nor virtuous, because she has bad appetites, i.e. she has not acquired full virtue of character. The same holds for the akratic, for Aristotle has shown that:

it is impossible for the same person to be akratic and prudent. A prudent person must also at the same time be excellent in character [and the akratic is not]. Moreover, someone is not prudent simply by knowing, he must also act on his knowledge. But the akratic person does not.[...]He is not in the condition of someone who knows and is attending to his knowledge, but in the condition of one asleep or drunk.¹¹⁴

Once we have explained why, in Aristotle's view, the enkratic and the akratic are closer than we may think, we can return to the comparison of the akratic with the drunk, the mad and the sleeping, and to the fact that the akratic does not abide by her own best choice. In the first section of this chapter, I tried to show that the akratic is ignorant insofar as she has a correct belief and a mistaken representation at the same time. To this extent, therefore, the enkratic can be considered ignorant too, and assimilated to the drunk, the sleeping and the mad. She is similar to the akratic in that she has a mistaken appearance and is in the condition of having and not having knowledge at the same time. This explains why the enkratic, like the akratic, is not prudent and experiences appetitive desires that go against reason. What differentiates the enkratic from the akratic, the mad and the drunk, then, is not that the akratic's intellect is impaired while the enkratic's is not. In the final chapter of this thesis, therefore, I will defend the claim that the difference between the enkratic and the akratic is to be found in the enkratic's ability to stand firm in face of temptation. I will argue that the enkratic doesn't act on her

¹¹³ NE 1145a1-2.

¹¹⁴ Contra Irwin 1999, I follow OCT and I do not transpose NE 1152a 8,9. If my interpretation is right, the comparison with the drunk and the sleeping maintains in NE 1152a 8,9 the same double reference to 'knowing and not knowing' and 'knowing and not using' as it has in NE1147 a10-15. "οὐδ' ἅμα φρόνιμον καὶ ἀκρατῆ ἐνδέχεται εἶναι τὸν αὐτόν: ἅμα γὰρ φρόνιμος καὶ σπουδαῖος τὸ ἦθος δέδεικται ὤν. ἔτι οὐ τῷ εἰδέναι μόνον φρόνιμος ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ πρακτικός: ὁ δ' ἀκρατῆς οὐ πρακτικός [...] οὐδὲ δὴ ὡς ὁ εἰδὼς καὶ θεωρῶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ὁ καθεύδων ἢ οἰνωμένος." NE 1152a 8-15

mistaken *phantasia* because she is able to employ effective cognitive strategies in order to reinforce her rational desires.

Chapter 3. Aristotle's Cognitivism

3.1 Introduction.

In the previous chapter, I have suggested that the akratic's ignorance should be traced back to a failure of the faculty of *phantasia*. According to my interpretation, the akratic both mistakenly represents a certain object as "good or desirable" and correctly believes that the very same object is to be avoided. The correct belief and the mistaken representation, in turn, give rise to the akratic's conflicting desires, and eventually to her failure to abide by her own deliberation. I also pointed out that this picture of *akrasia* preserves and reconciles the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account. Indeed, it grants that the akratic experiences conflicting desires, and at the same time explains her cognitive failure, though it emphasizes that this failure is not intellectual.

In this chapter, I will analyse the function of the faculty of *phantasia* in Aristotle's theory of desire formation. This analysis will help me to clarify in what way the akratic's failure of *phantasia* is cognitive but not intellectual, as well as providing a more detailed account of the differences between the akratic with respect to spirit (*thumos*) and the akratic with respect to bodily desires (*epithumiai*). Moreover, explaining the role of *phantasia* in Aristotle's account of desire formation would provide the theoretical basis for the discussion of Aristotle's syllogistic account of *akrasia*, which I will propose in the fourth and concluding chapter. Clarifying the syllogistic account of *akrasia*, in turn, will allow me to spell out in greater detail the distinction between the akratic, the enkratic and the virtuous person in Aristotle's ethics.

In the first section, I will argue that Aristotle, similarly to many other ancient philosophers, proposes a cognitivist theory of desire formation.¹¹⁵ This is to say that he maintains that desires are based on the agent's intentional awareness of a certain object, which is represented as *to orekton* (the "object of desire"). Then, I will try to demonstrate that the nature of the cognitive representation of the object of desire can be twofold, i.e. it can consist either in a belief or in a *phantasia*. I will also try to show that, in this context, the relevant difference between beliefs and *phantasiai* is that beliefs, as opposed to *phantasiai*, require conviction and are responsive to persuasion. I will conclude my analysis of Aristotle's cognitivism by suggesting that in his view the intentional awareness of the object of desire, in the form of a *phantasia* or a belief, is a necessary condition of the desire. *Phantasiai* and beliefs, in turn, are not sufficient conditions of desires, but they can both "sufficiently cause them". This is to say that a belief or a *phantasia* can

¹¹⁵ See Nussbaum 1994

produce a corresponding desire in most occasions, although it is possible to have the belief or the *phantasia* without experiencing the corresponding desire.¹¹⁶ A further result of this analysis of Aristotle's theory of desires will be the suggestion that the distinction between rational and irrational, in Aristotle's theory, has evaluative significance, and doesn't map onto the descriptive distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive¹¹⁷. Hence, both *phantasia*-based desires and belief-based desires can be irrational if directed towards the wrong object of desire, and rational if directed towards the correct object of desire.

In the second section, I will consider the implications of this interpretation of Aristotle's cognitivism for his tripartite categorization of desires. Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric*, *De Anima* and the Ethical treatises, distinguishes between bodily desire (*epithumia*), "spiritedness" (*thumos*) and wish (*boulesis*). I will consider these three types of desires separately, arguing first that the proper form of wish is based on beliefs, although there is an improper form of wishes based on *phantasiai*; second that bodily desires are mostly based on *phantasiai*, although in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle allows for the possibility of belief-based bodily desires; and third that *thumos*, in the case of humans, is based on a cluster of beliefs and *phantasiai*. This discussion will complete the picture of ancient cognitivism I proposed in the first section, and help me clarify the difference between *akrasia* with respect to spirit and *akrasia* with respect to bodily desires.

In conclusion, I will explain how this analysis of Aristotle's cognitivism clarifies my initial suggestion that the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*. On the basis of the account I have proposed, *phantasia* is a form of cognition which can represent an object as desirable or good, thus giving rise to a corresponding desire. *Phantasia*, however, doesn't produce belief-like representations. Rather, its products lack conviction and are not responsive to persuasion. Furthermore, the akratic's ignorance, if it is a failure of *phantasia*, consists in the fact that the akratic has a mistaken non doxastic representation of a certain object as an object of desire. The akratic's mistake is evaluative: her *phantasia* doesn't function correctly in so far as it identifies the wrong object of desire. This characterization of the akratic's failure, together with the discussion of the relationship between the workings of *phantasia* and the tripartite Aristotelian characterization of desires, will also allow me to explain further why Aristotle considers *akrasia* with respect to *thumos* less shameful than *akrasia* with respect to bodily desires.

3.2 *Phantasia* and Desire

¹¹⁶ See Ibidem, p 89

¹¹⁷ Nussbaum 1994, 81

In order to clarify the suggestion that the failure of the akratic is cognitive but not intellectual, it is necessary to propose a more detailed account of *phantasia* than the one I sketched in the second chapter. Indeed, I only briefly pointed out that *phantasia*, in Aristotle's view, is closely related to perception, as well as being a "mode of thought". Moreover, I emphasized that *phantasia* has an important role to play in Aristotle's account of desire formation in both animals and human beings. In this section, therefore, I will try to reconstruct what Aristotle means when he writes that *phantasia* is connected to both thought and perception and in what way its workings can give rise to human and animal desires.

As I noted in the second chapter, Aristotle's account of *phantasia* is extremely controversial. The difficulty most interpreters experience in reconstructing Aristotle's view on *phantasia*, however, is at least partially due to the fact that Aristotle describes its function in a number of different contexts. In *De Anima*, *phantasia* has a role to play in the explanation of animal and human perception and movement. In *De Motu Animalium*, *phantasia* is explicitly described as the faculty that renders animals capable of desiring. In *De Insomniis* and *De Memoria*, *phantasia* is crucial for Aristotle's view on dreams, memory and recollection. In this work, I will limit my analysis of the role of *phantasia* in the practical context, i.e. in the context of animal and human action and desire formation. My discussion, therefore, will have a narrow focus, and will not attempt to provide an exhaustive and coherent account of Aristotle's *phantasia* in all its functions.¹¹⁸

From the perspective of a contemporary reader, Aristotle's account of desires and desire formation can be misleading. Martha Nussbaum, in *The Therapy of Desire*¹¹⁹, emphasizes that in the context of ancient moral psychology we should keep in mind that the distinction between rational and irrational has normative value, and doesn't necessarily map onto the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive, which has only descriptive value.¹²⁰ In Nussbaum's account, being a cognitivist in the ancient world involves being committed to the following three assumptions:

1. the assumption that emotions are about an object, or directed towards it. In other words, that emotions correspond to the intentional awareness of a certain object.
2. the assumption that a belief is at least a necessary condition, if not a constituent part or a sufficient condition, of the corresponding emotion.

¹¹⁸ For a more exhaustive account of *phantasia* see for example Osborne 2000, Frede 1992 and Schofield 1992

¹¹⁹ Nussbaum 1994, pp 78-80. See also Moss 2009, p 126

¹²⁰ Nussbaum 1994, pp 78-80

3. the assumption that an emotion is to be qualified as rational or irrational on the basis of its normative status.¹²¹

Nussbaum's account of "ancient cognitivism", however, cannot be immediately extended to Aristotle's account of the nature of desire. Indeed, Nussbaum's view concerns first and foremost complex emotions (*pathe*), such as pity and anger, and therefore stresses the importance of beliefs as their necessary, or even sufficient conditions. Nonetheless, if we take into consideration several passages of *De Anima*, we notice that at least the first assumption of ancient cognitivism about emotions holds in Aristotle's account of desires.

Mind is never seen to produce movement without desire (*orexeis*) (for wish (*boulesis*) is a form of desire, and when movement accords with calculation, it accords also with wish), but desire produces movement contrary to calculation; for bodily desire (*epithumia*) is a form of desire (*orexis*). Now mind is always right, but desire and *phantasia* may be right or wrong. Thus the object of desire (*to orekton*) produces movement, but this may be either the real or the apparent good.¹²²

while that which causes movement is specifically one, the faculty of desire qua desiderative or ultimately the object of desire (for this, though unmoved, causes movement by being thought or represented by *phantasia*), the things which cause movement are numerically many.¹²³

In these passages, Aristotle emphasizes that desires are directed towards a certain object (*to orekton*- the "object of desire") which is either thought of or represented by *phantasia*. Aristotle's insistence on the importance of *to orekton*, then, suggests that in his view desires involve the awareness of an 'object of desire'. In other words, desires are 'directed towards' or are 'about' an object, which the agent represents as good, or desirable.¹²⁴

The fact that, according to Aristotle, desires involve the intentional awareness of an object of desire immediately raises two questions. The first question concerns the nature of the cognitive state that represents the object as good or desirable: is it a belief or another type of representation? The second question is about the relation between the desire itself and the

¹²¹ Ibidem

¹²² "νῦν δὲ ὁ μὲν νοῦς οὐ φαίνεται κινῶν ἄνευ ὀρέξεως (ἢ γὰρ βούλησις ὄρεξις, ὅταν δὲ κατὰ τὸν λογισμὸν κινῆται, καὶ κατὰ βούλησιν κινεῖται), ἢ δ' ὄρεξις κινεῖ καὶ παρὰ τὸν λογισμὸν· ἢ γὰρ ἐπιθυμία ὄρεξις τίς ἐστίν. νοῦς μὲν οὖν πᾶς ὀρθός ἐστίν· ὄρεξις δὲ καὶ φαντασία καὶ ὀρθὴ καὶ οὐκ ὀρθή, διὸ αἰεὶ κινεῖ μὲν τὸ ὀρεκτόν, ἀλλὰ τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν." DA433a 22-28

¹²³ "εἶδει μὲν ἔν ἄν εἴη τὸ κινεῖν, τὸ ὀρεκτικόν, ἢ ὀρεκτικόν—πρῶτον δὲ πάντων τὸ ὀρεκτόν· τοῦτο γὰρ κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενον, τῷ νοηθῆναι ἢ φαντασθῆναι—ἀριθμῶ δὲ πλείω τὰ κινεῖντα." DA433b 10-15

¹²⁴ See Moss 2009, p 124, Alexander of Aphrodisia *De Fato* XI. 178, Charles 1984, p 89 et alt.

cognitive awareness of it: is the cognitive awareness of *to orekton* a constitutive part of the desire? Is it only a necessary condition of the desire, or also a sufficient condition of the desire?

