

Just Shy of Virtue

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Abstract

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle presents four categories regarding character: vice, incontinence, continence and virtue. The question I will raise is whether these categories exhaust the possibilities of the psychological states that agents can find themselves in with regard to morality. Are we able to conceive of an agent who cannot be said to fall under any of the categories that Aristotle has presented, and is this state a plausible phenomenon? If such a scenario is not only conceivable, but highly plausible, then it would seem that Aristotle's account is unsatisfactory to the extent that he fails to account for this state in his ethical theory. The aim of this thesis is to raise a particular case of moral conversion where it will be argued that the agent depicted in the scenario fails to fall under the categories of character that Aristotle sets out. This agent, I will argue, possesses a set of psychological features that does not match the features that make up the other categories, and, to this extent, Aristotle's account is inadequate. The agent I describe is someone who does not experience the motivational conflict that characterises the continent agent, despite possessing some vicious appetites that have been weakened by means of reason. He is capable of taking the proper pleasure in the fineness of his act even though he has these residual appetites that are vicious. Consequently, this agent cannot be said to be either continent or virtuous, and falls under a distinct category that I will name *good-willed*. Even though Aristotle does not explicitly endorse this further category, it will be argued that the case I will raise (and what is to be said about it) is not inconsistent with Aristotle's account as a whole, and may even be suggested by it.

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Introduction

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle presents four categories regarding character: vice, incontinence, continence and virtue. He articulates the ways in which the agents that can be characterised in these different ways are psychologically distinct from each other, though what precisely these distinctions consist in is a matter of much debate. The question I wish to raise is whether these categories exhaust the possibilities of the psychological states that agents can find themselves in, morally speaking. That is, are we able to conceive of an agent who cannot be said to fall under any of the categories that Aristotle has presented, and is this state a plausible phenomenon? If such a scenario is not only conceivable, but highly plausible, then it would seem that Aristotle's account is unsatisfactory to the extent that he fails to include this category in his ethical theory. The aim of this thesis is to raise a particular case of moral conversion where it will be argued that the agent depicted in the scenario fails to fall under the categories regarding character that Aristotle sets out. This agent, I will argue, possesses a set of psychological features that does not match the features that make up the other categories. To this extent, Aristotle's account is inadequate. However, it will also be argued that the case I will raise, and what is to be said about it, is not inconsistent with Aristotle's ethical account as a whole, and may even be suggested by it.

Let me begin by setting out the case that seems problematic for Aristotle's account. The agent I am considering, whom we shall name Evander, is a middle-aged man living in ancient Greece during Aristotle's time at the Lyceum. He has reached maturity and has fully developed his capacity to reason. He hasn't lived a sheltered life, but has had ample experience of the world which has served to shape and develop his sensibilities and awareness of a myriad different contexts. In terms of his character he is generally considered to be a good citizen. He follows the law and generally treats those that he comes into contact with fairly and with respect. When entering transactions with others he does not attempt to deceive them and does not take more than he deserves. At this point in his life, however, his beliefs are in accordance with the customs of the time, and this includes the convention according to which it is just to take slaves as part of the conquests of war. He is wealthy enough to keep slaves and (like others of his station) has become accustomed to a certain quality of life that the possession of slaves affords.

Evander is interested in the opinions and perspectives of others and decides to attend one of Aristotle's lecturers at the Lyceum. As it happens, Aristotle presents his arguments against the belief that it is just to enslave those who are not slaves by nature through the conquests of war. After listening carefully to Aristotle's reasoning, Evander finds himself convinced by these arguments and walks away from the lecture feeling shocked and ashamed at what he had believed for so long. He returns to his household to release those that he now understands he has enslaved unjustly, despite the fact that this involves sacrificing a certain sort of lifestyle that he has grown accustomed to. He is committed to following his reason even though, in so doing, certain pleasures must be forfeited because he will have fewer slaves, and from that moment on he behaves in accordance with his newly acquired understanding of the matter. Here I am pursuing the intuition that it seems, not only possible, but highly likely that certain agents in particular psychological states are open to undergoing moral conversion quite rapidly as a result of being exposed to a train of reasoning that they find convincing. If we deem such a scenario plausible, then it remains to be seen precisely what psychological state Evander would be left with after Aristotle's lecture, and whether Aristotle has allowed for this possibility in his ethical theory.

In order to assess the case that I have raised, Aristotle's categories (and what it is that distinguishes them from each other) will need to be discussed. After setting out the characteristics of the vicious, incontinent, continent and virtuous agent in this section, I will proceed to break down the relevant elements of Evander's psychological state. In Chapter 1, I will assess the reasoning according to which Evander can be said to hold the belief that he does prior to Aristotle's lecture as discussed in the *Politics*. Evander initially has the false belief that it is just to enslave all those who have been taken in war. Aristotle articulates the reasoning behind this belief and then proceeds to refute such reasoning. He claims that it is unjust to enslave those who are not slaves by nature, and it is by means of his arguments in favour of this position (as well as his objections to Evander's original position) that Evander comes to be persuaded. Evander is convinced of his error in judgement by Aristotle's reasoning and goes on to adopt a true belief. For the sake of argument I will assume that Aristotle's arguments regarding slavery are correct.

Given Aristotle's claim that one's moral disposition consists in one's beliefs *and* emotions (to be discussed more carefully below), it is clear that Evander's psychological

state will also involve certain desires or motivational states that accompany his false belief. As someone who believed it just to enslave those taken as part of the conquests of war, Evander will have acted from particular kinds of motives. Thus in order to bring to light what his initial psychological state is we need to consider the motives operative in cases of injustice. In Chapter 1, I will set out Aristotle's account of justice and what he takes to be the specific desires that are present in the unjust person. I will argue that Evander can be said to act from the motive of *pleonexia* (a desire for gain) which, according to Aristotle, is the distinctive motive involved in an unjust disposition.

Based on an understanding of the particulars of the case as set out in Chapter 1, I will proceed, in Chapter 2, to unpack the psychological shift that takes place. I will carefully articulate, not only the belief, but also the particular appetites that are operative in the vicious state and are expressive of a desire for gain, after which I will consider how we are to characterise Evander's psychological state once he has been exposed to Aristotle's arguments. I will argue that sketching his psychological profile in terms of the features that characterise the continent agent will make it clear that Evander does not meet these criteria once his belief has changed. This will lead me to posit another agent that I will call *good-willed*. The good-willed agent is someone who does not experience the motivational conflict that the continent agent experiences, for (in spite of the presence of bad appetites) the good-willed agent is able to take the proper pleasure in the fineness of their act. Their ability to recognise their error in judgement, and their sensitivity to the virtues, arises from the presence of other good appetites as well as a developed capacity to reason. Evander is set within a particular kind of context which reveals his receptivity to reason, and this calls into question his status as a continent agent. After having presented the possibility of an intermediate state between continence and virtue I will proceed to present more substantive arguments in favour of this distinctive category in Chapter 3.

In the final chapter I will discuss the placement of the good-willed agent amongst Aristotle's categories, and the sense in which the good-willed agent is to be distinguished from the continent as well as the virtuous agent. I will begin by highlighting the influential role that reason plays in our moral development by discussing Cooper and Grönroos' accounts of how it is that the spirited desires are able to 'listen' to reason, and thus be shaped by reason's influence. This discussion will support my suggestion that reason is capable of affecting, and weakening, the appetites

that Evander has in the vicious state such that he does not experience the motivational conflict that characterises the continent agent. The further concern, and possible objection, that I need to address is whether the good-willed agent can clearly be distinguished from both the continent and the virtuous agent.

In placing the good-willed agent, I turn to McDowell's discussion of how the continent, and the incontinent agent, are to be contrasted with the virtuous agent. This, as well as Coope's discussion of the continent agent, will bring to light the sense in which the good-willed agent's psychological state is distinctive. I will argue that, despite the presence of vicious appetites that are weak, Evander is still capable of not only acting rightly but of experiencing the noble pleasure that comes from possessing a particular moral outlook. What sets the good-willed agent apart from the continent agent is the fact that the bad appetites of the good-willed agent are weak such that no motivational conflict arises, and this allows the good-willed agent to see and experience what the virtuous agent does. That is, the good-willed agent is practically wise, which means that (contrary to Aristotle's claims) one can be practically wise without being fully virtuous. And what sets the good-willed agent apart from the virtuous agent is that he still possesses residual appetites that are vicious but which have been weakened by reason.

My claim is that the presence of these residual appetites does not prevent the good-willed agent from being practically wise. Despite Aristotle's assertion that practical wisdom requires full virtue, I will argue that given his account as a whole, Aristotle has no principled reason for ruling out the possibility that one can be practically wise despite the presence of a few bad appetites. If Coope's discussion of the continent agent is convincing in the way that I take it to be, then it seems that the possibility of the good-willed agent flows from Aristotle's ethical theory, and his account is vindicated to the extent that his ethical framework accommodates this phenomenon.

In this section I will lay the groundwork for the discussion to come by discussing (1) what a moral disposition consists in according to Aristotle, (2) what Aristotle's moral categories are, and (3) how these may be distinguished from each other.

The Moral Categories

Let us begin by articulating the nature of a moral disposition according to Aristotle. This

comes out most clearly in his discussion of the state of excellence. Aristotle claims that for someone to be a virtuous agent it is not enough that the person does that which a virtuous person would do, and it is not even enough that they do it for the right reasons:

Moreover, in any case, what is true of crafts is not true of virtues. For the products of a craft determine by their own qualities whether they have been produced well; and so it suffices that they have the right qualities when they have been produced. But for actions in accord with the virtues to be done temperately or justly it does not suffice that they themselves have the right qualities. Rather, the agent must also be in the right state when he does them. First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state. (NE 1105a27-35)

For Aristotle, excellence of character is a particular sort of disposition, and being a virtuous agent is to have one's actions issue from a state which is stable:

But we must not restrict ourselves to saying that it [excellence] is a disposition; we must also say what sort of disposition it is...Excellence has to do with affections and actions, things in which excess, and deficiency go astray, while what is intermediate is praised and gets it right – features, both, of excellence. Excellence, then, is a disposition issuing in decisions, depending on intermediacy of the kind relative to us, this being determined by rational prescription and in the way in which the wise person would determine it. (NE 1106b25)

What is essentially involved in excellence, therefore, is a disposition which consists not only of beliefs but feelings as well. Emotions become central to Aristotle's understanding of the character virtues. He maintains that one's emotions, which essentially involve pleasure and pain, exhibit one's character just as much as one's behaviour does. The actions of a virtuous person involve the appropriate emotions so that

[t]he pleasure or pain that supervenes on what people do should be treated as a sign of their dispositions; for someone who holds back from bodily pleasure and does so cheerfully is a moderate person, while someone who is upset at doing so is self-indulgent, and someone who withstands frightening things and does so cheerfully, or anyway without distress, is a courageous person, while someone who is distressed at them is cowardly. For excellence of character has to do with pleasures and pains; it is because of pleasure that we do bad things, and because of pain that we hold back from doing fine things. (NE 1104b5)

A moral disposition is a nexus of feelings, beliefs, as well as *phantasiai* (or 'appearances' which are essentially involved in emotions), and this set of cognitive

states, that together make up excellence, are such as to be motivational.

With this understanding of what a moral disposition consists in we are in a position to sketch the various categories of character that Aristotle presents. Based on the remarks above we see that one central feature of the virtuous agent is that his reason and desires are in harmony, for the virtuous person does what reason demands without pain. The moderate person holds back from bodily pleasure quite cheerfully, for they are able to perceive the fineness of their action which they take pleasure in. Aristotle distinguishes between the rational and the non-rational part of the soul, where the non-rational part, while not being capable of reasoning, is able to 'listen' to reason:

Another nature in the soul would seem to be non-rational, though in a way it shares in reason. For in the continent and the incontinent person we praise their reason, that it is to say, the [part] of the soul that has reason, because it exhorts them correctly and toward 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...At any rate, in the continent person it [i.e. the non-rational part] obeys reason; and in the temperate and brave person it presumably listens still better to reason, since there it agrees with reason in everything...The non-rational [part], then, as well [as the whole soul] apparently has two parts. For while the plantlike [part] shares in reason not at all, the [part] with appetites and in general desires shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it. (*NE* 1102b14-32)

Thus the virtuous agent's desires (i.e. appetites and feelings) have come to fully obey reason, and have been moulded such as to be in harmony with reason. In contrast (as we see above) the continent and the incontinent agent fail to experience such harmony, for the non-rational aspect of their souls still struggles with reason. They know what it is that reason demands, but their desires have not yet fallen into step with reason. The incontinent agent succumbs to his desires and acts in a way that he deems wrong, while the continent person is strong enough to overcome his desires and follow reason even though this is done with pain. The vicious agent, on the other hand, is even worse off than the continent and the incontinent agent because not even the rational part of his soul gets things right. That is, he acts based purely on his feelings which have not been shaped or informed by reason, and he has no knowledge of what he ought to do, for he is only moved by his desires. So while the continent and the incontinent agent at least reason correctly, the vicious agent possesses the wrong conception of the end (*NE*

1110b31-3, 1114a31-b3).¹ This is a somewhat skeletal depiction of the psychological distinctions that can be drawn between the different categories, so let me set out Aristotle's remarks in more detail in order to flesh out our understanding of each character type.

Aristotle draws a distinction between committing unjust acts and being unjust, where acting unjustly is to act from passion which one later regrets, whereas the vice of injustice involves acts of injustice on a decision (*NE* 1135b20-26). Irwin aims to get clear on the precise psychological state of the vicious agent and considers the respects in which the vicious agent is to be distinguished from the incontinent, as well as the virtuous, agent. His discussion is instructive in terms of exposing the respects in which the internal structure of the psychology of these agents may be distinguished from each other. The incontinent agent is someone who has reached a decision about what he ought to do in a given situation by means of reason, but who also has appetites that oppose reason. This conflict is one which the agent cannot overcome. Aristotle makes the distinction between the vicious and incontinent agent more perspicuous with the following passage (*NE* 1151a5-7, 1152a5-8):

...the simply incontinent person is not incontinent about everything but he has the same range as the intemperate person. Nor is he incontinent simply by being inclined toward these things – that would make incontinence the same as intemperance. Rather, he is incontinent by being inclined toward them in this way. For the intemperate person acts on decision when he is led on, since he thinks it is right in every case to pursue the pleasant thing at hand; the incontinent person, however, thinks it is wrong to pursue this pleasant thing, yet still pursues it. (*NE* 1146b19-24)

The vicious person, therefore, takes himself to be acting rightly, whereas the incontinent person knows that what he is doing is wrong, but lacks the strength to turn away from those appetites that are not in harmony with reason. Since the vicious person acts on decision, he can be distinguished from the incontinent agent by means of engaging the rational part of his soul. For decision rests on *wish* which is a desire of the rational part of the soul (*NE* 1113b4-6). Furthermore, it is the fact that the vicious agent takes himself to be acting rightly which explains why he does not experience the incontinent person's regret and change of mind (*NE* 1150a19-23, 1150b30-40). In acting against his decision the incontinent agent activates a psychological disturbance as he is aware that

1 Irwin, T. 2001

he is acting wrongly, while the vicious agent acts in accordance with his decision. To this extent the vicious agent seems to be in a similar state to that of the virtuous agent regarding the internal structure of his psychology. For both agents follow their reason and have appetites that are in line with what their reasoning is telling them. The vicious person is, of course, wrong in thinking that he is doing the right thing because his conception of what is right is flawed as a result of having acted out of ignorance.