In Nussbaum's account of Aristotle's theory of emotions, these two questions receive a clear answer. The cognitive state that represents the object of the emotion is a belief, or a complex system of beliefs (*doxa/doxai*). For example, my anger may be directed against someone because I believe that she has insulted me and that I should do something to avenge myself. In Nussbaum's view, since the intentional awareness of the object of the emotion must "rest on a belief", the belief is a constitutive part of the emotion. The belief is also a necessary condition of the corresponding emotion: I couldn't be angry with my sister if I didn't believe that she had insulted me. In conclusion, Nussbaum argues that the Aristotelian corpus doesn't give us decisive evidence that beliefs are the sufficient conditions of our emotions. Nonetheless, she emphasizes that Aristotle often suggests that beliefs can "sufficiently cause" emotions. To return to my example, Aristotle would grant that, in most cases, the belief that someone has wronged me is sufficient to make me angry with them¹²⁵.

Nussbaum's view, therefore, is that Aristotelian emotions are directed towards an object, and that we represent the object by means of beliefs. These beliefs, in turn, are the emotions' necessary condition, and often suffice to cause them. Is this view justified? And, more importantly, can we extend it from complex emotions like anger and pity to all kinds of desires, and in particular bodily desires (*epithumiai*)?

The view that beliefs are a necessary condition and a constitutive part of desires encounters a number of objections, especially in the case of bodily desires (*epithumiai*). From the passages quoted above, indeed, it is evident that in Aristotle's view there are at least two faculties that can represent the object of desire, qualifying it as "good". These faculties are intellect (*nous*) and *phantasia*:

the object of desire [...] though unmoved, causes movement by being thought or represented by *phantasia* (*phantasthenai*).¹²⁶

In *De Motu Animalium*, even sense-perception (*aisthesis*) is included among the representative faculties (*ta kritikà*, the faculties that are able to "make distinctions") that can individuate the object of desire:

the proximate reason for movement is desire, and this comes to be either through sense-perception or through *phantasia* and thought¹²⁷.

¹²⁵ see Nussbaum 1994, pp 81-89

¹²⁶ DA 433b11

The fact that the object of desire can be individuated by *phantasia*, however, is in tension with the idea that the cognitive states that represent the object as good is always a belief. Indeed, Aristotle emphasizes that the products of the exercise of the faculty of *phantasia* are importantly different from beliefs:

belief (*doxa*) implies conviction (*pistis*), and conviction implies persuasion. And no animal has conviction, but many have *phantasia*. Every belief is accompanied by conviction, conviction by persuasion (*pepeisthai*), persuasion by rational discourse (*logos*). Although some animals have *phantasia*, they don't have rational discourse.¹²⁸

In light of this passage, then, we can return to the question about the nature of the cognitive state that represents a certain object as *to orekton*, i.e. as the object of desire. This state can be, in some cases, a belief. For example, according to Aristotle, an agent could desire to help her friend on the basis of the fact that she believes that doing so is good, or pleasant. In other cases, however, the nature of the cognitive state that represents *to orekton* will be different, and will consist in a *phantasia*, or in a product of the workings of the faculty of *phantasia*. What does the difference between the belief-based desire and the *phantasia*-based desire amount to? According to some interpreters, the relevant distinction between *phantasiai* and *doxai*, between appearances and beliefs, concerns the propositional form of the former and the imagistic (and thereby non-propositional form) of the latter.¹²⁹ In the context of practical reasoning, however,¹³⁰ this distinction doesn't seem relevant. Both *phantasia* and thought seem to be capable of predicating of a certain object *x* that it has the property of being, for example, good, or desirable. Insofar as they are both interpretative faculties, their products seem to have propositional content, or it seems to be at least possible to translate their content into a proposition.¹³¹

The difference between the two, then, has to be individuated in a different way. The starting point of another way of distinguishing between belief and appearance (*phantasia*), moreover, can be found in the passage of *De Anima* I quoted above. There, Aristotle stresses that the relevant distinction between *phantasiai* and beliefs is that the former lack conviction (*pistis*) and are not subject to persuasion (*peitho*). The latter, on the other hand, are available only to creatures who have *logos* (reason), and involve conviction and persuasion. As R. Sorabji notes in

¹²⁷ MA 701a 33. Translations of MA are based on those of Nussbaum 1978 unless otherwise indicated.

¹²⁸ "ἀλλὰ δόξη μὲν ἔπεται πίστις (οὐκ ἐνδέχεται γὰρ δοξάζοντα οἷς δοκεῖ μὴ πιστεύειν), τῶν δὲ θηρίων οὐθενὶ ὑπάρχει πίστις, φαντασία δὲ πολλοῖς. [ἔτι πάση μὲν δόξη ἀκολουθεῖ πίστις, πιστεῖ δὲ τὸ πεπεῖσθαι, πειθοῖ δὲ λόγος· τῶν δὲ θηρίων ἐνίοις φαντασία μὲν ὑπάρχει, λόγος δ' οὐ]." DA 428a 19-24

¹²⁹ See Modrak 1986.

¹³⁰ Sorabji 1993, pp 18-19 and Nussbaum 1994, p 84 agree on this interpretation.

¹³¹ Sorabji 1993, pp 18-20

*Animal Minds and Human Morals*¹³², in this passage Aristotle adopts a "rhetorical criterion" for beliefs. According to Aristotle, the characterizing feature of a belief is that an agent is convinced of it¹³³ or adheres to it in a specific way, i.e. because she has been persuaded¹³⁴ of its truth. Sorabji notes that this criterion is called rhetorical because it entails that every belief is the result of conversation or discourse with others. Nevertheless, he suggests that the criterion may not be strict, and may include "silent conversation" within one's soul as well as conversation with others. To this we can add that a belief, in order to qualify as such, may only need to be responsive to rational discourse (internal or public), rather than being the result of rational discourse.¹³⁵ At any rate, both the strict and the weak forms of the rhetorical criterion emphasize that the form of assent or conviction (*pistis*) that qualifies a mental state as a belief is strongly linked to rational discourse and persuasion. The difference between a belief and a *phantasia*, or a representation produced by the faculty of *phantasia*, seems to be that the latter, as opposed to the former, lacks a form of assent (*pistis*) which is the product of rational discourse and is responsive to rational discourse. In other words, *phantasiai* are representations that lack "reflective assent"¹³⁶.

If we grant this distinction between beliefs and *phantasiai*, then, we can conclude that the cognitive state that represents the object of desire can be either a representation to which the "desirer" accords reflective assent, or a representation to which the desirer doesn't give reflective assent. Some evidence for this distinction, moreover, can be found in Aristotle's characterization of bodily desires (*epithumiai*) in the *Rhetoric*:

now, of bodily desires some are unreasoned (*alogoi*), others with reason (*meta logou*). I call unreasoned all those that are not the result of any assumption. Such are all those which are called natural; for instance, those which come into existence through the body—such as the desire for food, thirst, hunger, the desire for such and such food in particular; the desires connected with taste, sexual pleasures, in a word, with touch, smell hearing and sight. The desires with reason are those that arise from conviction (*ek tou peisthenai*); for there are many things which we desire to see or acquire when we have heard them spoken and are convinced.¹³⁷

¹³² Ibidem, p 36

¹³³ *pistis*

¹³⁴ *pepeithai*

¹³⁵ See ibidem, fn 37. Sorabji disagrees with this suggestion.

¹³⁶ Sihvola 1996, p 117-120

¹³⁷ "τῶν δὲ ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν ἄλογοί εἰσιν αἱ δὲ μετὰ λόγου. λέγω δὲ ἀλόγους ὅσας μὴ ἐκ τοῦ ὑπολαμβάνειν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν (εἰσὶν δὲ τοιαῦται ὅσαι εἶναι λέγονται φύσει, ὥσπερ αἱ διὰ τοῦ σώματος ὑπάρχουσαι, οἷον ἡ τροφῆς δίψα καὶ πείνα, καὶ καθ' ἕκαστον εἶδος τροφῆς εἶδος ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ αἱ περὶ τὰ γευστὰ καὶ ἀφοροδίσια καὶ ὅλως τὰ ἀπτά, καὶ περὶ ὁσμῆν [εὐωδίας] καὶ ἀκοῆν καὶ ὄψιν), μετὰ

The conclusion that desires can be based on reasoned beliefs or unreasoned *phantasiai*, in turn, suggests an interesting answer to the question about the nature of the relation between the desire itself and the cognitive awareness of the desire. Given that the object of desire can be apprehended either by a belief or by a *phantasia*, we can assume that in general one of the two possible forms of intentional awareness are constitutive of the desire. In the same way, either a *phantasia* or a belief are necessary to the formation of a desire. In this interpretation of Aristotle's view of desire formation, desires must be based on the representation of an object as the object of desire, and this representation can be either a belief or a *phantasia*. Since the object of desire can be individuated by *phantasia*, in turn, beliefs cannot be the constitutive or necessary condition of every desire.

The suggestion that beliefs cannot be the constitutive or the necessary condition of desires because the object of desires can be represented by *phantasia* faces an immediate counter-objection. Many interpreters¹³⁸, indeed, have argued that in the case of emotions Aristotle's use of *phantasia* and related terms such as *phantasthenai* is non-technical. This is to say that whenever Aristotle writes that emotions are directed towards, or about, *phantasiai*, his use of a *phantasia*-related term doesn't suggest any contrast with beliefs. The contrast between *phantasiai* and beliefs is supposed to emerge in the perceptual context, where Aristotle wants to stress the difference between "the way things look" (*phainesthai*) and the way we "take them to be" on reflection (*dokein, oiein, nomizein*).¹³⁹ In the practical context, however, *phantasia* and *doxa* can be used interchangeably. In the case of the emotions (*pathe*), which are a subclass of the desires (*orexeis*), this view is conceptually defensible.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, especially in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle does seem to use interchangeably *phantasia* and *doxa*, *phainesthai* and *dokein*.¹⁴¹ In the case of bodily desires, however, the thesis that *phantasia* has the same meaning of belief is less plausible. Indeed, especially in *De Anima*, Aristotle discusses the nature of desires, and attributes them to both humans and animals:

λόγου δὲ ὄσας ἐκ τοῦ πεισθῆναι ἐπιθυμοῦσιν· πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ θεάσασθαι καὶ κτήσασθαι ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄκούσαντες καὶ πεισθέντες."Rhet I xi 5 (1370a15 ff) I follow, sometimes loosely, the translation in Freese 1926.

¹³⁸ Dow 2009, section 3 and Nussbaum 1994, p 85. See Sihvola 1996, 105 ff and Sorabji 1993 for the opposite view.

¹³⁹ For Example Dow 2009, p 144 and section 3

¹⁴⁰ Especially if we grant that complex emotions such as pity and shame are only available to creatures who have intellect and can form beliefs, i.e. human beings.