Irwin raises the point that this similarity between the vicious and the virtuous agent is an undesirable result for Aristotle, given his account as a whole. For it seems that what distinguishes virtue from the other character types is that the agent acts correctly and in accordance with reason. In the virtuous person the rational and non-rational parts agree and the rational part is in control. But it appears that the same can be said of the vicious agent. The vicious person also has reason, and the rational part is in control of the non-rational part as he takes himself to be acting rightly based on decision. How, then, are we to distinguish the vicious person from the virtuous person in terms of the internal structure of their psychology? Irwin considers two alternatives: “(1) In each of them, the rational part functions equally well, but they differ because it begins from different ends, and so its deliberation reaches different conclusions. The difference between the virtuous and the vicious person results from a difference in their non-rational desires and aims. (2) The rational part functions differently, because the virtuous person deliberates correctly and the vicious person goes wrong in deliberation. Each of them asks the same questions and answers them by rational deliberation; but their answers are different.”²

Irwin considers the problems with these two alternatives. Aristotle also holds that vice involves the domination of the non-rational appetite over rational desire. We are told that vicious people *do* in fact experience an internal disturbance:

...they [vicious people] are at odds with themselves, and have an appetite for one thing and a wish for another, as incontinent people do. For they do not choose things that seem to be good for them, but instead choose pleasant things that are actually harmful...his soul is in conflict, and because he is vicious one part is distressed at being restrained, and another is pleased [by the intended action]; and so each part pulls in a different direction, as though they were tearing him apart. Even if he cannot be distressed and pleased at the same time, still he is soon distressed because he was pleased, and wishes these things had not become pleasant to him; for base

2 Irwin, T. 2001: 79

people are full of regret. (*NE* 1166b7-26)

The vicious person can thus be seen to follow his passions alone, and looks to satisfy the non-rational part of his soul (*NE* 1168b19-21, 1169a3-6). The virtuous person, in contrast, is the only one who does not experience some sort of conflict in his psyche, and is mostly free of regret (*NE* 1166a27-9, 1166b22-5). However, this depiction of the vicious person does not seem consistent with the claim that he acts on decision. But then again, if the rational part *is* in control then it is difficult to see how a psychological conflict would arise. Irwin suggests that the coherency of Aristotle's position can only be preserved if we take him to be making the claim that the vicious person is controlled in one way by the rational part, in virtue of acting on his decision, and at the same time is controlled in another way by the non-rational part because he follows his passions. Yet, how are we to understand the control of the non-rational part?³

The vicious person has a particular conception of happiness which he acts on and is expressive of his rational wish. What distinguishes him from the virtuous agent is how he has come by this conception, and how it is expressed in his decision. As we see above, the virtuous person chooses a particular action for its own sake. Acting as one ought to act involves acting 'for the sake of the fine' (*NE* 1120a23-9, 1121a1-4). And to regard an action as fine is to recognize that they are distinctively *actions* as opposed to *productions*. "Production has its end outside it, but in action 'acting well itself is [the] end (*NE* 1140a6-7)"⁴. Irwin highlights the nature of the attitude possessed by the virtuous agent: it is not that the virtuous agent has the explicit thought that his action is fine or virtuous, but rather that he has in mind the properties that make the action fine. These are taken as sufficient reason for choosing the action.⁵

In contrast, the vicious person fails to choose an action because it is fine. The properties that make the action fine, or make the action base, are not in his mind when he acts. The action is appealing insofar as it furthers the vicious person's ends, and this is why he chooses them. Aristotle explicitly states that only the virtuous person cares about the fine (*NE* 1169a2-6), and following this he makes it clear that 'desiring the fine' means that what the virtuous person desires is that which is *in fact* fine (*NE* 1169a6-18). According to Irwin, the vicious person, on the other hand, desires what seems

3 Irwin, T. 2001: 80

4 Irwin, T. 2001: 81

5 Irwin, T. 2001: 82

advantageous (*NE* 1169a2-6). 'Here, then, the virtuous decision rests on a correct conception of the fine, whereas the vicious decision rests on an incorrect conception of advantage.'⁶

The vicious person only considers that which is advantageous for he takes his inclinations to be beyond rational criticism. The virtuous person, on the other hand, is concerned with discovering the fine. Irwin asserts that the contrast between passion and reason is to be understood in terms of those who form an end on the basis of inclination, on the one hand, and those who form and end on the basis of judgement about its value, on the other.⁷ This, Irwin thinks, is not to say that the vicious agent cannot recognise fine actions but rather that he does not adopt the virtuous person's attitude towards such actions: he does not decide on actions because they are fine. More remains to be said about the precise state of the vicious agent, but for our present purposes we have isolated the significant features that make up his psychological state and how these features differ from those of the other character types. The category which I have barely touched on is that of continence, and for the discussion that follows an understanding of this character type is crucial.

The state of continence receives minimal attention in the literature in comparison to the other categories. We are told that the continent, or self-controlled, person is someone who has strong appetites that are bad (*NE* 1146a9-16). Moreover, this person is also someone who is pained by acting against their appetites (*EE* II.8, 1224a33-6, b16-19), and who (even though they never will) *would* enjoy acting in accordance with their appetites (*NE* 1151b24-1152a3). For Aristotle, conflict here is characterised by the idea that one is *pained* by acting in accordance with reason because one is acting against one's appetites. Coope suggests further that for the continent person the pleasure of acting on her appetite would not be diminished by the shame of not acting in accordance with reason. This is how strong her appetites are.⁸

The sort of conflict at issue, therefore, is not merely a logical inconsistency but rather a *felt* motivational conflict. That is, we can distinguish between a conflict that consists in a kind of incompatibility located in the agent that gives rise to resistance (where this

6 Irwin, T. 2001: 83

7 Irwin, T. 2001: 86

8 Coope, U. 2012: 153

conflict arises at the level of propositional content), and something more forceful that results in an affective response. We can see that when adopting a new belief there may be certain residual feelings that remain as a result of the previously held belief. The agent previously held certain beliefs and presumably also had certain feelings at this time, where these beliefs either causally explain the feeling, or express the feeling by being a component of the emotion. Having adopted the new belief might be said to give rise to a logical inconsistency in the sense that the new proposition can't be true if some other proposition that explains or expresses the feeling is true, as the content of this other belief (and the feelings that flow from it) are incompatible with the new belief. This is not the sort of conflict that characterises the continent agent, for the continent person finds it painful to act in accordance with reason, and they are clearly torn between reason and desire even though they will act in accordance with reason (*NE* 1102b14-32). Their desires are characterised as strong in virtue of the fact that they would enjoy acting on the desire, where the pleasure of so acting would not be marred by the shameful of the act that conflicts with what reason demands. It is the intensity of the desires that constitutes a felt motivational conflict within the agent.

Based on Aristotle's remarks regarding the continent agent, it can be seen that the continent agent fails to take the proper pleasure in acting virtuously. Aristotle states at *EE* 1124b15-28 that for the continent person their pain in acting against appetite is accompanied by pleasure:

Further, there is both pleasure and pain in both; for the continent feels pain now in acting against his appetite, but has the pleasure of hope, i.e. that he will be presently benefited because he is in health; while the incontinent is pleased at getting through incontinency what he desires, but has a pain of expectation, thinking that he is doing ill.

The pleasure that the continent agent experiences does not come from contemplating the fineness of the act to be performed (and in so acting), but rather from the anticipation of some future benefit that will result from the action.⁹ The continent agent does not take the proper pleasure in the fineness of their act in the way that the virtuous agent does.

These preliminary characterisations of the various categories can be set out as follows:

⁹ Coope, U. 2012: 155

Vice	Incontinence	Continence	Virtue
Does not reason correctly.	Reasons correctly.	Reasons correctly.	Reasons correctly.
Has bad appetites that are strong.	Has bad appetites that are strong.	Has bad appetites that are strong.	Has good appetites.
Acts wrongly on decision.	Acts wrongly, but not on decision.	Acts rightly on decision.	Acts rightly on decision.
Takes himself to be acting rightly.	Takes himself to be acting wrongly.	Takes himself to be acting rightly.	Takes himself to be acting rightly.
His decision rests on an incorrect conception of what is advantageous.		He is pained by acting in accordance with reason.	His decision rests on a correct conception of the fine.
		Takes pleasure in the hope of being benefited.	Takes pleasure in the fineness of his act.

With this framework as our starting point, we are finally in a position to start considering the particular aspects of the case that I have raised in order to assess whether it can be accommodated by Aristotle's categories. I begin by filling out Evander's psychological state prior to attending Aristotle's lecture, which will require a discussion of slavery and particular justice.

Chapter 1

Slavery and Particular Justice

The concern of this chapter will be twofold. Given the content of the example under consideration I will begin by clearly setting out Aristotle's argument regarding slavery as a means of explicitly articulating the beliefs that Evander initially has, as well as the beliefs that he acquires after attending Aristotle's lecture. This discussion will allow us to characterise the content of Evander's beliefs at each point of his transition, thus facilitating an understanding of the moral category he falls under at each stage, i.e. prior to and following Aristotle's lecture. For the sake of argument I will be assuming that Aristotle's views regarding slavery are correct. As discussed in the introduction, for Aristotle, one's moral state is a particular sort of disposition that consists, not merely in the beliefs that one holds, but also in the desires that one has. Consequently, in assessing Evander's state before the lecture, we must also achieve an understanding of the particular appetites that motivate him *qua* unjust. To reach an understanding of what his desires might be we need to turn to Aristotle's discussion of the virtue of justice and, more specifically in this case, particular justice.

The second concern of this chapter, therefore, will be to assess the virtue of particular justice in order to reach an understanding of the motivational state that Evander is in as the unjust man. Here I am specifically concerned with particular justice as a settled disposition that reveals the character of the person, rather than mere acts of justice that are not indicative of character in this way. An analysis of particular justice will involve distinguishing this virtue from what Aristotle calls *general justice*, as well as investigating the particular motives that make up the state in question. The specific motive that Aristotle seems to think is indicative of, and essential to, injustice is that of *pleonexia*. Our task is to achieve an understanding of this motive. More specifically, can it be said to feature as the motivational force in the case under consideration? I will consider the interpretations of both Curzer and Young, and will defend Young's reading of *pleonexia*. Throughout the course of the discussion it will become evident that Evander is functioning based on a desire for gain, though the details of his desires will be more fully developed in Chapter 2. I begin with a discussion of Evander's beliefs.

Slavery

Aristotle considers the matter of slavery in the *Politics*. Not only was this a lawful practice that was common in ancient Greece, but the relation between the master and the slave characterises a particular instance of rule that Aristotle takes to be of a distinctive kind, as contrasted with the relation between a man and a woman, as well as a king and his subjects (*Pol.* 1259a38-43). Aristotle takes there to be more than one form of rule, and he argues that the rule of a master differs from that of political rule in that the former is exercised as a monarchy over natural slaves, while the latter is the government of those who are naturally free and equal (*Pol.* 1255b16-21). The rule of the master is not a matter of science, or the mastering of a particular sort of skill, in the way that political rule is (*Pol.* 1255b21-23). The introduction of the topic of slavery brings with it a whole host of opinions as to whether this practice can be considered just or not, which Aristotle (in keeping with his usual method) presents and considers. It is these opinions that Aristotle unpacks and assesses in arguing for his own position concerning slavery.

The majority of Greeks believed that slavery was just, and according to custom it was considered permissible to enslave those taken by means of the conquests of war. Aristotle considers their reasons for holding this opinion, and the argument can be reconstructed as follows:

1. Superior power is only found where there is superior excellence of some kind.
2. So, power seems to imply excellence.
3. Those taken as slaves as part of the conquests of war are taken as a result of superior strength on the part of the victors.
4. Therefore, those who have taken slaves as part of the conquests of war are in some sense superior in excellence.
5. “The superior in excellence ought to rule, or be master”. (*Pol.* 1255a21-22)
6. Thus, those taken as part of the conquests of war may be enslaved. (*Pol.* 1255a12-22)

There is clearly a particular understanding of justice at work here. Rather than identifying justice with benevolence, justice is identified with the idea that the superior, this being the strong, must rule those who are inferior or weak (*Pol.* 1255a18-20). This is one conception of justice that many Greeks accepted. There are also those who

justified slavery as a matter of convention and, while possibly not taking themselves to be subscribing to the train of thought spelled out above, considered themselves to be following a principle of justice that consists in law, or the convention that slavery in war is justified, for this 'convention is a sort of justice' (*Pol.* 1255a22-225). This conventionalism is clearly articulated at 1255a4-8:

For the words slavery and slave are used in two senses. There is a slave or slavery by convention as well as by nature. The convention is a sort of agreement – the convention by which whatever is taken in war is supposed to belong to the victors.

Aristotle scrutinises this conventionalism and reaches the conclusion that the position in fact ultimately rests on the thinking that has been articulated in the argument above: those superior in virtue should rule and be masters for this is a natural thing (*Pol.* 1255a29-32; 1255b1-4). This in turn reveals that a particular conception of justice is operative in the thinking of those who take slavery to be justified on these grounds, namely, that justice simply *is* the principle that the stronger should rule (*Gorgias* 483D). The rule of force becomes just by definition.¹⁰

Aristotle not only finds this understanding of justice problematic but also aims to reveal the way in which proponents of this position are not themselves committed to it:

Broadly speaking, the issue is this: some people take hold, as they would like to think, of a principle of justice of sorts (for *nomos* is something just), and put forward the proposition that enslavement through war is just [sc. because conventional or legal]. But at the same time they deny it. For it is quite possible that the reason for going to war was unjust, and nobody would say that someone who is unworthy of servile status is a slave. Otherwise we should find among slaves and descendants of slaves men of the noblest birth, should any of them be captured and sold: that is why they are not prepared to call them slaves, but only non-Greeks. But when they say that, they are feeling their way towards precisely the principle of natural slavery which we introduced at the beginning of the discussion. For it has to be admitted that there are some who are slaves everywhere, others nowhere. (*Pol.* 1255a22-32)

One concern with this position, then, is the fact that the cause of the war can be considered unjust. That is, it is plausible to suppose that even though the war may be won, and in so doing the victor claim his right to rule (for his position as the master has been justly acquired according to the custom), that the events giving rise to the war can separately be considered to be unjust. Consider the possibility that the victors act as the

10 Scholfield, M. 1999: 118

aggressors under the pretext that they are under threat, and are simply protecting their own people, while their true goal is to subjugate those they attack in order to acquire the resources that their land can offer them. Thus the motive and action of the victor is such as to prove him to be lacking in excellence despite the fact that he manages to conquer by means of force. This illustrates that those who are superior in strength are not necessarily excellent, for we can conceive of motives that we would consider unjust but which do not prevent the victor from possessing superior force and conquering those they attack. As Schofield comments: '...whatever we think of the general idea that laws are just simply inasmuch as they are laws, the legal arrangements which are brought about by an unjust war cannot themselves be just.'¹¹

The second concern is that no one would claim that someone who is unworthy of being a slave ought to be enslaved. Yet, according to the reasoning above, men of highest rank would be slaves, and the children of slaves, if they or their parents chanced to have been taken captive and sold. Based on this it can be seen that men take those who are noble to either be so absolutely or relatively (*Pol.* 1255a27-35). Their opinion seems to be that noble Athenians are noble absolutely, and are never to be enslaved, even if they happen to be the losers in a war. But noble non-Athenians, or foreigners, are only noble relative to the place that they are from, and so may be enslaved if they happen to be the losers in a war. Once this opinion is clearly drawn from the those who maintain the custom of slavery, it becomes apparent that, in the case of nobility, they clearly distinguish between those who, in virtue of their natures as Athenian noblemen, are never worthy of being slaves (and are superior in some sense), while others who in virtue of *their* natures as non-Athenian nobleman, are worthy of being slaves if they happen to be the losers in war.