¹⁴¹ Ibidem

In so far as the living creature (*to zoon*) is capable of desire, it is also capable of self movement; but it (*to zoon*) is not capable of desire without *phantasia*, and *phantasia* involves either calculation or perception. Every animal shares the latter *phantasia*.¹⁴²

Hence, assuming that at least in some cases animal and human desires are not different in kind, we cannot allow beliefs to be the necessary condition or constitutive of desires: animals do not have beliefs, but they do have desires.¹⁴³

This initial sketch, however, doesn't exhaust the analysis of the relation between the desire and its intentional object, however represented. Indeed, it is still unclear whether the representation, in the form of a belief or a *phantasia*, of the object as good or desirable is a sufficient condition of the desire. As Nussbaum¹⁴⁴ notes, the Aristotelian corpus doesn't seem to provide conclusive evidence to settle this issue. In *De Anima*, Aristotle suggests that the object of desire is the final cause of the desire, but doesn't clarify whether it can also be its efficient cause, or whether it suffices to bring it into existence:

and every desire (*orexis*) is directed towards an end (*eneka tou*); for the thing at which appetite aims is the starting point of the practical mind, and the last step of the practical mind is the beginning of action.¹⁴⁵

Moreover, in the few passages where Aristotle suggests an answer to the question whether beliefs or *phantasiai* are sufficient to cause desires, he seems to contradict himself. At first, his view seems to be that only beliefs are sufficient to cause desires:

again, when we form a belief that something is threatening or frightening, we are immediately affected by it, and the same is true of our opinion of something that inspires courage; but, as far as *phantasia* is concerned, we are like spectators looking at something dreadful or encouraging in a picture.¹⁴⁶

Not many pages after, however, he emphasizes that sometimes an agent can think that something is frightening or pleasant without thereby having a desire to pursue or avoid it:

¹⁴²" ὅλως μὲν οὖν, ὡς περ εἴρηται, ἧ ὀρεκτικὸν τὸ ζῶον, ταύτη αὐτοῦ κινητικόν· ὀρεκτικὸν δὲ οὐκ ἄνευ φαντασίας· φαντασία δὲ πᾶσα ἢ λογιστικὴ ἢ αἰσθητικὴ. ταύτης μὲν οὖν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα μετέχει." DA 433b 28-30

¹⁴³ for a similar view, see Sihvola 1996 and Osborne 2000.

¹⁴⁴ Nussbaum 1994, p 89

¹⁴⁵ "καὶ ἡ ὄρεξις <δ'> ἔνεκά του πᾶσα· οὐ γὰρ ἡ ὄρεξις, αὐτὴ ἀρχὴ τοῦ πρακτικοῦ νοῦ, τὸ δ' ἔσχατον ἀρχὴ τῆς πράξεως." DA 433a 15-17

¹⁴⁶ "ἔτι δὲ ὅταν μὲν δοξάσωμεν δεινόν τι ἢ φοβερόν, εὐθὺς συμπάσχομεν, ὁμοίως δὲ κἂν θαρραλέον· κατὰ δὲ τὴν φαντασίαν ὡσαύτως ἔχομεν ὡς περ ἂν εἰ θεώμενοι ἐν γραφῇ τὰ δεινὰ ἢ θαρραλέα." DA 427b 22-26

even when the mind contemplates such an object, it does not directly suggest avoidance or pursuit; e.g. it sometimes thinks that something is fearful or pleasant without suggesting fear.¹⁴⁷

In *De Motu Animalium*, in turn, Aristotle often suggests that *phantasia* is sufficient to bring desires into existence.

For the affections suitably prepare the organic parts, desire the affections, and *phantasia* the desire (*orexis*).¹⁴⁸

The proximate reason for movement is desire, and this comes to be either through sense-perception or through *phantasia* and thought.¹⁴⁹

Because of the puzzles that these passages present, a number interpreters have considered some of them spurious. Freudenthal, for example, argues that DA 427b 22-26 is an interpolation, for it is evident from other passages that *phantasiai* cause desires.¹⁵⁰ Freudenthal's interpretation, however, is perhaps too strong. After all, the passages in the *Rhetoric*, *De Anima* and *De Motu* do not conclusively show either that beliefs are the sufficient condition of desires, or that *phantasiai* are the sufficient condition of desires. Aristotle, then, may have adopted a weaker view, according to which both beliefs and *phantasiai* can sufficiently cause desires, although they not always do.¹⁵¹ This interpretation, besides the fact that it accommodates many textual difficulties, also has the advantage of attributing to him a more complex, and plausible, view about desire formation.

In sum, if the interpretation I proposed is correct, Aristotle's cognitivism indicates *phantasiai* and beliefs as the two possible forms of representation of the objects of desires. Thus, every desire has either a *phantasia* or a belief as its necessary condition and constituent part. Moreover, both *phantasiai* and beliefs can sufficiently cause desires. Borrowing Nussbaum's phrasing, Aristotle's cognitivism has descriptive value.¹⁵² This is to say that it qualifies as cognitivism because it assumes that every desire is based on the cognitive awareness of a certain object qualified as good or desirable by the intellect or by *phantasia*. This form of cognitivism, as Nussbaum emphasizes, implies that the distinction between rational and

¹⁴⁷ "ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὅταν θεωρῆ τι τοιοῦτον, ἤδη κελεύει φεύγειν ἢ διώκειν, οἷον πολλάκις διανοεῖται φοβερὸν τι ἢ ἡδύ, οὐ κελεύει δὲ φοβεῖσθαι." DA 432b 28-32

¹⁴⁸ "τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὀργανικὰ μέρη παρασκευάζει ἐπιτηδείως τὰ πάθη, ἢ δ' ὄρεξις τὰ πάθη, τὴν δ' ὄρεξιν ἡφαντασία." MA 702a 20

¹⁴⁹ "τῆς μὲν ἐσχάτης αἰτίας τοῦ κινεῖσθαι ὀρέξεως οὔσης, ταύτης δὲ γινομένης ἢ δι' αἰσθήσεως ἢ διὰ φαντασίας καὶ νοήσεως" MA 701a 35-40

¹⁵⁰ Freudenthal 1863, p 16. see de ins 460b3 probl XXX 7 956 a 20

¹⁵¹ For a similar position that concerns only beliefs see Nussbaum 1994, p 89

¹⁵² Nussbaum 1994, p 8

irrational desires has normative value, and doesn't map directly onto the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive. Hence, in Aristotle's view, it is not the case that all desires are rational in so far as they are based on the cognitive awareness that the object of desire is good. Rather, they can be rational or irrational depending on whether they are directed towards an object which is, according to the correct reason, a proper object of desire. Hence, both a belief-based desire and a *phantasia*-based desire can be irrational, in the normative sense, if they are directed to an object which shouldn't be represented as an object of desire. In other words, if they are directed towards an object which is not really good. Given that desires can be based on two types of representations, the irrationality of desires seems able to take two forms. On the one hand, my anger or my desire to retaliate can be based on, for example, the (evaluatively) mistaken belief that my sister has insulted me and that should I take revenge. On the other hand, my desire to smoke can be based on the (evaluatively) mistaken non-doxastic appearance (*phantasia*) that smoking is desirable.

3.3 *Boulesis, Epithumia, Thumos and Phantasia.*

In sketching this picture of the role of *phantasiai* and beliefs in desire formation, I discussed desire (*orexis*) in general, without focusing on Aristotle's distinction between bodily desire (*epithumia*), "spiritedness" (*thumos*) and wish (*boulesis*).¹⁵³ In this section I will consider the way in which this distinction applies to the tripartite division of *orexeis*. This discussion will help me clarify the reason why Aristotle considers *akrasia* with respect to spirit less shameful than *akrasia* with respect to bodily desires.

The case of wish is perhaps the easiest one to discuss. In *De Anima*, Aristotle connects wish to rational discourse and emphasizes that, in a theory that divided the soul into a part with reason and a part without reason, wish should be located in the part of the soul with reason.¹⁵⁴ If wish arises in accordance with rational discourse, then it is plausible to assume that wishes are belief-based desires. Although this conclusion seems to be granted by the textual evidence in *De Anima*, there is a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that seems to question it. Aristotle, indeed, suggests that sometimes wishes can be directed towards the "apparent good" (*to phainomenon agathon*):

If, then, these views do not satisfy us, should we say that, without qualification and in reality, what is wished is the good, but for each person what is wished is the apparent good? For the excellent person, then, what is wished will be what is [wished] in reality,

¹⁵³ DA 414b2, EE1223a 26-27 and other loci

¹⁵⁴ DA 432 b 5-8

while for the base person what is wished is whatever it turns out to be [that appears good to him].¹⁵⁵

This passage threatens a view that takes beliefs to be the form of intentional awareness on which wishes are based because it states that in some cases wishes can be for what appears to be good. The term Aristotle uses in order to characterize the apparent good, in turn, is “*phainomenon*”, which is related to *phantasia* and often used within Aristotle’s technical discussion of the nature of *phantasiai*. Is Aristotle’s reference to *to phainomenon agathon* enough to debunk the assumption that wishes are always about beliefs? A possible reply to this suggestion is that, in this passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the reference to the apparent good is non-technical. Aristotle is interested in stressing the difference between what really is good, and what isn’t. Hence, the use of a *phantasia*-related term doesn’t gesture towards a disanalogy between *phantasia* and belief, but towards the difference between how things really are, and how an agent may mistakenly take them to be.¹⁵⁶ This reply is to some extent plausible, because the difference between what is truly good and what isn’t is the focus of Aristotle’s discussion in this section.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, a parallel passage in the *Eudemian Ethics* makes a clearer use of the technical distinction between *phantasia* and belief in the context of wish:

The thing desired and wished is either the good or the apparent good. Therefore also the pleasant is desired, for it is an apparent good, since some people think it good, and to others it appears good even though they do not think it so (as *phantasia* and opinion are not in the same part of the soul).¹⁵⁸

In this passage, Aristotle clearly implies that sometimes wish can be based on a *phantasia*, and it is precisely for this reason that sometimes one can wish for the apparent good even when one doesn’t think it is good. The Ethical treatises, then, suggest a revision of the view about wishes in *De Anima*. Although it is true that wishes in the true unqualified sense (*kat’aletheia* and *haplos*) are about true beliefs concerning the good, there is a secondary form of wishes which can be based on *phantasiai*.

The case of bodily desires (*epithumiai*) mirrors the case of wishes. In *De Anima*, Aristotle says that if one divided the soul into a part with reason and a part without reason, bodily desires would reside in the part of the soul without reason.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, he writes that *epithumia* is for

¹⁵⁵ NE1113a 23-28

¹⁵⁶ see Dow 2009 for this distinction. See Freudenthal 1863 for this view.

¹⁵⁷ See Dow 2009 and Nussbaum 1994

¹⁵⁸ EE 1235b

¹⁵⁹ DA 432 b 3-5

the pleasant, which is the apparent good *par excellence*¹⁶⁰, and that it is the type of desire that all animals (rational and irrational) share¹⁶¹. These remarks could induce us to think that the basis for *epithumiai*, in Aristotle's view, is always a *phantasia*, or a non-doxastic representation. Once again, this clear cut classification is proved wrong, this time by a passage in the *Rhetoric*. As I noted at the beginning of this section, in Rhet. 1370a v-vi, Aristotle divides *epithumiai* into "reasoned" and "unreasoned". The former are based on belief and on conviction. The latter fall short of conviction and persuasion, and are thereby based on *phantasiai*. Even *epithumiai*, therefore, can be based either on beliefs or on *phantasiai*. As opposed to the case of wishes, however, Aristotle doesn't suggest that there is a difference in status between belief-based *epithumiai* and *phantasiai*-based *epithumiai*. Hence, we cannot assume that there is a primary type of *epithumiai*, based for example on *phantasiai*, and a secondary one based on beliefs. Nonetheless, the textual evidence from *De Anima* and the ethical treatises can drive us to think that, in most cases, *epithumia* is based on non-doxastic appearances. Indeed, the reference to belief-based *epithumiai* is limited to the aforementioned passage in the *Rhetoric*, which is not echoed in any other text. In particular, Aristotle emphasizes the unreasoned nature of *epithumiai* when he is analyzing *akrasia*. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, he writes that *epithumia* "leads on without employing persuasion, since it has no share with reason (*logos*)"¹⁶². In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, furthermore, Aristotle famously distinguishes between *akrasia* caused by *epithumia* and *akrasia* caused by *thumos*, and emphasizes that the former is more shameful because it has no share in reasoning, whereas the latter does:

In the same way, since *thumos* is naturally hot and hasty, it hears, but does not hear the instruction, and rushes off to exact a penalty. For reason and *phantasia* has shown that we are being slighted or wantonly insulted, and *thumos*, as though it had inferred that it is right to fight this sort of thing, is irritated at once. *Epithumia*, however, only needs [the reason or]¹⁶³ perception to say that this is pleasant, rushes off to enjoy it. And so *thumos* follows reason in a way, but *epithumia* does not. For if someone is akratic about *thumos*,

¹⁶⁰ see for example EE 1235 b

¹⁶¹ DA 414b 4-7

¹⁶² "ἡ δὲ ἐπιθυμία οὐ πείσασα ἄγει· οὐ γὰρ μετέχει λόγου" EE 1224b2

¹⁶³ Rakhman considers this an interpolation. I am inclined to agree with him because here Aristotle is stressing the difference between reasoned *thumos* and unreasoned desire. "οὕτως ὁ θυμὸς διὰ θερμότητα καὶ ταχυτήτα τῆς φύσεως ἀκούσας μὲν, οὐκ ἐπίταγμα δ' ἀκούσας, ὁρμᾷ πρὸς τὴν τιμωρίαν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ λόγος ἢ ἡ φαντασία ὅτι ὕβρις ἢ ὀλιγωρία ἐδήλωσεν, ὃ δ' ὥσπερ συλλογισάμενος ὅτι δεῖ τῷ τοιούτῳ πολεμεῖν χαλεπαίνει δὴ εὐθύς· ἢ δ' ἐπιθυμία, ἐὰν μόνον εἴπῃ ὅτι ἡδὺ [ὁ λόγος ἢ] ἢ αἰσθησις, ὁρμᾷ πρὸς τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν. ὥσθ' ὁ μὲν θυμὸς ἀκολουθεῖ τῷ λόγῳ πῶς, ἢ δ' ἐπιθυμία οὐ. αἰσχύων οὖν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ θυμοῦ ἀκρατῆς τοῦ λόγου πῶς ἤτταται, ὃ δὲ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ οὐ τοῦ λόγου."

he is overcome by reason in a way; but if he is akratic about *epithumia*, he is overcome by *epithumia*, not by reason.¹⁶⁴

In order to understand in what way *epithumia* lacks reason in a way that *thumos* doesn't, it is necessary to conclude this brief analysis of Aristotle's tripartite view of desires by focusing on *thumos* itself. *Thumos* is perhaps the most controversial desire in Aristotle's categorization. First, it is the only desire for which Aristotle doesn't individuate a proper object: *epithumia* is directed towards the pleasant, and *boulesis* towards the good. Many interpreters¹⁶⁵ argue that *thumos* is directed towards *to kalon* (the noble, the fine), but this view is not explicit in the Aristotelian corpus. Second, *thumos* is considered an "unreasoned" desire in *De Anima* 432b 7, but participates or "has a share" in reason in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Third, *thumos* is sometimes used as a synonym of *orgè*, i.e. "anger". Anger, however, seems to be a specifically human emotion, which involves a cluster of evaluative beliefs: the belief that one has been slighted, the belief that one should retaliate, etc. On the other hand, *thumos* is sometimes attributed to animals as well as humans.¹⁶⁶ Hence, its meaning cannot coincide entirely with anger, but must be broader. Animals, indeed, lack discursive reason, and couldn't thereby get strictly speaking "angry" in the same way as humans do.

Resolving these puzzles is very difficult, and providing an exhaustive account of *thumos* lies outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, it can already be inferred from these initial remarks that *thumos* is a broad family concept, which assumes different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Since the focus of this work is *akrasia*, and *akrasia*, according to Aristotle, is a phenomenon which involves only rational animals, it may be useful to narrow the focus of the discussion down to the type of *thumos* that humans can experience. In NE 1116b 23-37, Aristotle analyzes *thumos* in relation to courage:

those who act on account of *thumos* also seem to be courageous as beasts seem to be when they attack those who have wounded them.[...]courageous people seem to act on account of the noble, and *thumos* assists them, but beasts only act on account of pain.[...]human beings as well as beasts find it painful to be angered, and pleasant to exact a penalty. But those who fight for these reasons are not brave, though they are good fighters; for they fight because of their feelings, not because of the noble nor as reason prescribes.

¹⁶⁴ NE 1149a24-1149b5

¹⁶⁵ Sihvola 1996, p 129

¹⁶⁶ NE 1111a 24-26 NE 1111b 12-13

In this passage, the specific type of *thumos* Aristotle attributes to the courageous man seems to be based on evaluative beliefs. Their *thumos* arises in accordance to reason: it doesn't simply involve an unreflective representation of a painful slight and of a pleasant revenge. It also seems to be based on the conviction that it is *right*, or noble, to take revenge. In the *Rhetoric*, too, the reflective and unreflective components of *thumos* seem to emerge:

(*thumos*) is accompanied by a certain pleasure, for this reason first [i.e. because the angry person believes she will take revenge], and also because men dwell upon the thought of revenge, and the appearance (*phantasia*) that rises before us produces the same pleasure as one sees in dreams.¹⁶⁷

The fact that Aristotle gestures towards a belief component of *thumos* in the *Rhetoric* isn't surprising, for one of the main aims of this treatise is to teach rhetoricians and public speakers how to stir up the emotions of their audiences by means of conviction and persuasion. Despite the emphasis on beliefs, however, Aristotle indicates some elements of anger which seem non-doxastic: dwelling in the thought of revenge gives rise to a *phantasia* that enhances the attractiveness of revenge.

The belief that one should take revenge against a slight, then, can be accompanied by a *phantasia* which increases the appeal of revenge, and presumably contributes to increasing the agitation of the angry person. What this reconstruction suggests is that *thumos* and anger can be based on a complex cluster of representations, which involve both the beliefs that arise from persuasion or rational discourse and *phantasiai*. If this is true it can clarify why what Aristotle means when he writes that anger follows reason, although it isn't entirely or always controlled by reason. Indeed, anger involves the belief that one has been slighted and that one should retaliate, but it also involves fantasizing about the revenge. The appeal of the revenge, then, requires reason and the belief that one has been offended and must react to the offense, but it is increased by our tendency to dwell upon a *phantasia*, a pleasant representation of the revenge itself. The irritation provoked by the representations of *phantasia*, then, is not necessarily contrary to reason. Nevertheless, it can exaggerate the importance of the slight suffered, or drive the agent to overreact without considering all the features of her predicament carefully. In Aristotle's

¹⁶⁷ "ἀκολουθεῖ γὰρ καὶ ἡδονὴ τις διὰ τε τοῦτο καὶ διότι διατρίβουσιν ἐν τῷ τιμωρεῖσθαι τῇ διανοίᾳ ἢ οὖν τότε γινομένη φαντασία ἡδονὴν ἐμποιεῖ, ὡς περὶ ἢ τῶν ἐνυπνίων." Rhet 1378 b7-9 I take διὰ τε τοῦτο to stand for "the belief that one will take revenge" because in the preceding lines Aristotle uses the form οἶεσθαι in order to express the attitude of the angry person towards the representation of her revenge. This verbal form, indeed, seems to suggest a doxastic attitude. cf ἡδὺ μὲν γὰρ τὸ οἶεσθαι τεύξεσθαι ὧν ἐφίεται. Rhet 1378b 2-3

view, the workings of *phantasia* seem to be able to turn the horses of instruction into (un)wise tigers of wrath.¹⁶⁸

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Aristotle's theory of desire formation is a cognitivist theory, for it assumes that desires are based on the agent's representation of a certain object as "*to orekton*", i.e. the object of desire. This representation, in turn, can assume a *doxastic* form (belief), or a non-*doxastic* form (*phantasia*). The difference between beliefs and *phantasiai*, furthermore, is that the former, as opposed to the latter, involve conviction and are responsive to discursive persuasion. I also explained how beliefs and *phantasiai* are involved in the formation of bodily desires, wishes and *thumos*. I argued that wishes are primarily based on beliefs, although there is a secondary type of wish that can be based on *phantasiai*. Bodily desires, instead, are mostly based on *phantasiai*, although in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle allows for the possibility of belief-based bodily desires. I concluded my analysis noting that *thumos* is the most complex type of desire, and that, at least as far as human beings are concerned, it is based on a complex cluster of beliefs and *phantasiai*.

This account of Aristotle's cognitivism, then, can clarify my initial suggestion that the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*. In the second chapter, I suggested that the akratic is ignorant, or doesn't have knowledge, because she mistakenly represents a certain object as good or desirable. I also suggested that this representation is a product of *phantasia*. On the basis of the account of *phantasia* I proposed above, I can clarify further the nature of this mistake. The akratic's mistaken representation is a *phantasia*, and thereby falls short of the features that characterize beliefs: it lacks conviction (*pistis*) and it is not responsive to persuasion (*peitho*). Nonetheless, this representation is, or can be translated into, a proposition. For example, the proposition that "this piece of cake is good or desirable". This proposition expresses the akratic's evaluative mistake. The cake, indeed, shouldn't be an object of desire: since a virtuous agent wouldn't represent it as an object of desire, it is evaluatively wrong to represent it as such. In other words, the object of desire of the akratic is desired, although it shouldn't be desired: it is a *desideratum*, but it is not a *desiderandum*. The fact that the evaluative mistake of the akratic concerns a representation of *phantasia*, in turn, entails that this mistake is not responsive to rational persuasion. As Aristotle notes, the predicament of the akratic is usually described by the

¹⁶⁸ "the tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction". W. Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

saying "if water chokes us, what do we drink to wash it down?"¹⁶⁹. This metaphor, as St Thomas explains in his *Commentaries of the Nicomachean Ethics*,¹⁷⁰ can be attributed to the akratic because the akratic doesn't benefit from being persuaded or convinced that her evaluations are mistaken. On the contrary, she may be already be convinced that what she represents as desirable shouldn't be desired, but this conviction doesn't correct or remove her mistaken evaluation. Persuading her that she shouldn't believe that what her *phantasia* represents as good is in fact good would be like giving a sick person medication which has already proved ineffective.

The analysis of the role played by *phantasia* in the formation of bodily desires and *thumos*, moreover, can clarify further why Aristotle considers *akrasia* with respect to bodily desires more shameful than *akrasia* with respect to spirit. *Thumos*, in the case of human beings, is based on a complex cluster of beliefs and *phantasiai*, and therefore requires reflective reason as well as *phantasia* in order to arise. If we accept the thesis that the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*, in turn, the akratic is someone whose reflective reason functions correctly: she has the correct beliefs about what she should do. The reflective component of her anger, then, is right in judging for example that she has been slighted, and that she should do something to respond to the slight. However, the non-reflective component of her anger, her *phantasia*, leads her to dwell on the pleasure of envisaging an exaggerated revenge, and drives her to overreact to the slight.¹⁷¹ Both reason and *phantasia* represent the agent's retaliation as appropriate. In a way, they both express the same evaluative outlook. Thus, the difference between the evaluative judgements she assents to on reflection, and the evaluative representations of her *phantasia* is not a substantial difference, but a difference in degree. *Phantasia* simply enhances the attractiveness of a violent revenge. The akratic's mistake, then, doesn't produce an irreparable incoherence in her evaluative outlook, and is thereby less shameful, or less irrational in the evaluative sense of the word.