Based on the opponent's clearly worked out view regarding the nobility, Aristotle illustrates the fact that the two views according to which (1) the strong enslaving the weak is just, and (2) some are noble absolutely while others are noble relatively, cannot be jointly held in the case of Athenians. That is, the opponent claims to condone slavery in virtue of a convention, but upon closer scrutiny it seems that they in fact endorse the idea that there are those who, in virtue of their natures, are not suited to being slaves as they are noble absolutely. Consequently, they are not subject to the convention of

11 Schofield, M. 1999:120

slavery according to which the strong enslaving the weak is just. Athenians are superior and ought to rule in virtue of qualifying as noble in the absolute sense. From this, Aristotle draws a basis for his own position regarding natural slavery: just as there is something about the nature of a noble Athenian that makes him noble absolutely (and ill-disposed to being a slave), so there can be said to be something about the very nature of someone who *is* disposed to being a slave. This characteristic would not depend on some convention nor on being born in a particular place. Rather, it would depend on a more principled reason that Aristotle aims to reveal:

Hence we see what is the nature and office of a slave; he who is by nature not his own but another's man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another's man who, being a slave, is also a possession. And a possession may be defined as an instrument of action, separable from the possessor. (*Pol.* 1254A14-18)

Aristotle argues that the fact that some are natural slaves can be seen due to the distinction between the ruler and the subject in all things. Whenever there is a composite whole made up of parts, such as in the case of living creatures, there will be a superior and inferior component. If we consider the soul we see that the rational aspect is the ruler, while the appetitive aspect is the subject:

At all events we may firstly observe in living creatures both a despotical and a constitutional rule; for the soul rules the body with a despotical rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful... (*Pol.* 1254b2-15)

Those who are not able to reason for themselves are to be considered natural slaves, and the proper natural slave is one who has a soul that lacks enough rationality such that he can deliberate and act from choice (*Pol.* 1260a12), but who has a strong body in order to be useful to those who would deliberate on his behalf (*Pol.* 1254b23-31):

Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. For he who can be, and therefore is, another's, and he who participates in reason enough to apprehend, but not to have, is a slave by nature. (*Pol.* 1254b16-23)

Natural slaves are accorded reason only in virtue of being able to follow deliberative

reasoning in others (*Pol.* 1260b5-6), but they cannot deliberate themselves.¹² It is beneficial both to the natural slave and the master (or the free man) that the natural slave is ruled (*Pol.* 1254A21, 1255a). For the master is relieved of activities that would distract him from higher intellectual pursuits, while the slave is directed by the master such as to achieve that which will make his life more worthwhile: some virtue. Aristotle thinks that even though the slave lacks the ability to deliberate, which enables a virtuous life, he can still possess virtue in *some* sense – though precisely what this sense is, is a matter of much debate and an issue that I will not aim to resolve here.¹³ In *The Politics* I.13 he concludes that a slave needs 'little virtue – so much as keeps him from failing in his tasks through intemperance or cowardice' (1260a35-6). 'The slave benefits from slavery, then, because, were he not a slave, he would lead a life of idleness, dissolution, and petty immorality. The supervision of a master (at any rate, a good master) will keep his worst qualities in check.'¹⁴

Based on Aristotle's argument for the enslavement of natural slaves, we are able to identify the content of Evander's beliefs prior to, and after, attending Aristotle's lecture. His initial belief conforms to the custom of the time, in which case he believes that enslaving those that have been conquered by means of war is just. He himself keeps slaves that have been taken as a result of conquering other people in war, whether they are natural slaves or free men, and he takes this practice to be permissible. I will continue to speak of free men in contrast to natural slaves throughout the course of the discussion to come. A free man is someone who is not naturally disposed to being a slave, for this is someone who is fully capable of deliberation. They can also be described as an *unnatural* slave insofar as they have been unjustly enslaved. Here I am assuming that Evander keeps some free men as slaves.

But after attending Aristotle's lecture, Evander comes to see that the practice of this custom is not justified by reason. He accordingly abandons his false belief and adopts

12 How we are to understand the slave's inability for deliberation is a subject of much debate. Kraut, for example, suggests that Aristotle took natural slaves to lack the capacity to acquire advanced intellectual skills, which still left them capable of living on their own and finding means to their quotidian ends. I will not take up this debate here. (See Kraut, R. 2002: 286-301)

13 At *Pol.* 1260a12 Aristotle states: 'For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature. So it must necessarily be supposed to be with the excellences of character also; all should partake of them, but only in such manner and degree as is required by each for the fulfilment of his function...the subjects...require only that measure of excellence which is proper to each of them.' (1260a12-20)

14 Kraut, R. 2002: 297

the true belief, according to Aristotle, that it is unjust to enslave those who are not slaves by nature through the conquests of war. Having specified Evander's abandonment of the belief that it is just to enslave those who have been taken in war, we may go further in terms of filling out his altered views. By taking on board the belief that it is unjust to enslave free men, we see that Evander has adopted particular beliefs about what justice is that are in opposition to his previous conception of justice. He now possesses a view of justice as related to free men whereby he thinks that the free man should rule himself:

The previous remarks are quite enough to show that the rule of a master is not a constitutional rule, and that all the different kinds of rule are not, as some affirm, the same as each other. For there is one rule exercised over subjects who are by nature free, another over subjects who are by nature slaves. The rule of a household is a monarchy, for every house is under one head: whereas constitutional rule is a government of freemen and equals. (*Pol.* 1255b16-21)

The presence of this altered view, which stems from a new conception of justice based on Aristotle's arguments, will also bring with it a set of affective responses to what he encounters in his environment, as well as his reactions to these encounters. For it is not merely that Evander has taken Aristotle's arguments into consideration, but that he is *convinced* by them, and this new conception of justice which has taken root in Evander's psyche will prompt an alteration in his feelings and appetites. Precisely what this alteration consists in will be discussed in detail at a later stage. Our next task is to articulate the appetites that are operative as part of Evander's settled moral disposition in relation to justice prior to Aristotle's lecture.

Particular Justice

Aristotle distinguishes between general justice and particular justice, where general justice is co-extensive with all the other excellences, while particular justice has to do with what is equal. That is, in the case of general justice it is that which is lawful, and the law enjoins us to do many things that the courageous, or moderate, or mild person would do (*NE* V 1129b20-1129b). Then there are actions that we think are unjust, but not because they are cowardly or self-indulgent, and this is to speak of particular justice:

It is evident...that there is another type of injustice, special injustice, apart from injustice as a whole, and that it is synonymous with injustice as a whole, since the

definition is in the same genus. For both have their area of competence in relation to another, but special injustice is concerned with honour or wealth or safety (or whatever single name will include all of these), and aims at the pleasure that results from making a profit, whereas the concern of injustice as a whole is whatever concerns the excellent person. (*NE* V 1130a34-1130b6)

It can be seen that general justice relates to what is right, broadly speaking, insofar it concerns the virtues in relation to the other. For example, the actions of a temperate person can either concern himself alone (where overeating only injures his own well-being), or his actions may affect others (where overeating results in someone else receiving too little food). Aristotle's understanding of general justice in terms of lawfulness amounts to an identity of general justice and virtue of character:

Now the law instructs us to do the actions of a brave person – for instance, not to leave the battle-line, or to flee, or to throw away our weapons; of a temperate person – not to commit adultery or wanton aggression; of a mild person – not to strike or revile another; and similarly requires actions in accord with the other virtues, and prohibits actions in accord with the vices. The correctly established law does this correctly, and the less carefully framed one does this worse. This type of justice, then, is complete virtue, not complete virtue without qualification, but complete virtue in relation to another. (*NE* 1129b20-1129b1)

According to Aristotle, the law demands the sort of conduct that is expressive of the virtues¹⁵, but he acknowledges (as we see above) that laws can also fail to do this if they are ill conceived.¹⁶ Kraut emphasises the fact that we must not simply regard general justice as a matter of being law-abiding, for general justice is more demanding than it may at first appear. We need to keep in mind that at *NE* V.I Aristotle states that whoever is just in the general sense will possess every other ethical virtue as well (1129b25 – 1130a10). And this means that anyone who is just in the general sense is also just in the particular sense, for he will be an equal as well as a lawful person. Aristotle breaks particular justice down into distributive and corrective justice, which means that the lawful person must also be someone who is skilful in distributing goods and resolving disputes. Thus '[a] fully just person...is not merely a follower of rules, but is also a competent maker and adjudicator of the law, and his decisions reflect his understanding

¹⁵ Young, C.M. 2006

¹⁶ Kraut also points out that the Greek term that is translated as 'law' – *nomos* – does not only refer to the enactments of a lawgiver or legislature but also the customs, norms and unwritten rules of a community. 'The noun *nomos* is cognate to the verb *nemein*, one of whose sense is 'to believe'. Whatever conduct a community believes to be fitting – its customary way of doing things – constitutes the *nomoi* (plural of *nomos*) of that community.' (Kraut, R. 2002: 105)

of the great benefits that come from having a stable system of rules and norms.¹⁷ Kraut states that when we call someone who has behaved in a cowardly manner unjust as well, our complaint is not the fact that he suffers from an excess of fear and lack of confidence, but that he shows too little regard for the community's norms and the well-being of its members.¹⁸ General justice requires taking such considerations into account, for particular justice is part of the whole.

Aristotle proceeds to an explanation of particular justice by, firstly, articulating the scope of the goods with which particular justice and injustice are concerned, i.e. external goods or goods of fortune (*NE* V 1129b1-3). A list of external goods related to particular justice is then provided at *NE* 1130b2, which includes honour, wealth, and safety. The first difficulty, then, is reaching an understanding of what it is that distinguishes particular justice from general justice. As we have seen above, particular justice is concerned with equity, and we are also told that a juror must call on the virtue of equity in cases where the law has failed to take contextual considerations into account, given its generality (*Rhet.* 1374A28-33, *NE* 1137b21-2). But Aristotle also thinks that a certain kind of motive is engaged in cases of particular injustice.

We have been provided with a list of the *objects* of desire related to particular justice (this being honour, money and safety), but it is the desire itself that needs to be understood. We begin with a comment by Aristotle that indicates the sort of appetite involved, but which will have to be explored in more detail if we are to reach an understanding of this crucial appetite:

But when someone acts from overreaching, in many cases his action accords with none of these vices – certainly not all of them; but it still accords with some type of wickedness, since we blame him, and [in particular] it accords with injustice (*NE* V.2 1130a20-3).

In the unjust state one *overreaches*, and the idea here seems to be that one desires that which one does not deserve. Other translations of this appetitive state (i.e. *pleonexia*) include *graspingness* or *getting more than one's fair share*. At *NE* V 1130a34-1130b6 above, we are told that the distinctive motive in the case of particular justice is

17 Kraut, R. 2002: 107

18 Kraut, R. 2002: 121

pleonexia, and also that the pleasure that one experiences is that of making a profit.¹⁹ The precise nature of this distinctive desire, as well as the pleasure that it gives rise to, has been a subject of much debate. In order to achieve an understanding of the motive present in the unjust man I will be considering Curzer's view of the nature of *pleonexia*, as well as objections to it, before turning to Young's interpretation.

Curzer develops an interpretation of *pleonexia* according to which the pleasure of excessive gain is one that stands apart from the pleasure one experiences in acquiring the particular goods that one is aiming at: one enjoys *the fact* that one has acquired goods which are undeserved, rather than enjoying the goods that one has acquired. Curzer suggests that excessive gain or profit must not be understood as excessive honour, money or safety, for if this were the case then Aristotle would have failed to distinguish particular justice from general justice. That is, if gain were merely an excessive amount of some good, then the actions so motivated would be unjust in the sense that this person would be overambitious, or mean, or cowardly in the way they treat others. If the pleasure simply consisted in the acquisition of these goods, then one need not appeal to a moral failure that cannot be accounted for by means of the other virtues. But we, and Aristotle, think that there are genuine cases of wrongdoing that cannot be accounted for by appeal to the other virtues, as it seems to be another kind of wrongdoing. Thus Curzer argues that a desire for gain, or *pleonexia*, should be understood as a desire to get more than one deserves instead of a desire for some particular good.²⁰ What appeals to one is acquiring the goods *unfairly* rather than the goods themselves.²¹

Curzer's interpretation serves to make conspicuous the sense in which a distinction is to be drawn between general and particular injustice, but Young finds this reading problematic. He considers Aristotle's example of an instance of particular justice:

Further, if A commits adultery for profit and makes a profit, but B commits adultery because of his appetite, and spends money on it to his own loss, B seems intemperate rather than overreaching, but A seems unjust, not intemperate. Clearly,

¹⁹ Hardie, W.F.R. 1968:187

²⁰ Curzer, H.J. 2012

²¹ Kraut offers a similar interpretation of *pleonexia* where it involves a desire to have more at the expense of others. When the unjust person takes pleasure in his gain, part of what pleases him is profiting at the expense of others. He is glad that they are losing as a result of his gain. (Kraut, R 2002: 136-141)

then, this is because A acts to make a profit. (*NE* 1130a25-30)

Young thinks that the most straightforward way of understanding this example is to say that A seduced the woman because someone paid him to do it, or because he wanted to gain entry into her house to steal something. He states that on Curzer's interpretation, however, we would have to construe profit broadly where getting more physical pleasure than he deserves, or disgracing the woman, or her husband, counts as profit 'though it is unclear how this counts as securing excessive money, honour, or safety – the goods with which justice and injustice are concerned.'²² Young does not find this way of construing the example convincing as it is only done in order to save Curzer's interpretation.

I do not think, however, that Young is accurately capturing Curzer's interpretation here. Curzer first points out that Aristotle states that the sphere of justice is limited to the goods 'involved in good and bad fortune' (*NE* 1129b2-3), and equivalently to what is 'beneficial or harmful' (*NE* 1134a8-9). Aristotle then explicitly articulates a more detailed list of goods at *NE* 1130b2 which includes honour, money and safety. This, Curzer thinks, indicates that Aristotle acknowledges that all sorts of goods may be justly or unjustly distributed, and so we should take him to be providing examples of what can be so distributed, rather than thinking that the list specifies the entire sphere of goods related to particular justice. The sphere of justice is *all* of the goods of fortune. Curzer then appeals to the passage at *NE* 1130a17 where Aristotle states that

[a] sign that there is this type of justice and injustice is this: If someone's activities accord with the other vices – if, for instance, cowardice made him throw away his shield, or irritability made him revile someone, or ungenerosity made him fail to help someone with money – what he does is unjust, but not overreaching.

According to Curzer, Aristotle is distinguishing the person who acts *pleonectically* from the person who runs away from battle due to an excessive desire for safety. This, he thinks, suggests that gain cannot be understood as excessive safety, money, or any other good. If this were so, then actions motivated by gain of honour, money and safety could be accounted for by over-ambition, meanness and cowardice, which would then fall under general rather than particular justice. In the case of *pleonexia*, the pleasure does not come from acquiring the good but from getting what one should not have, where this

²² Young, C.M. 2006:191

desire (and the pleasure of fulfilling it) is distinct from the desire and pleasure of acquiring goods.

Thus Curzer's reading of Aristotle's example would surely be that the man who commits adultery for gain is acting out of a motive to get something (i.e. sexual pleasure from the woman), where he is not entitled to having this pleasure. He wants to have sex with the woman precisely *because* she is married and he has no right to her. He is taking what he does not deserve. On this reading Curzer does not need to specify how this desire specifically relates to safety, wealth or honour given his initial point that justice is concerned with *all* the goods of fortune, or what is beneficial or harmful. Young's criticism is out of place given Curzer's position.²³

Young raises another objection to Curzer's interpretation by arguing that it is not clear that the states of mind under discussion can in fact be seen as unjust. Rawls states that unjust people and evil people are both prepared to do wrong or unjust things.²⁴ What distinguishes them is the fact that unjust people want more than the fair share of goods that they are entitled to, while evil people want this in addition to displaying superiority over others and humiliating them. Young thinks that the state of mind that Curzer describes is much closer to that of Rawls's evil man than that of his unjust man. But this is only so based on Young's understanding of Curzer's position. I have aimed to indicate, however, that Young has failed to accurately capture Curzer's interpretation, and given my understanding of Curzer's argument, it would seem that the state of mind he describes *does* capture Rawls's unjust man.²⁵ Why think that the adulterer's aim is to demonstrate superiority or to humiliate the woman's husband? We are told that the man commits adultery for profit, and as long as we can specify the nature of this gain we need not add to the example by introducing further desires. Curzer accounts for what the nature of this gain could possibly be (i.e. having sexual relations that the man is not entitled to), and this need not include a desire to demonstrate superiority or to humiliate someone else.

In light of these objections, Young goes on to present his own view, and states that

23 His criticism would be convincing if he gave us reason to think that particular justice only relates to honour, money and safety.

24 Rawls, J. 1999: 385-6

25 Also, Young gives us no reason to accept Rawls' distinction between the unjust and the evil man to begin with, which weakens the criticism.

[t]he difference between just people and unjust people will be that just people desire external goods only when their appropriate pursuit is legitimate, while unjust people continue to desire such goods even when their pursuit is illegitimate. So understood, Aristotelian greed is not to be identified simply with some form, simple or complex, of the desire for excessive gain. It consists, rather, in the absence of a certain restraint on the desire for gain. A just person does not want gain when it involves taking what belongs to another. An unjust person is not similarly restrained.²⁶

Curzer understands gain to be 'more than one deserves', in which case the desire in question rests on the notion that one is not entitled to that which one acquires, and this is the source of one's pleasure. The unjust person takes pleasure in getting something they ought not to have precisely *because* they ought not to have it, thus illustrating the fact that pleasure arises from the illegitimacy of their claim to that thing. Young, on the other hand, emphasises what the unjust person *lacks* rather than what he has: injustice consists in the absence of a particular kind of restraint that *is* present in the just person. In the just person the desire for gain is curbed by particular considerations related to a conception of justice: the awareness that the good can only be had illegitimately is such as to disarm the desire. In the unjust person, no such considerations are present which would curb the desire, and this accounts for its presence. Based on the passage above, we see that Young understands *pleonexia* to be a continued desire for goods *even when* their pursuit is illegitimate, rather than a desire for goods *because* they can be had illegitimately. Thus, at this stage, we have two distinct notions of *pleonexia* in play:

- (1) Curzer: A desire for goods *because* they can be had illegitimately.
- (2) Young: A continued desire for goods *even though* they can only be had illegitimately.

Let us turn to the scenario that I have raised by way of reaching an understanding of *pleonexia* based on the two readings that have been presented. Evander is someone who has reached adulthood and has developed his capacity to reason. As he is someone who is capable of reasoning effectively, one might wonder how it is that he has failed to come to the conclusion that enslaving free men is unjust. One explanation is that he neglects to consider and scrutinise his conception of justice because he simply couldn't be bothered. This laziness, or failure to consider his views more carefully, can plausibly be said to be informed by further desires that would facilitate such an attitude. Given the

²⁶ Young, C.M. 2008: 191-192

complexity of one's psychological web, it seems plausible to suppose that the reason why he is not scrutinising his views too closely is because of a background awareness that in so doing he might have to abandon particular desires, and it is the strength of these desires that prevents him from making the effort to think things through.

The feature of my example that I am aiming to bring to light here has significant consequences for an account of *pleonexia*. If we assume that Evander has not framed the thought that what he is doing is unjust (as a result of a failure to consider whether his conception of justice is correct), then the example I have presented is not a clear case of Evander prioritising the satisfaction of certain desires over considerations of fairness. Nor is it something stronger, where Evander is pursuing the satisfaction of his desires by purchasing unnatural slaves *because* it is illegitimate and it is the illegitimacy that appeals to him. Rather, he takes himself to have the correct conception of justice at this stage because he has failed to scrutinise his views, and this laziness is informed by a desire for gain. This, I think, is an instance of injustice that is not only highly plausible but prevalent, and which Aristotle allows for given his characterisation of the vicious man. Let me explain more fully.

Pearson directs our attention to Aristotle's clarification of 'voluntary' at *NE* 1135a23-8, according to which it becomes clear that those who perform unjust acts that do not reflect an unjust character act with knowledge but not from deliberation. Such acts come about due to passions (*NE* 1135b20-2), but, importantly, the emotion does not prevent the agent from being aware of the relevant features of the situation, for the agent acts with knowledge.

This means that in order for an act to qualify as a type (II) *unjust* act the agent must be aware of the features of the situation that make his act unjust. Emotions may motivate us to do very different things – anger to seek revenge, appetite to pursue bodily pleasure, fear to run away, etc. - but in order for each such act to be an 'act of injustice' the agent must retain awareness of the features of the situation that make his act unjust.²⁷

Here type (II) unjust acts are those that are not the acts of a vicious person, as opposed to type (I) acts which are acts with a vicious outcome, or type (III) acts which are vicious acts done by a vicious agent. The question becomes whether being aware of

²⁷ Pearson, G. 2006: 223

these features entails that one conceives of it in terms of concepts of justice and injustice, or as falling under the description of an unjust act. Perhaps full awareness of these features would bring with it an engagement with these notions. Pearson states that

[i]f...the agent is *unaware* of the particular features of the situation that will make his act unjust (that is, that he will gain financially at X's expense from the act), then though the act could be a type (I) unjust act [acts that have an unjust outcome], it could not be a type (II) unjust act.²⁸

To act from an unjust disposition would similarly involve an awareness of the features of the situation, for the vicious person acts from deliberation. My characterisation of Evander's frame of mind, as well as Aristotle's discussion of unjust acts, may cast doubt on the idea that Evander is unjust. For can it be maintained that he is *fully* aware of the features of the situation if he doesn't *take* himself to be gaining goods illegitimately? I would argue that Evander is aware of the features of the situation that *make it* unjust, and that this does not require him to frame the thought *that* his action is unjust, based on the following consideration. We are told that the vicious person is someone who has a false belief (i.e. a belief regarding the nature of justice), so it would be peculiar to demand that the unjust person must, as he performs certain actions, be thinking of those actions *as* unjust. The person who is vicious in this respect is such that he does not deem the action unjust given his beliefs. Irwin points this out in his discussion, which I have mentioned in the introduction. The vicious person thinks that he is acting rightly (*NE* 1152a5-8), and his decision rests on an incorrect conception of advantage rather than the fine. The vicious person, therefore, fails to take certain considerations on board, for he acts based on what he deems advantageous rather than giving any weight to considerations of what is fine. This does not, however, mean that the agent is unaware of the features of the situation that make it unjust. It is simply that these features do not carry the weight that they ought to.

Evander would, for example, notice that some of the slaves are not as mentally capable as the others, and he would be aware of his own laziness regarding thoughts about justice. He would also be aware of the desires that he has, and how to go about satisfying them. Additionally, he knows that by purchasing slaves he is treating them as property and subjecting them to a particular sort of life. Thus I maintain that Evander commits his act knowingly, and so is unjust. In light of Aristotle's discussion of vice,

28 Pearson. G. 2006: 224

one need not conceive of one's act as unjust in order to be unjust.

This consideration counts decisively against Curzer's interpretation of *pleonexia*. For his understanding of *pleonexia* involves the explicit thought that one desires a good *because* one does not deserve it. That is, according to Curzer, unjust people have taken on board considerations of desert and have chosen to pursue goods precisely because they are not entitled to them and will be treating someone unfairly. Evander has, however, framed no such thought, and yet we can still see a clear sense in which he is unjust and acts from a desire for gain. In light of this counterexample, I turn to Young's account.²⁹

As we have seen, Young understands *pleonexia* to be a continued desire for goods even though they can only be had illegitimately. Throughout Curzer's discussion of *pleonexia* it becomes evident that one of his main motivations for opting for his interpretation is the fact that it clearly draws a distinction between general and particular justice. But if we understand *pleonexia* in the way that Young suggests, then it seems that the pleasure associated with *pleonexia* is essentially that of gaining certain goods. As Curzer points out, if this is the case, then the wrongdoing at issue can be accounted for in terms of the other virtues, and so *pleonexia* fails to uniquely characterise the unjust person in the particular sense. Let me explain more carefully by way of an example. Suppose that some agent has an excessive desire for sexual gratification and betrays their spouse by sleeping with a stranger. If we characterise their frame of mind in term of a desire for sex, then it seems natural to construe their moral failing as one of intemperance. According to Curzer, they would need to have a desire to have sex with the stranger *because* this would be a betrayal of their spouse (rather than because they simply desired more sex) in order for one to be in a position to construe it as a case of injustice. For if the desire were to be understood in terms of a desire for some beneficial thing, where it also just happens that they end up betraying their spouse, one would account

29 Williams' discussion of *pleonexia* also brings to light this crucial instance of injustice that Curzer's account ought to accommodate given Aristotle's characterisation of vice. When considering what the disposition of injustice consists in he states that '[t]he answer surely can only be that it is to lack the disposition of justice – at the limit, not to be affected or moved by considerations of fairness at all. It involves a tendency to act from some motives on which the just person will not act, and indeed to have some motives which the just person will not have at all. Important among the motives to injustice (though they seem rarely to be mentioned) are such things as laziness or frivolity. Someone can make an unfair decision because it is too much trouble, or too boring, to think about what would be fair. Differently, he may find the outcome funny or diverting.' (Williams, B. 1980:197) Williams raises this instance as a criticism of what he takes to be Aristotle's position, but I think that Williams is forwarding an interpretation of Aristotle which is mistaken.

for the moral failure by appealing to vices other than injustice. That is, the vice at issue would always be reducible to a vice other than injustice, and as such one would have failed to distinguish the vice from general justice, since general justice involves the virtues in relation to the other.

Young notes this concern himself, and points out that in being concerned with honour, wealth and safety, particular justice will overlap with the other virtues of character. More specifically, it will overlap with magnanimity and proper pride as these relate to honour; liberality and magnificence in relation to wealth; and courage as it concerns safety.³⁰ This, he thinks, must mean that particular justice is concerned with these goods in a different way to that of the other virtues. Though Aristotle does not make this difference explicit, Young suggests that perhaps 'his idea is that, for example, my cheating on my taxes shows both something about my attitude towards wealth – a concern of liberality – and something about my attitude toward those other citizens who must shoulder the burden I have shirked – a concern for justice.'³¹

Young's response to this concern is not fully developed, but I take it that he thinks that though there will be overlap, where unjust acts will also qualify as vicious in some further respect, the fact remains that by engaging in the vice in such a way, one is also thereby committing an act that shows a particular sort of attitude towards what is good for others. As Kraut has emphasised, those who are just in the general sense are also just in the particular sense, where this is a matter of taking considerations of fairness on board. By, for example, behaving intemperately in such a way that one fails to consider one's spouse and one's promises to that spouse, one is committing an act that shows a disregard for the other in a way that having excessive sexual relations as an unmarried person does not. And since particular justice is a *part of* general justice it seems to be the case that there will be overlap in the sense that, beyond one's failure to take considerations of fairness on board, one will also engage some other vice when acting unjustly. What is distinctive of particular justice is the regard that one has for the other, where this regard is shaped by the relevant considerations that carry the appropriate weight. I conclude that Young's account of *pleonexia* is more satisfactory than Curzer's, given the text, and clearly reveals the motivational state that Evander finds himself in prior to Aristotle's lecture: Evander has a continued desire for goods

³⁰ Young, C.M. 2006:183

³¹ Young, C.M. 2006: 183

even though the goods may only be had illegitimately, for he has not taken on board considerations of desert that would curb his appetite.

The aim of this chapter has been to provide a discussion of slavery and particular justice in order to determine the specific beliefs and appetites that make up Evander's moral disposition prior to attending Aristotle's lecture. The content of his beliefs before the lecture have been articulated based on the argument that Aristotle presents regarding natural slavery. I have considered Evander's motivational state by assessing two different accounts of *pleonexia*, or a desire for gain. Young's interpretation is superior to Curzer's in virtue of accommodating a case such as Evander's which, I have aimed to argue, Aristotle allows for based on his characterisation of vice. In order to arrive at a more detailed account of the specific desires that Evander possesses, I will need to consider Evander's context and the text more carefully. This will be done in Chapter 2, where Evander's psychological transition will be unpacked in greater detail in order to assess which moral category he can be said to fall under after Aristotle's lecture.

Chapter 2

Moral conversion and the possibility of an intermediate state

What we are essentially preoccupied with here is a particular psychological phenomenon whereby the agent undergoes some sort of moral conversion. The possibility of radical and immediate moral conversion within an Aristotelian framework does not seem to be a genuine possibility given the various elements that together make up a moral disposition. It is not enough that one has changed one's beliefs, for it is one's appetites that must also fall into step with reason, where reason must persuade these appetites to follow its lead. According to Aristotle, this psychological process does not occur instantaneously – it takes time (through the mechanism of habituation) for reason to work on the appetites that are present (*NE* 1147a18, *Categories* 13a23-13a31).

Yet it is exactly the possibility of such radical and immediate moral conversion that I wish to explore within an Aristotelian context by carefully considering a case that we plausibly take to exemplify this very phenomenon. And it is not simply the exploration of the possibility of a genuine case of this kind of moral conversion that I am interested in, but also the possibility of a particular set of psychological features (made up of beliefs and desires) inhering in the agent who is undergoing this moral shift. It is the plausibility of this set of features being present that gives rise to particular difficulties for Aristotle's account: this set, I will argue, does not fall under any of the categories of character that Aristotle presents us with. I believe, however, that this state can be accommodated by the Aristotelian framework for it is mostly consistent with his account. In this chapter I will once again set out the case to be investigated and will proceed to map out Evander's psychological profile in detail at each point of his progression from vice to some other moral state, still to be identified. This mapping will consist in articulating the specific beliefs and desires that he can be said to have prior to, and after, hearing Aristotle's lecture on slavery.