As opposed to *thumos*, bodily desire can be based only on non-reflective appearances. Thus, it doesn't usually involve beliefs or reflective reason. For this reason, the opposition between the akratic's reflective evaluations and her *phantasia* about the desirability of a bodily pleasure can

¹⁶⁹ Aristotle presents this saying as one of the common opinions concerning *akrasia*. The fact that he endorses this common opinion, however, is evident when he argues that weak akratics are harder to cure than impetuous akratics NE1152a 25. See also Broadie 2009, 160

¹⁷⁰ St Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII 1319

¹⁷¹ This interpretation of *thumos* may seem to obscure the reason why Aristotle thinks that *thumos* is hasty and irritable. Indeed, it emphasizes that *thumos* requires the agent to "dwell" on the pleasures of the appearance of her revenge, etc. Nonetheless, this interpretation is not necessarily in tension with the idea that *thumos* is hasty and irritable: it may be the case, for example, that the process that triggers the thumetic desire is complex (it requires thought and *phantasia*), whereas the thumetic reaction, once triggered, is quick and hot tempered.

be radical. When the glutton desires the forbidden piece of cake, the difference between her reflective evaluations and the representations of her *phantasia* is not a matter of degree. The belief that commands avoidance and the *phantasia* that suggests pursuit are incoherent, as they do not share an evaluative outlook, however general it may be. *Akrasia* with respect to bodily desire is shameful because it is based on a substantial evaluative mistake.

Chapter 4. Looking at the Cause of *Akrasia* Referring to the “Human Nature”: the Syllogistic Account of *Akrasia*.

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I presented an interpretation of the role of *phantasia* in Aristotle's theory of desires. This interpretation clarifies why the failure of the akratic is cognitive but non-intellectual, and why Aristotle distinguishes between the akratic with respect to spirit and the akratic with respect to bodily desires. In this chapter, I will try to analyze the account I suggested from a different perspective: whilst the preliminary interpretation I proposed can be considered to be a general introduction to Aristotle's understanding of the akratic's ignorance, this second analysis will be more “technical”. The analysis I intend to propose will be technical in so far as it will focus on Aristotle's formal account of the akratic's practical syllogism. This technical turn is suggested by the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself: in NE 1147 a 25, Aristotle writes that “ we may look at the cause [of *akrasia*] in the following way, referring to [human] nature” and introduces the syllogistic account of *akrasia*. Therefore, in order to complete my analysis of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*, I will try to bring the suggestion that the akratic's cognitive failure is a failure of *phantasia* to bear on the syllogistic account of *akrasia*.

In the first section, I will propose a general account of the practical syllogism, focusing on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *De Motu Animalium* and *De Anima*. First, I will endorse an interpretation according to which a coherent account of the practical syllogism can be extrapolated from *De Motu Animalium* and *De Anima* ¹⁷². Second, I will analyze the connection between the practical syllogism and Aristotle's account of choice and deliberation in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In conclusion, this discussion will help me clarify the extent to which Aristotle is committed to the view that the conclusion of a well-formed practical syllogism is an action.

In the second section I will consider the syllogistic explanation of *akrasia* Aristotle proposes in book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I will point out that most interpreters have assigned to Aristotle's akratic two distinct syllogisms: a “normatively incorrect syllogism” and a “normatively correct syllogism”¹⁷³. Whilst the normatively correct syllogism recites “avoid sweet things(MP), this is sweet(mP), therefore avoid this”, the normatively incorrect syllogism would be “(MP)everything sweet is pleasant, (mP)this is sweet, therefore this is pleasant”.

¹⁷² MA 701 a 17-18

¹⁷³ Moss 2009, pp 143-145, Burnyeat 2002, pp 82 ff, St Thomas Aquinas, et alt. A notable exception is Kenny 1966, p 80 ff

Nevertheless, I will argue that we should assign to the akratic, and therefore to the enkratic, a single syllogism.¹⁷⁴ I will suggest that the error of this syllogism is to be found in the minor premise, which gives rise to the mistaken *phantasia* that causes the akratic's blameworthy desire. I will then point out that this interpretation can be integrated with a plausible account of *enkrateia*. In conclusion, I will emphasize that this analysis can make sense of Aristotle's comparison of the akratic with the student, the drunk and the sleeping.

In the third section, I will briefly sketch the account of vice, virtue, *akrasia* and *enkrateia* which the view that the akratic's ignorance is a failure of *phantasia* seems to suggest. In particular, I will emphasize that this account of *akrasia* gestures towards a further analysis of the way in which the akratic can be "cured".

4.2 The Practical Syllogism

Aristotle proposes his account of the practical syllogism in *De Motu Animalium*, the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De Anima*. Extrapolating a coherent account from these three texts, however, is complicated. In *De Motu Animalium* and *De Anima*, Aristotle uses the practical syllogism in order to explain the connection between thought and action. The *Nicomachean Ethics*, in turn, differs from the "psychological" treatises in that it presents the practical syllogism in connection with Aristotle's theory of deliberation and choice, thus complicating the role it plays in explaining human action. In this section, I will first assume that Aristotle's account of the practical syllogism is analogous in *De Anima* and in *De Motu Animalium*. Second, I will analyze the relation between the practical syllogism and choice and deliberation in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The upshot of this analysis will be, I hope, a clarification of the significance of Aristotle's insistence on that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action.¹⁷⁵

In *De Motu Animalium*, the practical syllogism is characterized as follows:

[...] when someone thinks that every man should take walks, and that he is a man, at once he takes a walk[...] I should make something good, a house is something good. At once he makes a house. I need covering, a cloak is covering. I need a cloak. What I need I have to make; I need a cloak. I have to make a cloak. And the conclusion, the "I have to make a cloak", is an action.[...] Now, that the action is the conclusion, is clear. And as for the premises of action, they are of two kinds: through the good and through the possible.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ See Kenny 1966

¹⁷⁵ MA 701 a 23, DA 434 a 12-16, NE 1147 a 28

¹⁷⁶ MA 701a 10-25

According to this description, then, the practical syllogism is a practical inference constituted by a major premise (the premise of the good), a minor premise (the premise of the possible) and a conclusion (the action).

The account of *De Anima* is slightly different. Here, Aristotle is still interested in how thinking can move to action, but distinguishes more carefully between the different types of premises in the practical syllogism:

the cognitive faculty (*to epistemonikon*), however, is not subject to motion, but is at rest. Since the one supposition and proposition – the major – is universal and the other is particular (the one is saying that such and such a human being ought to do such and such a thing, while the other says that this then is such and such a thing, and that I am such and such a human being), than either it is the latter opinion, not the universal one, that produces movement, or it is both, but the first is more static while the other is not.¹⁷⁷

Hence, the practical syllogism is constituted by a major universal premise that contributes only indirectly to the movement. Indeed, it is the particular premise that is "less static" and directly moves to action.

These two accounts of the practical syllogism in *De Motu Animalium* and *De Anima* present some differences. Nonetheless, the most promising (and the most common)¹⁷⁸ interpretive strategy seems to be one that minimizes those differences, and looks for the features that the practical syllogism presents in both texts. According to this interpretation, the major premise presents a general evaluative expression of an aim or goal, which concerns the agent's needs, wants or desires: "I need covering", "Every man should take walks"¹⁷⁹. The minor premise, in turn, concerns the particular occasion in which the evaluative stance, and thereby the agent's desires, needs or wants, can be realized: "a cloak is covering", "I am a man", "this water in question is heavy". The conclusion, as Aristotle repeatedly states, is an action.¹⁸⁰

Even if one accepts the interpretation above, Aristotle's account of the practical syllogism remains to some extent puzzling. Indeed, Aristotle's analysis of deliberation (*bouleusis*) and choice (*prohairesis*) in the *Nicomachean Ethics* III and VI raises some problems for thesis that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action. The thesis that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action, in turn, seems to generate a dilemma for Aristotle's account of *akrasia*: either the akratic gets to the conclusion of the practical syllogism that forbids her to act in a

¹⁷⁷ DA 434a16-22 (trans Hamlyn 1968)

¹⁷⁸ Nussbaum 1978, interpretive essay 4. Wiggins 1980a, PP 228-230. Anscombe 1958, pp 60-61

¹⁷⁹ MA 701a 10

¹⁸⁰ MA 701a 25, NE 1147a (or an omission)

certain way, and thereby she refrains from acting, or she doesn't. If she does get to the conclusion, she doesn't act akratically. If she doesn't get to the conclusion, she acts against the syllogism, but she is not akratic because she is unaware that she is doing something wrong.¹⁸¹ In this section, I will begin by discussing the relationship between the conclusion of the practical syllogism and Aristotle's account of deliberation and choice. This discussion will provide the conceptual background for the analysis of the syllogistic account of *akrasia* I will propose in the next section.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* III and VI, Aristotle proposes his view on deliberation and choice. These two concepts are obviously linked to one another: deliberation is a practical enquiry about what is towards the end, i.e. an enquiry by means of which the agent discovers either the means to achieve her end or the constituent parts of her end;¹⁸² Choice is a "deliberative desire to do an action that is up to us; for judging on the basis of deliberation, we desire in accord with the deliberation" ¹⁸³. This "deliberative desire" is formed when our enquiry concerning what to do (our deliberation) works out a way of pursuing our ends, or spells out the constituent parts of our ends. Hence choice is the result of deliberation¹⁸⁴. Choice and deliberation have the same object (since we deliberate about what we choose to do), but they are praised or blamed on the basis of different criteria. Deliberation is praised if it follows the right steps, if the deliberating agent takes into account the relevant features of the predicament she finds herself in. Choice, although it is the result of a deliberation, is correct, and therefore praised, when it has the correct object: a good choice is a choice to do something noble, just or good.

having deliberated well seems [...] to be some sort of good; for the sort of correctness in deliberation that makes it good deliberation is the sort that reaches a good (through the right steps). However, we can reach the right thing to do, but by the wrong steps, when the middle term is false. Hence this type of deliberation, leading from the wrong steps to the right thing to do, is not enough for good deliberation either.¹⁸⁵

In order to be praised, deliberation must arrive at the right choice through the correct steps. Choice, in turn, can be correct even when it isn't the result of a good deliberation:

¹⁸¹ See Wiggins 1980b, et alt.

¹⁸² Here I follow Wiggins 1980b, p 249

¹⁸³ ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν. NE1113a10-13 (Irwin reads κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν instead of κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν. κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν is the correct *lectio* according to OCT).

¹⁸⁴ NE1113a 5-10

¹⁸⁵ NE 1142 b23-27

Choice is praised more for having the correct object, than for being arrived at correctly.¹⁸⁶

So far, Aristotle is proposing what looks like a plausible account of choice and deliberation. A process of deliberation results in a choice, and a good deliberation necessarily produces a good choice. A good choice, in turn, is not necessarily the product of good deliberation. For example, an agent can choose to do the right thing (recycling paper) for the wrong reasons (in order to avoid her neighbor's judgmental looks). This account, however, becomes problematic when integrated with Aristotle's views on the practical syllogism, and in particular with the assumption that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action. When he explains deliberation Aristotle makes wide use of the practical syllogism, and seems to suggest that the deliberative process can be made explicit in the syllogistic form.¹⁸⁷ However, the assimilation of deliberation with the practical syllogism encounters a difficulty: the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action, whilst the result of deliberation is a choice, or deliberative desire. What is the relationship, then, between the choice and the action? It seems clear that choice and action cannot be identical, or amount to the exact same thing. The action can surely be described as the content of the choice (the choice to recycle paper, whose content is the action of recycling paper, for example), but whilst the action is performed in the outside, physical world, the choice seems to be something like a mental state, a "deliberative desire" which doesn't present any immediate observable feature, although it may involve some internal bodily change¹⁸⁸. Since it is hard to believe that the choice and the action are simply the internal and external equivalent description of the same event, we may expect them to stand in a specific and very close relationship which isn't identity. This expectation is met in NE 1139a 33-35, where we find a description of the relationship between action and choice:

the origin (*arche*) of an action – the source of motion, not the goal – is choice. The principle of choice is desire and goal directed means.¹⁸⁹

In this passage, Aristotle writes that choice is the "origin" or the "source of motion" of the action. If choice is the source of motion of the action, in turn, what binds them seems to be a causal relation: in particular, the choice seems to be the efficient cause of the action. Moreover, in

¹⁸⁶ καὶ ἡ μὲν προαίρεσις ἐπαινεῖται τῷ εἶναι οὐ δεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ ὀρθῶς. NE1112a 5-6. Here I follow OCT contra Irwin 1999.

¹⁸⁷ Ne 1142a 15-25, 1142 b17-23

¹⁸⁸ By distinguishing between mental and physical events I don't mean to attribute to Aristotle a version of Cartesian dualism. The distinction is meant to capture the difference between mental states and events in the physical world, without committing to any particular theory of the nature of mental states.

¹⁸⁹ "πράξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις—ὅθεν ἡ κίνησις ἀλλ' οὐχ οὐ ἕνεκα—προαιρέσεως δὲ ὄρεξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἕνεκά τινος." Rowe translates ἀρχὴ with "origin" (Broadie and Rowe, 2002), Irwin has "principle".

virtue of its being the "origin" of the action, the choice may even be considered to be a constituent part of the resulting action. This doesn't mean, however, that choice and action cannot exist independently of one another: we can imagine cases where the agent chooses to do something (e. g., to cycle back home) but for some reason (e.g., a flat tyre) the choice doesn't result in action. If this interpretation is correct, it can shed further light on the problematic connection between Aristotle's account of practical deliberation and his account of the practical syllogism. If the choice which results from the agent's deliberation isn't "idle", there is a relevant sense in which it is the conclusion of the practical syllogism, i.e. the action. The choice is a constituent part of the action. If an agent goes for a walk after having thought that "every man should take walks, and that he is a man", his choice to act is a part (i.e., the origin) of her chosen action. This doesn't mean, however, that the choice and the action are identical, or that the choice must coincide with an action in all possible circumstances. In the presence of external obstacles, for example, the choice becomes "idle" or "impotent" and it is not part of any action.

Before discussing the relationship between the practical syllogism and practical deliberation, I mentioned Wiggins' worry that Aristotle's remark that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action couldn't be squared with a plausible account of *akrasia*. If the view that choices are efficient causes and can be constituent parts of actions is correct, however, this worry can be solved. When the choice is active, it is a constituent part of the action process. If the choice is "idle", however, it can exist separately from the action. This means, in turn, that there is at least the logical possibility for the akratic to choose, and not to perform the chosen action.

In this section, I proposed an account of the practical syllogism according to which the major premise is an evaluative stance that expresses the agent's needs, wants or desires, and the minor premise is a particular occasion in which the evaluative stance can be realized. I then considered Aristotle's claim that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action in light of his views on practical deliberation, and I tried to reconcile this claim with the view that the result of deliberation is choice. If my interpretation is correct, the choice and the action are not identical, share a very close relationship: the choice is the efficient cause of the action. This means that when the choice is not idle it can be regarded as a constitutive part of the chosen action. For this reason, Aristotle is not contradicting himself when he argues that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action, and the result of deliberation is choice. I also emphasized that this interpretation seems to dismiss Wiggins' worry that Aristotle's theory of the practical syllogism seems to be in tension with his account of *akrasia*. In the next section, I will bring these considerations to bear on the syllogistic account of *akrasia*.

4.3 NE VII.3: The Syllogistic Account of *Akrasia*

Aristotle's syllogistic account of *akrasia* begins at NE 1147a 33 and finishes at NE 1147b 19. In this section, I will divide the passage into five short sections. I will analyze these sections in light of the interpretive considerations I proposed in the previous three chapters of this work. My interpretation of NE 1147a 33-1147b 19, therefore, will be to a certain extent speculative, for it is based on the theoretical analysis I have tried to pursue so far. Nevertheless, I believe that this analysis has the advantage of solving some puzzles that this passage seems to give rise to, and that it can shed some light on Aristotle's distinction between virtue, vice, *enkrateia* and *akrasia*. As I proceed to unpack this long passage, I will emphasize that these advantages include an explanation of why the akratic's action is not "chosen" even though the akratic can arrive at a choice; an intelligible account of *enkrateia*; and a view on the similarities between the akratic, the sleeping, the drunk and the student. If my analysis is convincing, I will be able to briefly consider some of its implications on Aristotle's account of virtue and moral education in the concluding section.

In NE 1147a 33-37, Aristotle introduces the structure of the syllogistic account of *akrasia* as follows:

(1) Suppose, then, that someone has the universal belief hindering from tasting; he has the second belief, that everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet, and this belief is active; but it turns out that appetite is present in him. The belief [that follows from the previous two beliefs] tells him to avoid this; but appetite leads him on, since it is capable of moving all the [bodily] parts.

In this passage, according to most commentators, Aristotle attributes to the akratic two distinct syllogisms:

S1 do not taste sweet things (Mp)	S2 all sweet things are pleasant (Mp)
This is sweet (mp)	This is sweet (mp)
Do not taste this! (c)	This is pleasant (c)

S1 and S2 have two different major premises and share the minor. Their conclusions generate conflicting desires: S1 prompts the agent to avoid the piece of cake, while S2 emphasizes the attractiveness of the cake. In accordance with the account of the practical syllogism I proposed above, we can interpret both syllogisms as expressing a general want or desire of the agent in the major premise, and a particular occasion in which the general want or desire can be realized in the minor. If both syllogisms are expressive of a deliberative process, then both their

conclusions should be a deliberative desire, or a choice that, if active, would generate an action. Identifying two distinct syllogisms in the passage above, however, seems to present at least three difficulties.

The first difficulty stems from the phrasing of the passage, which doesn't immediately suggest the presence of two distinct syllogisms. Indeed, although Aristotle clarifies that the first premise of S1 is a proper major (*kat'holou*), he doesn't explicitly tell us how the premise should be stated. We only know that the major premise is supposed to "hinder the agent from tasting". Moreover, what is usually considered the major premise of the second syllogism, i.e. "everything sweet is pleasant", is not explicitly called a major premise. Rather, it is presented as if it were connected to the shared minor premise "this is sweet". The presence of two distinct conclusions in the form of choice or chosen action, in turn, is questionable. Aristotle only mentions the "idle" conclusion of the first syllogism, "avoid this", but doesn't explicitly tell us the conclusion of the second syllogism, which should be active and lead to the akratic action.

The second difficulty arises because attributing to the akratic two overlapping complete syllogisms, if we agree that practical syllogisms reconstructs a deliberation,¹⁹⁰ means attributing to her two distinct and simultaneous complete processes of deliberation. These two deliberations, if carried forward by two different agents, would terminate in two opposite choices that would give rise to two opposite actions: eating the sweet thing and avoiding the sweet thing. How do we account for the fact that when the two deliberative processes are carried forward simultaneously by the same agent, only the second one, i.e. the one that results in the akratic action, is effective? One obvious explanation, in the context of Aristotle's view, would be epistemic ignorance. The agent doesn't act according to the "non-akratic syllogism" (S1) because she fails to grasp or to have rational confidence in one of its premises. Later on in his syllogistic account of *akrasia*, Aristotle tells us that the akratic lacks knowledge of the particular.¹⁹¹ Hence, the most plausible view for an interpretation that sees the akratic as ignoring one of the premises of the non-akratic syllogism is a view according to which the akratic ignores either the particular premise or the conclusion. In other words, the akratic fails to know or to have rational confidence that the object in front of her is sweet, or she fails to know or to have rational confidence in the choice to avoid it.

¹⁹⁰ In other passages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE 1117b 20), Aristotle uses the practical syllogism to describe the deliberative process that could have led the agent to a particular choice, even though the agent has chosen to do something without deliberating. This is not a problem for my interpretation because it is clear that here Aristotle is reconstructing the akratic's actual deliberation.

¹⁹¹ NE 1147 10-19

Some version or other of this explanation has been proposed by many interpreters¹⁹², and in some cases it seems very sophisticated and convincing. In this work, I will be unable to devote the required attention to a survey and an evaluation of the advantages or disadvantages of the different possible versions of this view. Rather, I will emphasize the importance of three objections they all seem to face: the fact that they exclude clear eyed *akrasia*, their tendency to render *enkrateia* unintelligible and the difficulties they face in accommodating Aristotle's view that the akratic doesn't act on a choice.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I emphasized how Aristotle seems to be committed at least to the view that clear-eyed *akrasia* is possible. Some akratics, in particular those he dubs "weak akratics", know that what they do is wrong or blameworthy. A view that explains *akrasia* by epistemic ignorance or lack of rational confidence in one of the premises of the "non-akratic syllogism", however, seems to threaten the very possibility of clear-eyed *akrasia*. How can the akratic know that she is doing something wrong, if she either ignores that she is eating something sweet, or if she is not convinced that she shouldn't eat this particular sweet thing?

Enkrateia, being the counterpart of *akrasia*, raises similar problems for a view that relies on epistemic ignorance to explain the syllogistic account of *akrasia*. The enkratic agent is someone who desires to perform the akratic action, but manages to refrain from it:

opposed to the akratic man is another (the enkratic), who stands firm by his choice, and does not abandon it under the mere impulse of passion.¹⁹³

Aristotle, in book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, focuses on the akratic, and doesn't devote much space to the enkratic. An account of *enkrateia*, therefore, must be derived from the few remarks we find in the text and from the parallel treatment of *akrasia*. The enkratic desires to do the akratic action, and thereby supposedly has the "akratic syllogism" (S2) that everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet. Nevertheless, she also knows that she should avoid sweet things, and that this thing is sweet, and this non-akratic syllogism is the one that eventually leads her to act. In the case of the akratic, we explained the fact that she acts on the akratic syllogism emphasizing that she ignores one of the premises of the non-akratic syllogism. Can we provide a parallel explanation of the enkratic's case? Simply assuming that since the enkratic has knowledge of the non-akratic syllogism she would act on it is not enough. If the two syllogisms express two parallel deliberations which have contrary results (one prompts the akratic action, the other hinders it) then assuming that the non-akratic one must be decisive seems to be an *ad hoc* solution. Indeed, we know from the *Metaphysics* that if an agent wishes or desires to do two

¹⁹² Moss 2009, p 152, McDowell 1998, p 29, Lorenz 2006, p 191 to some extent Charles 2009.

¹⁹³ NE 1151a 25-27.

contrary things, her predicament has to be considered an obstacle against acting in general. Like Buridan's donkey, she will not act:

hence even if it wishes or desires to do two things or contrary things simultaneously, it will not do them, for it has not the capability to do them under these conditions, nor has it the capability of doing things simultaneously, since it will only do the things to which the capability applies and under the appropriate conditions.¹⁹⁴

Another possible explanation of enkratic behaviour which is coherent with the attribution of an epistemic failure to the akratic, then, could consist in assuming that the enkratic doesn't know or lacks confidence in one of the premises of the akratic syllogism. This solution, however, has to the best of my knowledge never been proposed, and for a good reason. Although it is true that Aristotle's silence on the explanation of *enkrateia* allows us to present imaginative proposals, assuming that the enkratic doesn't know one of the premises of the akratic syllogism doesn't seem plausible. Indeed, what characterizes the state of *enkrateia* is the presence of bad desires, desires that lead the agent towards a blameworthy action. If it is assumed that these desires are the result of an akratic syllogism, it would be counterintuitive to picture the enkratic as "ignorant" of one of the premises of that syllogism. This point is connected to the problems raised by the exclusion of clear-eyed *akrasia*. If it seems implausible to claim that Aristotle didn't allow for the possibility of clear-eyed *akrasia*, then assuming that he also denied that the enkratic is aware of her bad desire is even more problematic. We may know little about the enkratic, but we know that she feels and is attracted by blameworthy pleasures, although she doesn't act on them.¹⁹⁵

The third problem of a view that attributes to the akratic two distinct and complete syllogisms arises with respect to Aristotle's claim that the akratic, as opposed to the vicious, acts against her choice¹⁹⁶and is not convinced that she should perform the akratic action.¹⁹⁷ Hence, Aristotle seems to grant that the akratic action is not chosen. If the akratic entertains two practical syllogisms, and acts on the conclusion of the normatively incorrect syllogism because of her ignorance, however, how can her action be "not chosen"? After all, the akratic syllogism would represent a vicious piece of practical deliberation, whose result is a blameworthy choice. Similar to the assumption that the non-akratic syllogism would always be decisive and win over the akratic syllogism, the stipulation that the former expresses a deliberation whose result is a choice while the latter doesn't seems an *ad hoc* solution.