In the vicious state Evander can be said to have a false belief and bad appetites, but after Aristotle's lecture his belief has changed, and is now true. Given Aristotle's understanding of the psyche, Evander's bad appetites will persist, for a change in one's belief cannot immediately have an effect upon one's appetites. The question becomes

whether Aristotle's categories can adequately capture the transformation that Evander has undergone. It is clear that the persistence of some bad appetites excludes Evander from being virtuous, for the virtuous man has only good appetites. But is it obvious that Evander falls under the category that precedes virtue, namely, continence? I will work my way towards an answer by presenting the psychological profile of Evander as a continent agent, and will indicate the extent to which this picture of Evander's moral state fails to capture his psychological position. Based on these inadequacies I will present the suggestion that Evander falls under another category that Aristotle does not recognise and which I will call *good-willed*. Thus an intermediate state between continence and virtue will be introduced.

Moral Conversion

Let us once again bring to mind the particulars of the case that I have constructed, and which I take to be a plausible characterisation of an actual phenomenon. Evander is a middle-aged man living in ancient Greece during Aristotle's time at the Lyceum. He has reached maturity and has fully developed his capacity to reason. He hasn't lived a sheltered life, but has had ample experience of the world which has served to shape and develop his sensibilities and awareness of a myriad different contexts. In terms of his character he is generally considered to be a good citizen, as he follows the law and generally treats those that he comes into contact with fairly and with respect. At this point of his life, however, his beliefs are in accordance with the customs of the time, and this includes the convention according to which it is just to take slaves as part of the conquests of war. He is wealthy enough to keep slaves and (like others of his station) has become accustomed to a certain quality of life that the possession of slaves affords.

Evander is interested in the opinions and perspectives of others and decides to attend one of Aristotle's lecturers at the Lyceum. As it so happens, Aristotle presents his arguments against the belief that it is just to enslave those who are not slaves by nature through the conquests of war. After listening carefully to Aristotle's reasoning, Evander finds himself convinced by these arguments and walks away from the lecture feeling shocked and ashamed at what he had believed for so long. He returns to his household to release those that he now understands he has enslaved unjustly, despite the fact that this involves sacrificing a certain sort of lifestyle that he has grown accustomed to. He is committed to following his reason even though, in so doing, certain pleasures must be

forfeited because he will have fewer slaves, and from that moment on he behaves in accordance with his newly acquired understanding of the matter.

As we see, Evander has undergone a conversion of sorts, and whether we take this shift to constitute a full moral conversion in Aristotelian terms will clearly depend on what we take a moral conversion to consist in according to Aristotle. Given Aristotle's explanation of what a moral disposition (or the state of excellence) involves, i.e. the appropriate beliefs and feelings, it is made clear that true conversion to the state of virtue would not merely be the changing of a belief. That is, we might undergo changes in our views that are superficial in nature, and do not constitute the sort of knowledge appropriate to morality:

The fact that men use the language that flows from knowledge proves nothing; for even men under the influence of these passions utter scientific proofs and verses of Empedocles, and those who have just begun to learn can string together words, but do not yet know; for it has to become part of themselves, *and that takes time*; so that we must suppose that the use of language by men in an incontinent state means no more than its utterances by actors on the stage. (*NE VII 1147a18*, my italics)

The incontinent agent has formed a judgement about what is right, and knows what he ought to do for he reasons correctly. But his appetites are such as to conflict with what reason demands, and have not yet been appropriately shaped. Consequently, such a man is able to express what ought to be done but this has not yet become part of him in virtue of affecting his appetites. Genuine moral conversion, therefore, involves in-depth persuasion which consists not merely in a change of one's beliefs but also the moulding of one's feelings in accordance with reason. That moral conversion is a possibility is not something Aristotle denies:

The bad man, if he is being brought into a better way of life and thought, may make some advance, however slight, and if he should once improve, even ever so little, it is plain that he might change completely, or at any rate make very great progress; for a man becomes more and more easily moved to virtue, however small the improvement was at first. It is, therefore, natural to suppose that he will make yet greater progress than he has made in the past; and as this process goes on, it will change him completely and establish in him a contrary state, *provided he is not hindered by lack of time*. (*Categories 13a23-13a31*, my italics)

If the passages above are any indication, it seems that the possibility Aristotle resists is the idea that one can undergo radical, *immediate* moral conversion. To suppose that one

can make the psychological shift from being vicious to being virtuous in a short span of time is simply not consistent with Aristotle's moral psychology. For, as we have seen, a state of excellence requires the appropriate feelings that must accompany one's true beliefs, and if one starts off in a vicious state whereby one possesses bad appetites, it will take time for these bad appetites to be shaped by reason through a process of habituation. This is precisely why, in the passages above, Aristotle highlights the importance of allowing an appropriate amount of time to pass for the conversion to take place.³²

But this is exactly the sort of conversion that I am interested in considering. For, in the case that I have presented, we see that Evander undergoes a shift whereby he acquires a new belief which brings with it changes in his behaviour. The first question becomes whether this shift constitutes a moral conversion in the sense outlined above. That is, if we reach the conclusion that Evander is not virtuous, does this entail that he has not undergone a moral conversion? It seems that even if he has not undergone a moral conversion in the sense that he has reached a state of virtue, we still want to claim that he has undergone a moral conversion of *some* kind. For his changed belief does seem to rest upon a genuine acknowledgement of his error in judgement such that he feels ashamed of having held his previous belief, and he also shows a commitment to his new belief by releasing those he had enslaved unjustly. These changes seem to be significant enough to constitute a genuine moral shift.

Here I think that we can distinguish between *full* moral conversion, where this is to become virtuous in Aristotle's sense, and moral conversion of the kind that consists in moving from one point on the moral scale to another. Given the layout of Aristotle's categories regarding character it seems appropriate to consider these categories to be points on a continuum where the state of vice, on the one hand, and virtue, on the other, are limit points on the scale. Thus, we might say that to be incontinent is a morally better state to be in than that of vice, while progressing to a state of continence would be better still, up to the state that is best of all – virtue. Progression along these points that move in the direction of virtue, while perhaps not constituting a conversion to a state of

32 It must, of course, be acknowledged that Aristotle is concerned with what is typically the case, for nowhere does he state that anomalies cannot occur. He is presenting us with a standard picture of our moral psychology, and this does not mean that there are no exceptions. However, I do not wish to characterise Evander's case as a mere anomaly but as a phenomenon that is common rather than an exception.

absolute goodness, are still morally significant, as can be seen from Aristotle's discussion of incontinence and continence: '...continence is a good and incontinence a bad state' (*NE* VII 1151a29-30). And incontinence would be considered better than vice because the incontinent agent reasons correctly in virtue of which they have the potential to change. The truly vicious person lacks the ability to reason correctly and, as Aristotle suggests, once such a person has chosen to be unjust or intemperate such that they enter a state of *complete* vice this cannot be altered (*NE* 1114a14-23, 1150a17-23).

The suggestion here, then, is that when Aristotle speaks of moral conversion he seems to have in mind the movement from moral states that precede virtue to a state of virtue, rather than a movement to states on the higher end of the scale, such as continence. It is the progression from points on the lower end of the scale, such as vice (when the person is not completely vicious) and incontinence, to virtue that requires time to pass. However, whether other movements along the scale can occur more rapidly seems to be left open. What this indicates, then, is that Evander, in virtue of moving from a moral state that is considered worse to one that is better in a short period of time (i.e. the time that it takes to listen to Aristotle's lecture), *has* undergone a moral conversion, though not in the full sense. The fact that a significant period of time has not passed, while excluding him from converting to a state of virtue (because his appetites have not had the requisite time to be shaped by reason so that his bad appetites are no longer present), does not disqualify him from having undergone a significant moral shift.³³

The more intriguing question is what precisely this moral change consists in. Evander has moved from a state of vice to a better moral state that is not virtue. So what is this moral state? My strategy for reaching an answer to this question will be to clearly track

33 Moral conversion does not appear to be an Aristotelian notion, for he does not explicitly use the term. Yet, based on his discussion of the moral categories it would seem that he predominately takes moral conversion to consist in a movement towards what is good or right. He does, however, acknowledge that reasoning can undo one's moral disposition such that one *regresses* to a state of vice. Kraut states that '[e]ven if someone has acquired good habits, and then becomes reflective about practical matters, there is no guarantee that he will, as a result of that reflection, become a better person. In fact, it is possible that he will become worse, if he reasons badly about goodness, justice, friendship, and so on. Aristotle makes this observation in his brief discussion of moral education in Book VII of the *Politics*. He notes...that three factors are involved in the process of becoming good: nature, habit, and reason...But, he notes, reason can undo all of the work accomplished by the two earlier factors. 'People do many things contrary to their habits and their nature, because of reason, if they are persuaded that it is better to do otherwise.' (*Pol.* VII 1332b6-8) Again, this does not standardly seem to be the case. Aristotle is here acknowledging the possibility of such regression by means of reason, but where he discusses moral development he seems to take such development to tend towards what is right or good. Kraut adds that 'the possibility that Aristotle mentions – that someone may start off well in life, and then be ruined by bad reasoning – is not something he takes to be the typical course of human development.' (Kraut, R. 2012: 540-542)

the psychological shift that is taking place by unpacking the particular disposition (i.e. beliefs and desires) in play at each stage of the process. I begin by considering the particular beliefs and desires that Evander has in the vicious state, building on what has been discussed in Chapter 1.

Vicious

According to Aristotle's framework, Evander starts off being vicious, for he has a false belief and bad appetites that correspond to this belief. The false belief is that it is just to enslave those who are taken by means of the conquests of war, which forms part of Evander's conception of justice, and Evander has acted on this belief until now by taking and keeping as slaves some free men. The reasoning according to which Evander has come to hold this false belief has been discussed in Chapter 1, and the arguments that serve to undo the grip of this belief have also been spelled out.

If, as we are imagining, there is a citizen who believes that those taken as part of the conquests of war may be enslaved, this agent will equally have developed particular appetites that have been shaped by what their reason is telling them. As we see from Chapter 1, Evander's belief engages a particular understanding of justice. He believes that taking those who have been conquered in war as slaves is fair, since the victors have demonstrated that they are superior in excellence in virtue of being stronger, and out of laziness he hasn't bothered to scrutinise this convention. This means that we need to consider the particular appetites that relate to the virtue of justice, which I have done thus far by means of my discussion of *pleonexia*, or a desire for gain. The next step is to consider what Evander's particular desires are as they relate to gaining certain goods of fortune. Aristotle makes a point of stating that the objects of desire in the case of particular justice are honour, wealth and safety (*NE* 1130b2). Let us consider whether this list assists us in plausibly filling out Evander's motivational state as a vicious agent.

We can sensibly suppose that the objects of desire related to particular justice are pursued in the context of unjustly keeping slaves in the following respects: with regard to honour one can be said to acquire status if one keeps many slaves, for this is an expression of wealth (or the size of the household), and the standing that accompanies such wealth; with regard to wealth we see that the more slaves you are able to keep the wealthier you are, which means that attaining slaves is not a means to wealth but an

expression of it; and in terms of safety, obedient slaves can ensure the security of the household and its members by protecting them from physical harm. Thus there are two objects of desire from the list that the keeping of slaves engages: keeping more slaves allows one to acquire status and safety. And the fact that one is able to keep slaves in the first place conveys one's standing in society as one of wealth which also indicates the sorts of appetites that Evander may possess.

If this is to specify the objects of desire in the case under consideration, then we also need to articulate the particular appetites that the pursuit of these objects has thereby cultivated in virtue of giving rise to pleasures and alleviating pains. For Aristotle characterises the emotions or appetitive states as consisting in the presence of pain and/or pleasure. Once again, Aristotle fails to explicitly mention the various sorts of appetites that apply here, but the bits of text that we do have allow room for speculation regarding the motivational states that seem fitting. With reference to honour, one might suppose that the pursuit of status, and taking oneself to have acquired such status by means of one's wealth, brings with it feelings of superiority and a sense of entitlement that amounts to hubris or arrogance:

The characteristics attendant on wealth are open for all to see; for men become arrogant and haughty, being affected in a certain way by the possession of wealth (their disposition reflects their having all good things; for wealth is a kind of value of the worth of other goods, so that all things seems to be purchased by it), and also luxurious and snobbish, luxurious through their maintenance and the display of their happiness, snobbish and cavalier from the fact that all men are accustomed to spend time in the pursuit of what is valued and admired and from the assumption that all men have the same ends as themselves. And it is also reasonable that they be affected in this way (for there are many people who want what they have...) (*Rhet.* 1399b36-1391a12)

The acquisition of status is to experience pleasure in taking oneself to be better than others, as one is admired and envied for one's position. This seemingly entitles one to belittle others which is also pleasurable (*Rhet.* 1378B22-29, 1387b28-40, 1371a11-14, 1371a29). If Evander is wealthy enough to have slaves, then this expression of his wealth means that he has become accustomed to a sense of comfort. Rather than possessing the hardy and resilient nature that comes from getting things with difficulty and strain, he will have become soft and pampered as a result of accomplishing everything with ease, or allowing slaves to see to his every need. One takes pleasure in acquiring what one needs so easily, and one's potential fears about one's continued

material well-being are also alleviated by such wealth which makes one confident (*Rhet.* 1390b36-1391a12, 1383a43-1383b3).

Finally, in terms of safety it seems plausible to suppose that one will experience a sense of contentment that comes from the confidence or certainty in being secure. One's fear of any potential danger that might harm one is alleviated because one possesses slaves as a means of physical force that provides safety. One also takes pleasure in the freedom this allows one when it comes to moving around in the city. Aristotle states that 'those in great prosperity or seeming to be would not expect to suffer (hence their arrogance, disregard and brazenness, the product of wealth, strength, good connections or power)...' (*Rhet.* 1383a1-3, 1383a43-1383b3)

Now that I have filled in the details regarding the nature of Evander's beliefs and appetites as much as possible using the text and a certain amount of speculation on my part, the psychological profile of our vicious agent is more clearly rendered. We have someone with a false belief which has served to cultivate bad appetites such as arrogance, as well as being in a state of comfort and confidence that is not deserved. Based on the discussion of *pleonexia* in Chapter 1, we see that as a result of Evander's conception of justice (which he hasn't bothered to scrutinise), the desires as they relate to the keeping of unnatural slaves are not curbed. Evander has failed to take certain considerations on board that would serve to disarm his desire for gain in relation to unnatural slaves.

The next step is to consider which elements of his psychological state undergo significant changes, and what the consequences of these changes are. According to the narrative I have presented, Evander, in the first instance, acquires a new belief. He is brought to see that he has been holding a false belief until now, and is persuaded to adopt a new belief that is true. He is genuinely convinced by Aristotle's arguments, for he immediately returns to his household to release the slaves that he now sees he has been holding unjustly. Not only this, but he also has an emotional response to the realisation that he has been unjust, for upon leaving the lecture he is ashamed at what he once thought. In other words, Evander has acquired an awareness that was absent before. And this awareness to what his beliefs have been, and how they are mistaken, has prompted a process of reflection as expressed by means of his feeling of shame. Evander now has views regarding how free men ought to be treated and ruled, and it is

the taking on board of these considerations that will alter his cognitive and affective responses to unnatural slaves, and give rise to reflection on what these responses are.

The picture I am presenting is not of someone with a superficial recognition of having made an error in judgement, but of someone who is already disposed to follow reason and behave morally, for in other respects this person treats people fairly. Evander has some good appetites. He is considered to be an upstanding citizen in the sense that he follows the laws laid down by the state, and he takes seriously his duties to his household and society. Evander tends to his household as a king tends to his subjects: by making sure that they have what they need and are well-looked after (*NE* VIII 1161a10-22). Furthermore, when entering into transactions with his equals, Evander treats them fairly and does not attempt to deceive them in order to attain that which he is not entitled to. So he acts justly in virtue of respecting the laws of the state and dealing fairly with his equals, for he accepts that this is how one ought to act (*NE* 1129a33-1129b2, 1129b15-19). This is the extent to which Evander is already morally sensitive and acts accordingly.

Of course, what the law demands is ideally that which is virtuous (as discussed in Chapter 1), and clearly this is not always the case. But even though there may be some laws which are not consistent with excellence (such as the law that it is just to enslave those who have been taken by the conquests of war), there are likely to be others that are. Thus, to the extent that Evander follows laws which are just he will be behaving in accordance with general justice. Given his standing moral commitments with regard to following the law and dealing fairly with fellow citizens, we can see that Evander is susceptible to, and is able to grasp, what his reasoning guides him towards once he has been exposed to Aristotle's arguments.

Not only that, but his sensitivity to, and acceptance of, his error in judgement is further illustrated by the affective response that accompanies it, namely, shame. Here we see Evander reflecting on what he once thought, and also on what his present desires are that he now knows to be unjust, in light of the fact that he ought not to want such gain if it can only be had illegitimately. The self-awareness and reflection inherent to the feeling of shame (which I will discuss more carefully in a moment) has been prompted by a process of reasoning, which means that Evander now has feelings about his feelings and views. It is in virtue of his new conception of justice, as well as the new

affective responses that come with it, that we may distinguish the psychological state of one who keeps natural slaves from one who keeps unnatural slaves also. Granted, the desires that Evander had prior to Aristotle's lecture will persist in relation to *natural* slaves, and according to Aristotle's arguments these need not be curbed as they are just. But Evander has an altered psyche post-lecture, and can be distinguished from the person who keeps both natural and unnatural slaves, in virtue of the affective responses that he has in relation to *unnatural* slaves, where he is aware of the unjust desires that persist and which he in turn has further feelings about, i.e. shame.

And there are additional affective responses that arise in virtue of his newly acquired conception of justice. Evander's realisation that only those who are slaves by nature ought to be enslaved will give rise to feelings of pity and indignation regarding the keeping of unnatural slaves. Aristotle states that pity '...may be defined as a feeling of pain caused by the sight of some evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon' (*Rhet.* 1385B12-16) Granted, Evander may not expect such an evil to befall him soon, as he is a wealthy Greek, but given that those who are by nature free men have been enslaved, he may at least take seriously the idea that such an evil could possibly have befallen him as a free man as well. He is capable of identifying with unnatural slaves insofar as he himself is not suited to being a slave, and it is clearly a sight of evil to his eyes as he has come to recognise the reasons why such a state of affairs is unjust. Furthermore, we are told that indignation 'is pain caused by the sight of undeserved good fortune', for 'it is not any and every man that deserves any given kind of good; there is a certain correspondence and appropriateness in such things...' (*Rhet.* 1387A11-30). Thus the person who keeps unnatural, as well as natural, slaves is attaining goods that are undeserved, for they are not in fact entitled to having the amount of status and safety that the keeping of more slaves affords. It is these additional responses brought about by Evander's new conception of justice that serve to set apart the psychological state that he is in now. In particular, the feeling of shame is morally significant for Aristotle.

According to Aristotle, shame is 'a kind of pain or disturbance in connection with those evils that appear to pertain to disrepute, whether present, past or future...' (where '[t]hese evils are, in the first place, those due to moral badness'), or 'a fear of disrepute' (*Rhet.* 1383B12-14, *NE IV* 1128b11-12). We are also told that 'shame is a mental picture of

disgrace, in which we shrink from the disgrace itself and not from its consequences, and we only care what opinion is held of us because of the people who form that opinion.' Thus 'it follows that the people before whom we feel shame are those whose opinion of us matters to us' (*Rhet.* 1384A23-28). This brings to light the essential feature of shame as a feeling involving reflection on the self from the perspective of the other. The characterisation of shame as a 'mental picture', or impression, involves an element of self-awareness, of viewing oneself in a certain way.³⁴ The evils at issue are clearly stated as being of a moral nature, so the feeling of shame for Aristotle essentially relates to morality. The pain or disturbance comes about as a result of a tension within the agent based on knowledge of one's own deeds and an evaluation of those deeds due to adopting the perspective of the other. It is this self-appraisal that reveals the attitude of reflection and awareness that is fundamental to feeling shame. And it is this awareness of the self that makes one susceptible to what morality demands, for reflection of this kind is inherent to a disturbance that would prompt moral development.

Aristotle doesn't think that shame is a virtue, for it is a feeling rather than a state of character (*NE* IV 1128b10-17). He states that feeling shame is praiseworthy when one is young, as this is the time of one's development when one follows one's feelings, and shame is the feeling that often prevents one from going astray. But one does not praise an adult for feeling shame since he should by this point, in virtue of his capacity to reason, be capable of avoiding wrongdoing (*NE* 1128b19-23). Aristotle then claims that

[s]hame might, however, be decent on an assumption; if one were to do [disgraceful actions], one would feel disgrace; but this does not apply to the virtues. If we grant that it is base to feel no disgrace or shame at disgraceful actions, it still does not follow that to do such actions and then to feel disgrace at them is decent (*NE* 1128b30-34).

From these remarks it may at least be gathered that, even though one would not praise an adult for feeling shame at having performed disgraceful actions – as they should have known better by this point and not have done them to begin with – there is still a sense in which the person may be considered base, or in an even worse moral state, in virtue of *not* feeling shame. One shouldn't praise the person for feeling shame, but one would equally blame him, or think even less of him, moral speaking, if he did not feel shame. Therefore, the person who feels shame is morally better than the person who does not

34 Rostenstreich, N. 1965

feel shame. Shame becomes representative of a particular sort of sensitivity to morality and the virtues, as it engages self-reflection that would prompt moral development. The fact that Evander experiences shame is significant as it is indicative of a particular psychological state that is sensitive to the dictates of reason to the extent that he achieves, in a relatively short period of time, an understanding sufficient to cause the disturbance of shame. The presence of shame indicates that Evander has become more aware and reflective with regard to morality. It is *this* sort of agent that we are considering, and the complexity of the case raises particular questions about which character type he can be said to fall under once his belief has changed.

Continent

Evander now has a true belief, but the bad appetites that he cultivated in his vicious state will take time to fall into step with reason. As such, these bad appetites will persist for some time. Evander will, however, always act on his belief, which means that he will always do what reason demands, even though these bad appetites are present. At first glance (and given this simple characterisation of what has occurred), it would seem that he matches the criteria that distinguish the continent agent from the other character types. Let us remind ourselves what these criteria are for the sake of clarity.

The continent agent has a true belief and bad appetites that he will never act on. But the key feature of the continent agent is that these bad appetites are strong; they are strong enough that the agent has to drag himself away from pleasurable appetites, because he would enjoy satisfying those desires, and is consequently pained by acting in accordance with reason (*NE* 1152a2-3, *EE* 1224a33-6). What characterises the continent agent, as we have seen, is a motivational conflict that prevents the agent from experiencing the proper pleasure in the fineness of his act (*EE* 1124b15-28). So, despite acting on reason (and always doing so no matter which powerful appetites happen to be present at the time), the continent agent fails to experience the noble pleasure that comes from performing an action *because* it is fine, and because he is able to apprehend this fineness. It is these strong appetites that are bad which characterise the continent agent. The appetite qualifies as strong if one would enjoy acting on it against reason, and the pleasure of so acting would not be marred by the shamefulness of the act.

Is the sort of motivational conflict highlighted above present in the agent I have

described? For the sake of comparison, by means of which we may be able to reach an answer, we should fill out the psychological profile of a continent person within the current context. The continent person has the true belief that it is unjust to enslave those who are not slaves by nature through the conquests of war. He has bad appetites that are still present as a result of having been in a vicious state, and these appetites are strong. Consequently, the sense of superiority would still be present, and given the loss of the comforts and security that more slaves would bestow, there will be a desire for these things that have been lost. Furthermore, we may think that, given these desires, there could be a sense of bitterness present at having to deny oneself the comforts and security afforded by keeping slaves because this is what reason demands:

Habits are also pleasant; for as soon as a thing has become habitual, it is virtually natural; habit is a thing not unlike nature; what happens often is akin to what happens always, natural events happening always, habitual events often. Again, that is pleasant which is not forced on us, for force is unnatural, and that is why what is compulsory is painful, and it has been rightly said 'All that is done on compulsion is bitterness unto the soul'. So all acts of concentration, strong effort, and strain are necessarily painful; they all involve compulsion and force, unless we are accustomed to them, in which case it is custom that makes them pleasant. (*Rhet.* 1370A5-14)

The continent agent experiences a strong conflict which is why they are pained by acting in accordance with reason. Reason is forcing them to turn away from their appetites, and this involves a mighty effort because we are told that they must 'drag themselves away' from pleasurable appetites, thus giving rise to pain.

Given this depiction of the continent agent's psychological state we can more easily decide whether this captures the state of our friend Evander. I would like to suggest that it does not accurately convey what sort of person we are left with after the lecture, for it does not seem as if Evander is undergoing the same sort of motivational conflict that characterises the continent agent. Evander not only behaves in accordance with reason after the lecture, but feels shame at having thought what he did for so long. In the current context this shame expresses a deep-seated awareness of having wronged others and having behaved unjustly. Importantly, the pain that Evander experiences is that of shame rather than the pain of not satisfying his vicious desires. Furthermore, it seems that in virtue of this shame, as well as his subsequent actions, one may assert that because he has fully recognised his error in judgement, he *is* able to take the proper pleasure in the fineness of his actions. The fact that he is genuinely persuaded by means

of reason (in the form of Aristotle's arguments) indicates that he is able to perceive its fineness in virtue of engaging this capacity as set against the background of some other good appetites and true beliefs. In contrast, the continent agent is incapable of perceiving the fineness of the act and does not experience noble pleasure as a result of the motivational conflict that is present.

It is clear that there are bad appetites that may persist once Evander's belief has changed, and this is what excludes him from being considered virtuous in Aristotle's sense. However, it seems less clear whether we would want to claim that he is continent. If a case can be made for the fact that he fails to experience the motivational conflict that characterises the continent agent, then I think it will indicate the possibility of another sort of agent that I will call *good-willed* – someone who, despite not being virtuous, has undergone a moral conversion that fails to fall under the category of continence.

Good-willed

There are reasons to suppose that the good-willed agent is a genuine possibility based on Aristotle's remarks. He clearly characterises the continent agent as having strong desires that are bad (*NE* VII 1146a10-13). And the very fact that Aristotle explicitly distinguishes the continent agent in this way suggests that there may be someone who has *weak* appetites that are bad. If this were not so, he would presumably have characterised the continent agent as having bad appetites without specifying the intensity of these desires. Furthermore, based on Aristotle's discussion of the continent agent, it is clear that strong appetites are those that one would enjoy acting on against reason, where this pleasure would not be marred by the shamefulness of the act (*NE* VII 1152a2-3). This in itself seems to bring to mind the possibility of having appetites that one would *not* enjoy acting on against reason, where this pleasure *is* marred by the shamefulness of the act. Aristotle does not explicitly mention or discuss these weak appetites, but based on his other remarks it seems at least consistent with, if not suggested by, his account as a whole.

It can also be argued that given the fact that Aristotle thinks it is possible for one to achieve a state of virtue, and that this will occur by means of reason's capacity to mould one's appetites, that he *has* to acknowledge an intermediate state between continence

and virtue. For if an agent were to move from being continent to being virtuous, this would involve the transformation of the agent's strong appetites that are bad in the continent state, where these appetites are gradually weakened and moulded into good appetites. Consequently, by Aristotle's own lights, there must come a point at which the agent can be characterised as having bad appetites that have been weakened by reason's influence if they are to progress towards a state of virtue.

To reach a clearer understanding of the type of agent I have in mind, it would be helpful to consider the good-willed agent with reference to the virtue of temperance. Suppose, for example, that an agent is particularly fond of good-quality wine but will not have wine in excess. This, I think, would not rule out the idea that upon being confronted with a glass of wine (after already having consumed a moderate amount), they will, nonetheless, take note of its desirability. This follows from our innate capacities for perception, for it is in virtue of perception that we experience pleasure and pain, and have an awareness of what is pleasurable or painful (*De An.* II.3 414b1-6). The acknowledgement of the presence of what is pleasurable does not, I think, in and of itself disqualify the agent from being able to take the proper pleasure in not drinking to excess. For, to take note of the wine's desirability is not the same as desiring the wine.

It seems that if the person is temperate then, upon perceiving the wine after having had a moderate amount already, she will note its desirability by means of a counterfactual of the following kind: 'If I were to have another glass of wine it would be pleasant'. She would, however, fail to form the desire as a result of other overriding desires, such as the desire to drink in moderation, and the knowledge that having another glass of wine would be to drink in excess. Thus, the agent is aware of the wine as being something that gives rise to pleasure, but given the other elements of her psychological state she does not form a desire that would give rise to motivational conflict, and thus exclude her from taking the proper pleasure in the fineness of her act. She, therefore, forms the judgement that another glass of wine would be pleasurable, without this giving rise to a desire. McDowell, as we will see in the next chapter, takes this to be the mark of the virtuous person: the virtuous agent is able to acknowledge the desirability of the wine without this constituting a desire.

The suggestion here is that the judgement of the wine as something desirable is not sufficient to give rise to a clearly identifiable motivational conflict within the agent as

characterised in the case of the continent agent. For this agent need not force herself to turn away from the wine – she simply notes that it is something pleasurable while having no desire to consume it. That is, she is not pained by not drinking the wine, and consequently is not prevented from taking the proper pleasure in the fineness of her act in the way that the continent agent is. I have something similar in mind in the case of the good-willed agent. For what Evander's case reveals is someone who possesses residual appetites as a result of a previous moral disposition, where these appetites serve to alert the agent to the desirability of a certain course of action, even though these desires fail to gain any motivational traction, for they have been overridden and weakened by other considerations.