¹⁹⁴ Met 1048a 20-25. (Trans Ross)

¹⁹⁵ NE 1152a 1-3

¹⁹⁶ *para prohairesin* NE1151a7

¹⁹⁷ NE 1151a 11-14

In light of the problems that arise if we attribute to the akratic two distinct “strings” of practical deliberation, therefore, we should look for an alternative interpretation of NE1147a 33-37. Instead of reconstructing two syllogisms, we can see Aristotle as presenting a single, complex, process of deliberation:

the universal belief hindering from tasting[...] the second belief, that everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet, and this belief is active[...]The belief that[...] tells him to avoid this;¹⁹⁹

The structure of the akratic's deliberation, then, would be the following:

First Belief: sweet things should be avoided.

Second Belief: everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet.

Conclusion: avoid this.

The deliberative process could be divided in two phases, which can be characterized as top down and bottom up respectively. In the top down phase, the akratic accepts the first belief that she should avoid sweet things (or has the aim of avoiding sweet things), and the second belief that the piece of cake in front of her is sweet and everything sweet is pleasant. In the bottom up phase, the second belief (in particular the belief that everything sweet is pleasant) is accompanied by the mistaken evaluative generalization that all pleasant things are good and strongly desirable.²⁰⁰ This generalization is the source of the akratic's mistake, for it is the source of the mistaken *phantasia* of the sweet in front of her as good and desirable. It isn't surprising, within the Aristotelian corpus, that the belief that some things are pleasant would prompt a non-virtuous agent to represent them as "good" or "desirable". In NE 1113a 35- 1113b 2, Aristotle writes that what is pleasant deceives the many (*tois pollois*), precisely because it appears (*phainetai*) good. Moreover, Aristotle seems to gesture towards the idea that the akratic's decisive desire to eat the cake is caused by a mistaken evaluative generalization a few lines before the beginning of the syllogistic account of *akrasia*. Indeed, describing what seems to be a "vicious" syllogism, he attributes to the vicious glutton the universal evaluative premise that "everything sweet must be tasted"²⁰¹. It is plausible to interpret this universal premise as expressing a (mistaken) evaluative judgement on the nature of sweets things: they must be tasted because they are good, because they are desirable. Hence, it can be a similar appearance, or even a similar belief, that inclines the akratic to have a non-doxastic mistaken *phantasia* of the

¹⁹⁹ NE 1147a 33-37

²⁰⁰ I thank Fiona Leigh for suggesting to me this point and the textual evidence that supports it.

²⁰¹ NE 1147a 29. "παντὸς γλυκέος γεύεσθαι δεῖ."

sweet thing as desirable and good. The mistaken *phantasia*, in turn, is the source of the blameworthy desire that leads the akratic to eat the sweet thing even though she thinks it shouldn't be tasted. The minor premise, i.e. the belief that "everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet" may or may not be false: it may be true that the akratic would feel pleasure eating the cake, and it may also be true that even the virtuous person, if coerced to eat it, would feel pleasure too. However, this belief, in the akratic's²⁰² case, is accompanied by a mistaken generalization, by an evaluative mistake. In general she is wrong to represent all sweet things as desirable, or good. In particular, she is also wrong to represent the specific sweet thing in front of her as desirable or good.

The top down phase, then, is reflective and quasi-deductive. The bottom up phase, on the contrary, arises from the akratic's perception of a particular object (the sweet), and from the belief that all object of that kind (sweets) are pleasant. The bottom-up phase is the source of the akratic ignorance, or of her failure of *phantasia*: the belief that all sweet things are pleasant and the individuation of a sweet thing is accompanied by the mistaken generalization that all sweet things are desirable and good. This mistaken generalization, moreover, produces the appearance of the sweet thing in front of her as good and desirable, which is the source of a decisive epithumetic desire to eat it. It is because of a mistaken appearance, then, that the akratic's deliberation can only arrive to an idle choice. She chooses to avoid the cake, but her choice is not active in her refraining from tasting it. Her intellectual reasoning is correct, but it faces the obstacle of a mistaken non-doxastic representation of *phantasia*.

If this is a plausible reconstruction of the akratic's deliberative process, it can shed some light on Aristotle's view that akratic actions are not chosen. The "top down", quasi-deductive phase of the akratic's reasoning is correct, and can lead her to choose to avoid the akratic action. Nevertheless, her deliberation is disturbed by the fact that her *phantasia* wrongly represents something as good and desirable. This malfunction of *phantasia*, however, isn't the result of a parallel deliberative process. Rather, it gives rise to a non-deliberative, or non-reflective desire. Hence, the mistaken *phantasia* cannot generate a wrong *choice*: as I noted in the first section, according to Aristotle choice is a deliberative desire, it is the result of deliberation²⁰³. On the contrary, the mistaken *phantasia*, by giving rise to a non-deliberative desire, renders the akratic's choice idle and results in the akratic action.

In this picture, the failure of *phantasia* generates a desire which is sufficient to "deactivate" the akratic's choice, thus explaining akratic action, or in-action. Is this interpretation also able to accommodate the case of the enkratic? The enkratic seems similar to the akratic in that she is

²⁰² as well as the enkratic's case.

²⁰³ NE 1113a 10-13

also subject the malfunctioning of *phantasia*. She also desires to do the akratic action, but she manages to refrain from doing so. A view according to which an evaluatively mistaken *phantasia* generates a desire that can cause the akratic action must explain the enkratic's ability to resist. Significantly, even though he doesn't discuss the characteristics of the enkratic at length, Aristotle briefly comments on this ability of the enkratic:

for some people are like those who do not get tickled themselves if they tickle someone else first; if they see and notice something in advance, and rouse themselves and their rational calculation, they are not overcome by feelings, no matter whether something is pleasant or painful²⁰⁶.

In this passage, Aristotle stresses how impetuous akratics may become enkratic and learn to control their akratic behaviour by adopting some preventative strategies. In this case, if they can foresee the situation in which the desire (the "tickling") will arise, they can counterbalance its motivational force. We could suppose, then, that similar strategies could be adopted by those who are prone to weak *akrasia*: that is, those who manage to deliberate but only arrive at an idle choice. Enkratics who find themselves in a similar position, may nevertheless refrain from behaving akratically because they are able to reinforce their choice with a series of cognitive strategies. They may direct their attention away from the mistaken evaluation of *phantasia*, or they may be able to "dwell" on the reasons provided by their deliberation. It is in virtue of this capacity of abiding by their choice that Aristotle defines the character (*hexis*)²⁰⁷ of the enkratic excellent. The enkratic knows how to resist what most people can't resist. Like Odysseus with the sirens, they find a way to tie themselves to their reasoning in order not to fall prey to the call of *akrasia*.

Interpreting the first paragraph of the syllogistic account of *akrasia* as the description of a single complex process of deliberation, moreover, offers an interesting viewpoint on the subsequent remarks Aristotle makes. Once he has reconstructed the akratic's reasoning, Aristotle writes that

(2) [...]in a way, he acts akratically under the influence of reason. The [second] belief is contrary to the correct reason, but coincidentally, not in its own right. For the bodily desire, not the belief, is contrary. This is also why beasts are not akratic, because they have no universal supposition, but only *phantasia* and memory of particulars.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ NE 1150b 25-30

²⁰⁷ NE 1151a 28

²⁰⁸ NE 1147b 1-6. "ὕπὸ λόγου πως καὶ δόξης ἀκρατεύεσθαι, οὐκ ἐναντίας δὲ καθ' αὐτήν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός—ἡ γὰρ ἐπιθυμία ἐναντία, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡ δόξα—τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ· ὥστε καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὰ θηρία οὐκ ἀκρατῆ, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει καθόλου ὑπόληψιν ἀλλὰ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα φαντασίαν καὶ μνήμην. I translate

The akratic is such even though her beliefs are correct, and can be akratic although she is capable of reasoning. She knows that she should avoid sweet things. Even her second belief, i.e. the belief "that everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet", is coherent with the belief that sweet things should be avoided: it is not contradictory to maintain that sweet things should be avoided even though they are pleasant. The second belief, however, is coincidentally in tension with correct reason, because it is accompanied by a mistaken appearance, which is the basis of the blameworthy bodily desire and of the corresponding akratic action. The agent described in this passage is akratic precisely because she acts against her deliberation even though her beliefs are correct and coherent. Animals, on the contrary, cannot possibly be faced with her predicament, for they lack *logos* and the capacity to reason and deliberate, although they have *phantasia*. Hence, although they have bodily desires and *phantasia*, they couldn't possibly follow them against a "correct reasoning". Indeed, they are not able to characterize reflectively their actions as right or wrong.

The next three paragraphs mark a change of viewpoint, and exemplify the nature of the akratic's ignorance in the context of the syllogistic account of *akrasia*:

3) How is the ignorance resolved, so that the akratic recovers his knowledge? The same account that applies to someone drunk or asleep applies here too, and it is not special to this way of being affected. We must hear it from the natural scientists.²⁰⁹

4) Since the last premise is a belief about something perceptible, and controls action, this is what the akratic does not have when he is being affected. Or the way he has is it is not [full] knowledge of it, but, as we saw, [results in] merely saying the words, as the drunk says the words of Empedocles.²¹⁰

5) And since the last term doesn't seem to be universal, or expressive of knowledge in the same way of the universal term, even the result that Socrates was looking for seems to come about. For the *pathos* does not occur as a result of the presence of what seems to

ὑπὸ λόγου πως καὶ δόξης ἀκρατεύεσθαι as "he acts akratically under the influence of reason". Aristotle's use of πως suggests that he is not using ὑπὸ as the connective for a proper efficient cause.

²⁰⁹ NE 1147b 7-10

²¹⁰ "ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ τελευταία πρότασις δόξα τε αἰσθητοῦ καὶ κυρία τῶν πράξεων, ταύτην ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐν τῷ πάθει ὦν, ἢ οὕτως ἔχει ὡς οὐκ ἦν τὸ ἔχειν ἐπίστασθαι ἀλλὰ λέγειν ὡσπερ ὁ οἰνωμένος τὰ Ἐμπεδοκλέους." NE 1147b 11-14

be knowledge in the strict sense, nor is this very same knowledge that is dragged about by the *pathos*, but as result of the presence of perceptual knowledge.²¹¹

Paragraph 3) is easily squared with the thesis that the failure of the akratic is a failure of *phantasia*. Sleep and drunkenness are, according to Aristotle, states in which the agent's faculty of *phantasia* is particularly fervid and productive:

it is evident from the foregoing that stimuli arising from sense impression, both those which are derived from without and those which have their origin within the body, occur not only when we are awake, but also when the affection we call sleep supervenes, and even more at that time.²¹²

That there is a close connection between the workings of the faculty of *phantasia* and physiological processes, in turn, is clear from *De Anima* 428b-429a, where *phantasia* is described as a kind of movement that arises from perception. It is not surprising, then, that Aristotle thought that the akratic valuations mistakes can be analyzed from the perspective of the natural scientist, and that the natural scientist can tell us how she recovers from her state of ignorance. Her *phantasia* is triggered in particular occasions, i.e. when she perceives a type of object that she tends to see as (or believes to be) good or desirable (for example, sweets). When the object is not present or available, we can suppose that the akratic's psychophysical upheaval ceases. She wakes up or sobers up, and her ignorance is resolved.

Paragraph 4) and 5) are perhaps the most debated among the interpreters of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. Here Aristotle seems to be determined to individuate the specific premise of the practical syllogism that the akratic either doesn't know, or knows in a way that only allows her to "say the words". He writes that this premise is the last one (*teleutaia*), and that it is not universal, but these remarks do not render his position less ambiguous. The terms he uses make the reader think that he is referring to the minor premise, which is *kath'echaston*, about a particular. As David Charles has noted, however, it would also be plausible to assume that he is referring to the conclusion, especially if we attribute to Aristotle the view that the conclusion of a practical syllogism is not identical to an action.²¹³ Does the thesis that the akratic's failure isn't an intellectual failure but a failure of *phantasia* offer a way to resolve this ambiguity? As I emphasized in the reconstruction of the akratic's complex process of deliberation, the failure of *phantasia* is "triggered" when the akratic perceives the sweet as present and available. Indeed,

²¹¹ "καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ καθόλου μηδ' ἐπιστημονικὸν ὁμοίως εἶναι δοκεῖν τῷ καθόλου τὸν ἔσχατον ὅρον καὶ ἔοικεν ὁ ἐζητεῖ Σωκράτης συμβαίνειν· οὐ γὰρ τῆς κυρίως ἐπιστήμης εἶναι δοκούσης παρούσης γίνεται τὸ πάθος, οὐδ' αὕτη περιέλεκεται διὰ τὸ πάθος." NE 1147b 14-19

²¹² De Ins 459b 28-33.

²¹³ Charles 1984, p 91-96

she believes that everything sweet is pleasant, and she also mistakenly sees every sweet as desirable and good. This interpretation seems to cohere with paragraph 5), where Aristotle tells us that the *pathos*, or the akratic's psychophysical upheaval, arises as a result of the presence of perceptual knowledge. Moreover, it suggests that the premise the akratic "has and doesn't have" is the minor, the one that indicates that this particular thing is sweet and that everything sweet is pleasant. Indeed, the akratic knows that this is sweet and that everything sweet is pleasant. Yet, this belief is accompanied by a wrong generalization and by a mistaken *phantasia*. To clarify her failure further, however, we must turn to paragraph 4), where Aristotle envisages two ways in which the akratic can ignore the minor premise. Some akratics "don't have it". Others have it in way that makes them only "say the words of knowledge". These remarks, then, seem to suggest that these two different kinds of akratics suffer from two different kinds of failures.

The view that the akratic's ignorance is a failure of *phantasia*, however, allows one to see that their failure is the same, although it manifests itself in two different ways. Both akratics misrepresent the sweet thing as desirable and good. Hence, in a way, they do not have knowledge. In one case, this misrepresentation causes a strong desire which causally "masks" the akratic's correct reasoning. This is the predicament of impetuous akratics, who, according to Aristotle, "don't wait for reason, because they tend to follow *phantasia*"²¹⁴. Even in the case of the impetuous akratic, however, the failure of *phantasia* is not tantamount to an intellectual failure: the workings of the intellect are simply causally masked by the malfunctioning of *phantasia*. Impetuous akratics are so quick-tempered that whenever *phantasia* individuates an object of desire, they reach for it without pausing to reflect on the possible blameworthy consequences of their action. In the second case, the akratic is still ignorant, because she misrepresents the sweet thing as good and strongly desirable. Nonetheless, the desire that arises from her misrepresentation is not as violent as the one of the impetuous akratic. Hence, she is able to come to the conclusion of her complex deliberation, and to choose to avoid the cake: her intellect functions correctly. Nevertheless, the misrepresentation of *phantasia* is enough to render this conclusion idle, and is unable to give rise to an action. The only thing she can do, then, is to say the words that come from her knowledge: ("I should avoid this!"). This, then, is the predicament of the clear-eyed akratic, the one that deliberates and chooses, but doesn't abide by her choice.

In the syllogistic account of *akrasia*, Aristotle compares the akratic with the sleeping and the drunk. In this section and in the second chapter, I tried to emphasize that this comparison is not necessarily meant to point out that the akratic undergoes an intellectual failure. Rather, it can suggest that the akratic, the drunk and sleeping all have mistaken *phantasiai*. Interestingly, the

²¹⁴ 1150b27-28

same point can be made about the other analogy Aristotle uses in order to clarify the characteristics of the akratic: the one that concerns the student who has just learned a demonstration, but still doesn't know it because she hasn't "internalized" it²¹⁵. We can imagine the student demonstrating, for example, that an isosceles triangle has equal base angles. The student has just learned the lesson, and demonstrates the theorem using the correct Euclidean postulate. Nevertheless, instead of drawing an isosceles triangle, she always draws a scalene one. Her demonstration is correct: she follows and represents all the required steps. Yet, there is still a sense in which the student's demonstration shows that she doesn't know the lesson yet: there is still something wrong about the way in which she pictures or represents it. The akratic, according to the interpretation I proposed, is guilty of a similar mistake. The steps she follows in her deliberations are sound and correct, but there is something wrong about the way in which her *phantasia* depicts the features of her evaluative outlook. The only difference between the student and the akratic, then, is that the failure of the former is merely descriptive, whereas the failure of the latter is evaluative. Thus, as opposed to the akratic, the student doesn't have to worry too much about the influence of her mistakes on her desires and motivational states.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I firstly analyzed Aristotle's account of the practical syllogism. I argued that the major premise expresses the agent's general wants, needs or desires, whilst the minor individuates the occasion in which these wants needs or desires can be satisfied. I also suggested that, as long as we emphasize the fact that choices are the efficient causes of actions, Aristotle's views on the practical syllogism can be made compatible with his analysis of choice and deliberation.

Second, I proposed an interpretation of the syllogistic account of *akrasia* which is based on the view that the akratic's failure is a failure of *phantasia*. In this interpretation, the akratic's failure arises when she states the minor premise of the practical syllogism, the one that concerns the particular situation in which her desires, wants or needs can be applied. This failure, in turn, doesn't necessarily involve lack of knowledge or rational confidence in the minor premise or the conclusion of the practical syllogism. Rather, it consist in a valuational mistake due to the malfunctioning of the faculty of *phantasia*. In the case of the impetuous akratic, this mistake can cause a passion which is sufficient to causally "mask" the akratic's deliberative process. The impetuous akratic's intellect is operative, but doesn't have enough time to carry forward the deliberation. In the case of the weak akratic, the mistake doesn't mask the deliberative process,

²¹⁵ NE 1147a 20-23

but renders her choice to resist her blameworthy desires “idle”. I also emphasized that this reconstruction fits the comparison of the akratic with the drunk, the sleeping and the student, and that it can be accompanied by a plausible account of *enkrateia*.

If this interpretation is correct, it suggests some interesting ideas regarding the four protagonists of Aristotle’s ethics: the virtuous, the vicious, the enkratic and the akratic. The virtuous and the vicious agent share a similar cognitive framework: their reflective beliefs and their *phantasiai* cohere with each-other. Nevertheless, they differ in that the virtuous agent’s evaluative outlook is wholly correct, and the vicious agent’s evaluative outlook is wholly wrong. The virtuous, then, have achieved perfect *phronesis*, or prudence, whilst the vicious are wholly ignorant. The cognitive framework of the akratic and the enkratic, in turn, is similar because their reflective beliefs and *phantasiai* do not cohere with each other. Their evaluative outlook is also similar, for they both have correct beliefs and mistaken *phantasiai*. Hence, with respect to practical knowledge, they are both to some extent ignorant. Nonetheless, they differ because the enkratic agent has learnt, or is able, to cope with this cognitive dissonance and evaluative dissonance, and the akratic agent hasn’t.

This brief characterization of the virtuous, the vicious, the enkratic and the akratic, if correct, leaves us with an open question: can the akratic ever rid herself of her ignorance, achieve wisdom and become virtuous? We know that her ignorance, in the same way as sleep and drunkenness, can be temporarily resolved. Nevertheless, she will revert to making her mistake whenever she is confronted with an occasion that gives rise to her mistaken *phantasiai*. Since her mistaken appearances are non-doxastic, and not dependent on reason, we know that trying to convince her to get rid of them is not effective. Her mistake is not intellectual, and she cannot be “talked out of it”. Nevertheless she can perhaps be persuaded to cope with her mistake, learning the preventative strategies adopted by the enkratic. But learning to cope with her mistake will not make her virtuous: significantly, the enkratic only acts *in accordance* with prudence (κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον), but not *with* prudence (μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου)²¹⁶. The *Nicomachean Ethics*’ account of moral habituation, understood as a form of “cognitive behavioural therapy”, seems to be a good starting point to find a solution to this puzzle. We may think that if the akratic practiced and acted against her appearances consistently, she would eventually manage to rid herself of them. In other words, we may suppose that by being enkratic and acting in accordance with prudence for a sufficiently long amount of time, we may eventually achieve an integrated and correct moral outlook. However, this interpretive strategy encounters the difficulty of extrapolating a clear picture of habituation as a moral therapy in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Habituation seems to be extremely important for a good upbringing, but it

²¹⁶ NE 1144 b25 and NE1151 a 20

is less clear that it could be used as a *corrective* tool for grown up agents. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how exactly habituation could provide the “gestaltic switch” that allows the agent not only to act according to prudence, but also to have it.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ For an account of the relation between *akrasia* and Aristotle's philosophy of education, see Burnyeat 1992.

Overall Conclusion

In this thesis, I considered the alleged tension between Aristotle's motivational conflict account and his ignorance account of *akrasia*. I argued that this tension can be resolved if we consider the akratic's failure as a failure of *phantasia*. In the first chapter, I criticized other attempts to resolve this tension, and I categorized them under the label of desire-based accounts and Socratic accounts. I argued that the desire-based account mistakenly identifies the akratic ignorance with a desiderative failure, while the Socratic accounts render clear-eyed *akrasia* impossible.

In the second chapter, I presented the thesis that the akratic failure is a failure of *phantasia*. I argued that the akratic's ignorance consists in a mistaken, non-doxastic representation, which is the source of the akratic's blameworthy desire. This interpretation resolves the conflict between the motivational conflict account and the ignorance account because it envisages the akratic's ignorance as the source of her conflict of desires. I concluded the chapter by arguing that this interpretation can also make sense of the distinction between the enkratic and the akratic, as well as the different kinds of *akrasia* discussed by Aristotle.

In the third chapter, I clarified the suggestion that the akratic's failure is a failure of *phantasia* by discussing Aristotle's theory of desire formation in relation to his account of *phantasia*. I argued that Aristotle presents a cognitivist theory of desire formation, according to which desires can be based either on beliefs or on *phantasiai*. I emphasized that the difference between *phantasiai* and beliefs is that the former, as opposed to the latter, do not require reflective assent and are not responsive to rational persuasion. I then analyzed the consequences of this interpretation for Aristotle's tripartite theory of desires. In conclusion, I argued that, in Aristotle's theory of desire formation, the difference between rational and irrational desires has evaluative, and not descriptive significance. The discussion of Aristotle's cognitivism helped me clarify the reason why *akrasia* with respect to *thumos* is less blameworthy than *akrasia* with respect to bodily desires.

In the fourth chapter, I considered Aristotle's syllogistic account of *akrasia*. I first suggested that Aristotle's theory of the practical syllogism is coherent in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *De Motu Animalium* and in *De Anima*. Second, I argued that Aristotle's view that the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action is coherent with his analysis of choice and practical deliberation. On the basis of this analysis of Aristotle's practical syllogism, I provided an interpretation of the syllogistic account of *akrasia* in relation to the suggestion that the failure of the akratic is a

failure of *phantasia*. I then argued that, if this analysis is correct, it can clarify further the difference between the virtuous, the enkratic, the akratic and the vicious in Aristotle's Ethics. In conclusion, I noted that my view leaves open the question whether Aristotle's akratic can be cured by means of moral habituation.

Bibliography

Abbreviations used:

DA: *De Anima*

MA: *De Motu Animalium*

EE: *Eudemian Ethics*

NE: *Nicomachean Ethics*

Rhet: *Rhetoric*

Met: *Metaphysics*

De Ins: *De Insomniis*

Probl: *Problemata*

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