If we understand Evander to be a man who is open to, and capable of, being persuaded to see his error in judgement, and if we furthermore suppose him to be a man who also has some good appetites related to appropriate dispositions (such as his just behaviour in following the law and treating his equals fairly), then it no longer seems obvious that this agent would suffer the motivational conflict that characterises the continent agent. It is certainly true that his moral disposition has been cultivated by habit, and to the extent that he must begin to alter this habit he will experience some pain, as expressed by the passage in the *Rhetoric* above (1370A5-14). But this is not sufficient to show that Evander is experiencing the motivational conflict that arises from having strong desires that are bad.³⁵

Yet, if a substantive case in favour of the possibility of the good-willed agent is to be made, then it needs to be shown that the bad appetites are in fact weak rather than strong. Let us consider once again which bad appetites would persist. In relation to the pursuit of honour, hubris (arrogance) and a sense of entitlement would surely settle in. With regard to money and safety one would possess a continuing desire for the sense of comfort and security afforded by having more slaves at one's disposal, and accompanying this would possibly be a sense of bitterness at having to deny oneself these pleasures because this is what reason demands. However, to see what reason demands (such that one will always act in accordance with it), and, more importantly, to also be persuaded by reason such that one comes to apprehend the value in so acting, is

³⁵ It may also be argued that Evander's possession of some good appetites make it the case that his error in judgement may more easily be rectified. The change in behaviour and the passing away of some bad appetites will occur more readily given his overall moral state, in which case the pain of altering the habit would also possibly be minimal.

to acquire an understanding which seem sufficient to “dislodge” or weaken the bad appetites that are present. For one's sense of entitlement and superiority would surely begin to dissipate in the presence of a genuine recognition that one is not so entitled, and that one has in fact mistreated and subjugated those who do not deserve it. And equally, the bitterness that could accompany a denial of one's desires would be affected by a true understanding of the harm one has inflicted in error, rather than the mere acknowledgement of what reason requires one to do. Granted, one may perhaps have particular desires that arise from, and persist, due to an awareness of the quality of life that one was accustomed to, and could have once more. But the persistence of these psychological phenomena does not by itself constitute something as pervasive as the motivational conflict that profoundly affects the continent agent and how he experiences his right actions.

In virtue of the influence that beliefs have on our emotions, and the psychological complexity that Aristotle continually emphasises in terms of the interaction between beliefs, desires and the imagination (or *phantasia*), I would argue that an intermediate state between continence and virtue is not only a genuine possibility, but seems to characterise a particular state that we are likely to confront in life (especially with relation to certain psychological shifts at particular times of our development). In order to make a substantive case for the possibility of the good-willed agent I will need to argue that reason is capable of influencing Evander's desires and weaken them such that a motivational conflict does not arise, as in the case of the continent agent. This will involve an investigation of Aristotle's claims regarding the relation between beliefs and desires. Additionally, I will have to clearly set out the respects in which the good-willed agent is not only to be distinguished from the continent agent, but the virtuous agent as well.

The aim of this chapter has been to reveal the extent to which Aristotle's account fails to capture the shift that Evander has undergone, and how this suggests the possibility of an intermediate state between continence and virtue. This intermediate state, I believe, is not only largely consistent with Aristotle's account but may even be suggested by it. In the next chapter I will aim to present more substantive arguments in favour of the existence of another category related to character and how this category sufficiently captures a possible phenomenon that we take to be plausible.

Chapter 3

The Good-willed Agent

In Chapter 2, I argued for the possibility of an intermediate state between continence and virtue and named this category *good-willed*. This state is characterised by the presence of bad appetites that are weak such that they do not give rise to a clearly identifiable motivational conflict within the agent. The good-willed agent is someone who reasons correctly, and grasps what reason requires, but who still has residual appetites that are vicious. One of the crucial features of the case under consideration, as I have presented it, is the fact that Evander has undergone a process of moral conversion whereby reason has been capable of 'dislodging' appetites that were once strong. The effect of reason's activity on the psyche is such that appetites which were once decisive and dominant (due to a failure to reason correctly in the vicious state), have been disturbed as a result of reason's new ruling. This, I want to suggest, gives rise to an agent who has recalcitrant appetites that are vicious, but which have been weakened by means of reason, and lack the traction that would yield the motivational conflict which characterises the continent agent.

In arguing for the good-willed agent I am attempting to highlight a phenomenon that we arguably take to be plausible. This is the phenomenon whereby a process of reasoning is sufficient to give rise to moral conversion of a kind that leaves the agent fully capable of grasping the rightness of their action and experiencing the proper pleasure that comes with it. That is, reason is not only capable of having an effect upon vicious appetites such that they are significantly weakened, but the presence of these vicious appetites in their weakened form do not, I believe, prevent the agent from fully apprehending what their course of action should be and why. This chapter is concerned with making my case in more detail and addressing criticism of the idea that I am presenting. This will involve two tasks.

First, it must be shown that Aristotle views reason as being capable of significantly affecting the non-rational part of the soul such that it is conceivable to think that reason can bring about changes with regard to one's affective responses. This will support my suggestion that, in the case under consideration, reason has disturbed the vicious

appetites that Evander possesses. In the first section of this chapter, therefore, I will be considering Aristotle's remarks regarding the relation between the rational and the non-rational parts of the soul and will present two different accounts, as presented by Cooper and Grönroos, which serve to explain how it is that the non-rational part of the soul is able to 'listen' to reason. Both accounts, while not compatible, offer an explanation as to why spirited desire is crucial with regard to reason's ability to affect the non-rational part of the soul. My interest in these discussions is to show that Aristotle considers reason capable of affecting the non-rational part of the soul and that reason is dominant in this way, while also presenting possible explanations as to the details of *how* reason is capable of exerting this influence. I am not concerned here with offering reasons in support of either Cooper or Grönroos' position, but will consider whether these accounts may give rise to objections for my position.

My second task is to address the main objection to my claim: is there genuinely a substantive difference between the good-willed agent and the continent, as well as the virtuous, agent where this difference is significant enough to constitute the postulation of another moral category? If I am to clearly carve out a space for what I take to be a distinct set of psychological features that cannot be captured by the categories of continence or virtue, then it needs to be made clear in what sense the good-willed agent reveals something further about the internal structure of our psychology.

The presence of some vicious appetites easily leads one to draw the most straightforward conclusion about Evander's case, namely, that he is continent and there is nothing further to be said about it. But I would argue that there could be an agent, and often *is* an agent, who can be convinced through reason of what they ought to do, even though they once thought very differently, and that in that moment they are fully capable of apprehending what they should do and why. If we are to engage Aristotle's moral psychology (which I take to be convincing), then a movement from vice will involve the continued presence of certain vicious appetites that have not yet undergone the process of being moulded by reason. I would suggest, however, that given the right circumstances (and other facts about an agent's psychology), reason is in a position to bring about changes regarding these appetites such that they are weakened, and consequently fail to engage a motivational conflict within the agent despite their presence. In this chapter I will aim to argue that there is a genuine distinction to be drawn between the good-willed and the continent, as well as the virtuous, agent and this

argument will lead me to a further conclusion that Coope considers, namely, that it is possible to have someone who fails to be fully virtuous but who is practically wise. This conclusion, as we will see, flows from my discussion of the good-willed agent as someone who is not only able to see what ought to be done and why, but who also experiences the right kind of pleasure in so acting while, at the same time, possessing some weak appetites that are vicious. Let us turn to the first task at hand.

The Role of Reason

I begin by elaborating on the prominent role that reason plays in our moral development, for this will support my suggestion that, according to Aristotle, reason is influential enough to affect and weaken certain vicious appetites. Cooper elucidates Aristotle's moral psychology by considering how he conceives of reason and desire. He begins by considering occurrent desires, and the sorts of states that they are, according to Aristotle:

...a [occurrent] desire is taken by Aristotle...as more than merely an *inclination* to want to have or experience or do something; it is a fully-fledged, completed such want – an active psychological movement toward getting in an appropriate way, or experiencing or doing, whatever it is the desire for...they [desires] are fully realized psychological movements that move the limbs and so initiate action, unless some other similar psychological movements outweigh them or add some weight of their own so as to diminish or deflect their influence on the relevant bodily parts.³⁶

Aristotle maintains that desires can initiate bodily movement independently of any reasoned thoughts about what to do (*NE* VII, *EE* VI, 1147a34-35). That is, to act on appetite or spirit is to be moved psychologically without thinking that these things are to be done, for one can in fact think that these things must *not* be done, yet still be moved to do them. Thus desires are afforded great psychological significance with regard to action. But Cooper highlights the fact that, quite unusually, Aristotle holds the view that reason is itself the source of a certain sort of desire, namely rational desire or wish (*NE* I.13, 1002b13-25). Thus, in dividing the soul, Aristotle has in mind three kinds of desires: *epithumia* or appetite, *thumos* or spirited, and *boulesis* or wish. The two former desires fall within the non-rational part of the soul, while the latter desire is rational. This division of the soul conveys much about how Aristotle conceives of reason as well

36 Cooper, J.M. 1999: 239

as the non-reasoning desires.

Cooper aims to spell out the sense in which a wish may be considered to be a rational desire while the other desires are non-rational. At *NE* VI and *EE* V2, 1139b12, Aristotle states that the function of practical reason is to pursue and attain the truth. This means that the function of practical reason is, not merely to hold views about what is good for us, but to hold these views as part of an overall investigation into the truth about what is good. And this is not to say that we need to be self-consciously aware that these views form part of this greater investigation into what is in fact good. A rational desire, therefore, is 'the practical expression of a course of thought about what is good for oneself, that is aimed at working out the truth about what *is* in fact good.'³⁷

This conception of a rational desire brings to light the sense in which non-rational desires differ, for non-rational desires are those that lack the features that reason as a source affords. Thus, non-rational desires are desires whose causal history fails to include a process of investigation into the truth about what is good for oneself. According to Cooper, non-rational desires must not be conceived of as lacking the propositional and conceptual structure that we usually associate with rational thought. Non-rational desires may be, or at least involve, the thought *that* something is pleasant or *that* one has been slighted. Non-rational desires can even contain thoughts about what is good for oneself, such as the thought that this particular pleasure is a good thing. This is clear from Aristotle's discussion of *thumos* or spirit at *NE* VII and *EE* VI, 1149a25 where he claims that spirit is capable of hearing reason but can also mishear what reason would instruct:

Moreover, let us observe that incontinence about spirit is less shameful than incontinence about appetites. For spirit 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 instructions, and then carry them out wrongly, or dogs who bark at any noise at all, before looking to see if it is a friend. In the same way, since spirit is naturally hot and hasty, it hears, but does not hear the instruction, and rushes off to exact penalty. For reason or appearance has shown that we are being slighted or wantonly insulted; and spirit, as though it has inferred that it is right to fight this sort of thing, is irritated at once. Appetite, however, only needs reason or perception to say that this is pleasant, and it rushes off for gratification. And so spirit follows reason in a way, but appetite does not. Therefore [incontinence about appetites] is more shameful. For if someone is incontinent about spirit, he is overcome by reason in a way; but if

37 Cooper, J.M. 1999: 242

he is incontinent about appetite, he is overcome by appetite, not by reason. (NE 1149a25-b4)

Thus we are told that spirit will respond as though having inferred *that* it is right to rise up against an apparent slight and *that* such a response is called for. Equally, in the case of appetite (whose object is that which is pleasant), it will respond to what it takes to be good. The fact that concepts and thoughts are being employed in these cases, while perhaps constituting *our* notion of rationality, does not serve to confer that status on these desires. They remain non-rational for 'these desires, and so the thoughts that they contain, do not occur as parts of any process of reasoning for the purpose of figuring out what one should do, i.e. what one has best reasons for doing; nor do those value-judgements rest upon reasons.'³⁸ Thus the difference between rational and non-rational desires rests on whether the thoughts involved arise from reasons for having them. An understanding of the distinction between rational and non-rational desires is important if one is to address the question of *how* reason goes about affecting the non-rational part of the soul. Cooper thus offers this way of drawing the distinction as part of his answer to this question, which I will now articulate in more detail.

If non-rational desires are to be characterised in the way that Cooper has suggested, then how are we to make sense of the influence that reason has over them? Cooper asserts that Aristotle does not just think that reason controls these desires by forcing them to follow its directives in some form or another, but rather *persuades* them to obey:

The non-rational [part], then, as well [as the whole soul] apparently has two parts. For while the plantlike [part] shares in reason not at all, the [part] with appetites and in general desires shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it. This is the way in which we are said to 'listen to reason' from father or friends, as opposed to the way in which [we 'give the reason'] in mathematics. The non-rational part also [obeys and] is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by correction, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation. (NE 1102b29-1103a)

Clearly Aristotle places much stock in reason's capacity to bring the desires into alignment with it, but the question is by what mechanism this process is meant to occur. What is the structure of these desiderative states that facilitates reason's influence over them? Cooper offers an explanation of this process and maintains that reason is able to exert this influence, and engage in a process of 'persuasion', precisely because the non-

38 Cooper, J.M. 1999: 243

rational desires are made up of elements that feature in reason as well. So when you get angry at a perceived slight, this anger will contain the thought that you have been insulted and that the person who has offended you deserves to be retaliated against. Now if your reason diverges at points where value-terms such as 'good', 'right' and 'ought' feature in this thought, you will psychologically be pulled in different directions. Essentially you are entertaining contradictory thoughts, where one features as part of your anger, while the other is expressive of your reason. Reason persuades anger by managing to get its view of the good to obtain in the sense that the non-rational part takes it on as well. Cooper thinks that this is not simply a matter of reason exercising brute force, but rather a matter of addressing one's anger in the sense that reason tries to direct attention to features of the situation that reveal why it is wrong to feel that way. This would involve attending to a wider set of facts rather than focusing on a narrow set of features that give rise to anger.

Cooper goes on to emphasise the crucial role that spirited desire can be said to play in this process of persuasion. For it is only spirited desire, rather than appetite, that can follow reason's lead (*NE* 1149b1-3). Spirited desire is afforded this role as a result of the kinds of objects or values that it aims at. As we have already mentioned, in the case of appetite its object is the pleasant, while the object of spirited desire is what is fine or beautiful. The attribution of this object to spirited desire is based on Cooper's argument where he first points out that, according to Aristotle, an action is "choiceworthy" in three senses: *kalon*, pleasant, and advantageous (*Topics* 105a27-28, 118b27-28). Cooper states that based on the second passage of *Topics* it is apparent that 'advantageous' is not simply pointing towards what would be useful in attaining an end, but that which contributes to one's good. 'The advantageous' is thus to be understood as 'the good'. These three categories of value – (one's) good, pleasure, and *to kalon* – constitute that which is choiceworthy for human beings.

Aristotle goes on to correlate *boulesis* (wish) and *epithumia* (appetites) with the good and pleasure, respectively, at *NE* 2.3. As we have seen, wish is for the good, or what appears good, while appetite is for the pleasant. Aristotle is not explicit about which value spirit is aimed at, but Cooper argues that it is to be correlated with the final value on the list, i.e. *to kalon*. This is based on the following consideration. Aristotle states at various points in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that *to kalon* is *the* end for which the morally virtuous person acts (1115b13, 1119b16, 1120a24). This is in specific reference to moral

virtue, for when speaking of practical wisdom he only mentions knowledge, and pursuit of things that are good for oneself (1140a26-27, b4-6, 20-21; 1141b7-8, 12-14). And the difference between the two is that moral virtue involves the appropriate condition of the non-rational desires, so if moral virtue essentially aims at the pursuit of the fine, then it is natural to suppose that the non-rational desires are somehow responsible for that. Cooper assembles various bits of text to come up with an understanding of what the fine or the noble actually is, for Aristotle says little about this crucial notion:

...what is *to kalon* in action involves, in addition to the praiseworthiness we are told about elsewhere, is order, symmetry, and determinateness...In the *Eudemian Ethics* we are told that things that have this property of nobility (e.g., virtuous actions) are chosen for their own sakes and praised or worthy of praise for that reason. In the *Metaphysics* we are told that what has this property exhibits order, symmetry, and determinateness. The connection then is this: *kala* things *as such* exhibit order, symmetry, and determinateness, and when they are chosen for their own sakes, i.e., because they do exhibit these properties, then they are praised or worthy of praise for that reason – for the reason that they are so chosen. The idea then is that when someone does actions having order, symmetry, and determinateness (in a high degree), precisely out of a desire for, or love of, such actions because they do have them, she and her actions deserve praise.³⁹

Cooper emphasises that his claim is not that Aristotle proposes the noble or the fine as the immediate object of spirited desires *in general*. It is only the morally virtuous person, who has passed a certain stage in his moral development and self-discipline, who has spirited desires aimed at the fine. In order for the young to take pleasure in the fine they must first become aware of, and experience, the fineness of the actions required by virtue. This is where, Cooper believes, spirited desires enter the picture:

These [spirited] desires, as we have seen, aim at competitive exertion, at being active in command, at making oneself significant. Young people must initially be brought to find satisfaction for their *thumos*-desires in the order, symmetry, and determinateness of morally virtuous actions: the self-discipline required to compose such actions...makes them a salient object for that kind of desire, and presumably an especially satisfying one. Just as with appetitive desires for pleasure, so here: once, through habituation, young people do come to experience this satisfaction of their *thumos*-desires through the nobility and fineness of actions of the virtues, this satisfaction and their desires for it can be used as a counterweight in their own (and others') reason-based efforts to reshape their *other* spirited desires – by eliminating

³⁹ Aristotle also equates *kalon* with what is fitting in *Topics* 135a13, and Cooper goes on to explain what is fitting about certain actions (Cooper, J.M. 1999: 273-274). My interest at the moment is to get clear on Cooper's understanding of how it is that reason is able to influence the desires, and the crucial role that spirit can be said to play in this process, rather than a full understanding of the fine. For more on the noble, see Cooper, J.M. 1999: 273-276.

some, reducing others, initiating them to yet others, and so on – as well, of course, as to refine and deepen the satisfaction for their spirited desires to be found in the nobility and fineness of virtuous action itself. Once they discover and begin fully to experience the satisfaction of their *thumos*-desires in the nobility of virtuous action, and so to be able to take *pleasure* in it, they draw into a single focus both of their two kinds of non-rational desire. At the same time, and as a result, they advance to the threshold of achieving effective control of their lives by reason.⁴⁰

Gosta Grönroos takes issue with Cooper's characterisation of non-rational desires, and specifically the role that spirit plays in facilitating reason's dominance. He offers an alternative account of how reason is able to mould the non-rational part of the soul. He begins by emphasising the extent to which the intellectual virtues and virtues of character are intimately connected. The intellectual virtue that has bearing on whether someone is virtuous or not (i.e. practical wisdom), and virtue of character are dependant on one another, for we are told that the one cannot be had without the other (*NE* 1144b30-2, 1178a16-19). Thus even virtue of character, though consisting in the possession of the appropriate desires, is equally a realisation of our essentially rational nature for it requires the presence of practical wisdom. This dependence does not, however, dissolve the distinction between virtue of character, which belongs to the non-rational part of the soul, and practical wisdom, which belongs to the rational part (*EE* 1220a4-12). The relation between the two parts of the soul is characterised by Aristotle as a matter of the non-rational part being capable of “following” reason, where this is articulated in various different ways: the non-rational part has a share in reason due to being capable of listening to reason, or the non-rational part is obedient to or is persuaded by reason (*NE* 1102b13-14, 31, 1098a4, 1102b26, 33). But what precisely is the mechanism by which the non-rational part is able to follow reason?

We are told that the non-rational part follows reason's lead by understanding its commands (*NE* 1102b29-33, 1149a25-32), and as a result it is natural to suppose that the non-rational part must possess *some* capacity for reason. To understand the commands of reason, the non-rational part must have a grasp of concepts and propositional thought. And once this is conceded it becomes difficult to understand the sense in which the non-rational part lacks the ability to do more than just comprehend commands. More specifically, this would lead us to think that the non-rational part is also capable of grasping the reasons in favour of the commands. Grönroos argues that such an understanding of non-rational desires misses something important about

40 Cooper, J.M. 1999: 277-278

Aristotle's moral psychology, where he distinguishes between an acknowledgement of *what* one ought to do and *why* one ought to do it. Grönroos resists Cooper's suggestion that listening to the rational part implies a certain capacity for reasoning on the part of the non-rational desires. He argues that non-rational desires "following" reason is a matter of 'directing the desires of the non-rational part towards values of reason itself by exposing them to those values through experience.'⁴¹

Grönroos maintains that the non-rational part follows reason's lead, not by attending to any arguments or considerations, but by obeying reason in authority. The non-rational part follows reason without questioning its directives, for it does not grasp that which speaks in favour of such a course of action. Grönroos states that according to Cooper, the non-rational part can be persuaded by reason due to having access to the same conceptual framework, and furthermore, that this persuasion consists in the non-rational part coming to grasp the reasons in support of the proposed action. But this, according to Grönroos, distorts the distinction that Aristotle seems to want to establish. For how are we to understand the claim that only the rational part possesses reason by itself if the non-rational part is equally capable of apprehending the reasons that speak in favour of some action?

At *NE* 1102b31-3 Aristotle states that the non-rational part has reason in the same way that children have it from their father, rather than in the way that one would have it in mathematics. Grönroos argues that this should be understood in terms of how we take advice from others based on authority without having knowledge of the considerations that support the advice. In mathematics, on the other hand, we are presented with, not only the truths, but also the proofs in support of them. Cooper's appeal to Aristotle's description of the relation as a matter of persuasion at *NE* 1102b33-1103a1 is also misplaced, for Aristotle states that the non-rational part is *in a way* persuaded by reason, and that this is shown by admonition and all sorts of censure. Grönroos states that, based on this characterisation, it seems implausible to suppose that Aristotle thinks that the non-rational part understands reason's commands. He rather seems to have in mind the way in which children are raised, where the child accepts that something ought to be done based on authority alone. Grönroos maintains that Cooper has afforded the non-rational part too much, cognitively speaking, in virtue of attributing to this part the

41 Grönroos, G. 2007: 254

capacity to engage with concepts.

Grönroos returns to the passage quoted above at *NE* 1149a25-b3 where Aristotle discusses the incontinent agent who is overcome by spirit, which is less shameful than being overcome by appetite. According to Grönroos, the non-rational part of the soul prompts a certain response to the insult due to its sense of the fine, without reasoning about which action is fitting. He thinks that Cooper, on the other hand, maintains that spirited desire fits the evaluative view (that insults are belittling and must be met with retaliation) with the factual information (that an insult has taken place) which leads to the decision to retaliate. Grönroos maintains that there is no textual evidence to support this, for Aristotle claims that spirited desire prompts action 'as if having reasoned' that insults of this kind are causes for going to war (*NE* 1149a32-b1). Moreover, Aristotle does not need to distinguish spirited desire by appeal to features of reason, since what matters is that it is susceptible to the fine, as Cooper has pointed out. The question to be answered is why reason values the fine:

Reason values what is good for human beings, viz. that which realises someone's full potential as a rational being. The fine has bearing on the human good in at least two ways. First, through spirited desire's drive for the fine, a reflective outlook on life and the self is developed. This reflective outlook, in turn, is indispensable if practical wisdom is to develop. For practical wisdom is conditional on the power of deliberation (*bouleusis*), i.e. the capacity to deliberate about what is good for oneself in general, in the sense that it contributes to well-being, or a happy life (*NE* 1140a24-8). If such deliberation is to be successful, it is crucial that the self is taken stock of in the broadest possible perspective. And secondly, the fine character is also a prerequisite for realising human beings' potential for theoretical knowledge (*episteme*) and reflection (*theoria*).⁴²

Importantly, this does not mean that spirited desire itself possesses a reflective outlook, but that the value it is sensitive to contributes to a more reflective outlook on life which develops the self.

The final point of discussion is the mechanism by which the non-rational part is made to follow reason. In agreement with Cooper, Grönroos identifies this mechanism as being the process of habituation that we undergo. To persuade a child of some course of action one can appeal to pleasure by rewarding them with sweets, or they may be encouraged by appealing to their sense of the fine. The child may be told that doing the honest thing

42 Grönroos, G. 2007: 263

makes them a better person, and while they do not understand why honesty is good, their spirited desire will, nonetheless, take command and motivate such behaviour based on authority. A crucial part of this process is feeling shame, and Aristotle emphasises the role of this feeling in one's moral development, as this is what one responds to before one is fully capable of reasoning. '[I]t is precisely through the sense of shame that we can correct bad behaviour and, ultimately, make the child a lover of the fine (*NE* 1179b4-16).'⁴³ It is the exposure to the fine, and the child's experience of it, that will allow him to develop an appreciation of such action. Also, Grönroos indicates how it is through spirited desire that reason has an influence over appetite:

...at some point in one's development spirited desires can function as a moderating force *vis-a-vis* appetite...For instance, in correcting excessive behaviour of even a fairly small child in regard to appetites, we can appeal to its sense of shame. This sense of shame with regard to appetites helps develop the power to resist excess, and thus is the beginning of moderation.⁴⁴

Thus Grönroos departs from Cooper's understanding of spirited desires, but supports the idea that these desires are crucial in moral development as reason has influence over them, through which reason equally exerts pressure on the appetite. My aim in this section has been to show that Aristotle views reason as playing a dominant role in our moral development, for reason is capable of acting on, and changing, our affective responses. An explanation of the details of this process of shaping the desires has been offered by both Cooper and Grönroos, and while their accounts are incompatible with each other, they both maintain that spirited desire and the mechanism of habituation are key to this transformation. The fact that there are these two plausible accounts of *how* such a transformation would occur lends credence to my claim that reason is capable of significantly affecting one's desires to the extent that they are weakened. However, the explanations that have been presented, while making my claim more plausible in one respect, may also reveal an objection to my position.

Here I have in mind Grönroos' assertion that it is the mechanism of habituation that is responsible for reason's ability to influence the non-rational part of the soul. For recall that, according to my example, Evander has undergone a rapid conversion by means of a process of reasoning which has led to the possession of weakened, rather than strong,

43 Grönroos, G. 2007: 265

44 Grönroos, G. 2007: 267

appetites. But according to Grönroos' understanding of habituation – as a process that occurs over time because reason acts on appetite, not by means of persuasion, but by means of authority alone – it would seem that the scenario I am considering is excluded as a possibility. For, according to Grönroos, Evander's appetites will not immediately be weakened as a result of a process of reasoning, because reason acts on these appetites by forcing them into submission based on authority, which takes time.

One response to this objection is to emphasise that Grönroos' understanding of habituation is not the only one to be had. Cooper's account allows for the possibility that habituation can occur more rapidly, since he takes spirited desire to involve propositional and conceptual content, which would facilitate reason's impact more readily because reason equally engages such a framework. There are respects in which Cooper's account is more convincing, as Grönroos' account can be discredited.

Dow, for example, argues that the *Beliefs View* of emotion, according to which the distinctive outlook of emotions is how the subject takes things to be, rather than the *Appearances View*, where the distinctive outlook of emotions is how things appear to the subject, is more convincing in light of considerations regarding irrational and recalcitrant emotions. These are emotions that persist despite the presence of conflicting better beliefs. For example, continued fear of a spider even though one knows that it is harmless. Many commentators favour the appearances view because they think that it provides a ready explanation of such emotions, but Dow clarifies the demands that these cases make on a theory of emotion.⁴⁵ He explains that there are two demands that the appearances view clearly cannot meet, namely, that a theory of emotion should be able to account for the irrationality of such emotions, and it should explain why emotions usually are responsive to the subject's better beliefs.

The irrationality of these emotions arises from the conflict between the content of the emotion and the subject's better belief, but if one accepts the appearances view then the irrationality disappears, as there is nothing irrational about things appearing different to how we know them to be. This is illustrated by Aristotle's example of the sun in *De Anima*, where it appears to be a foot across but is in fact much larger (428b2-9). Furthermore, it is evident that when our beliefs change, our emotions are affected. For

⁴⁵ Dow, J. 2008: 3

example, when someone who looks like a beggar is revealed to be a wealthy actor, our sympathy disappears. This presents a difficulty for the appearances view, as perceptions are not generally responsive to beliefs in this way. My knowledge that the sun is much larger than a foot across does not change my perception of the sun as being a foot wide.⁴⁶ It is based on these, and other, considerations that Dow favours the beliefs view.

What Dow's discussion brings to light is the fact that Cooper's account provides a clear explanation of *how* the process of transformation occurs in virtue of the shared elements between reason and desire. Grönroos' account conveys, not so much an explanation, as a discussion of what appear to be brute facts about our psychology. In virtue of his theory of submission based on authority it is not obvious *how* it is that the non-rational part submits, whereas Cooper is able to explain this more clearly. There are persuasive reasons, therefore, to favour Cooper's account, in which case the phenomenon I have raised remains a possibility.

Also, if we take the example that I have raised to be, not only a conceivable, but also a very plausible phenomenon, then I am inclined to say, so much the worse for Grönroos' account. For if his account fails to make sense of such instances then it may suggest that we need to take Aristotle's remarks regarding persuasion more seriously in the way that Cooper has. I am not at liberty to pursue this concern in more detail here, but we may think that the plausibility of certain cases that we take to be actual phenomena should inform and shape how we fill out the particulars of Aristotle's moral psychology that he neglected to fully address himself. I now turn to the second task of this chapter.

Placing the Good-willed Agent

Having discussed the pervasive role of reason, we are left with clearly articulating the space that the good-willed agent is meant to fill. I begin with McDowell's discussion of incontinence, where he aims to clarify the distinction to be drawn between incontinence,

⁴⁶ The other demands made on a theory of emotion by the phenomena of recalcitrant and irrational emotions is that the theory should not render such cases impossible or exceptional, and it shouldn't overstate the irrationality. Dow acknowledges that the demands he highlights also present problems for the beliefs view, but he argues that these difficulties can be dealt with more successfully. He argues that the beliefs view is more convincing based on the place of emotions in virtue and how they are aroused in rhetoric. He then goes on to undermine the reasoning that speaks in favour of the appearances view. For the details of Dow's position, see *Aren't Aristotelian Emotions Fantastic? - 'Appearances' in 'Rhetoric' II and 'De Anima' III. 3.* 2008

or continence, and virtue. He claims that Aristotle's discussion of the incontinent agent at VII.3 shows that

...something must have gone wrong with the agent's purchase on the minor premise of virtue's syllogism, so that although the agent in a way sees things as a temperate person would, the match between the relevant part of his practical thought and that of a temperate person is imperfect. If the match in thought were perfect, there would also be a match in behaviour.⁴⁷

McDowell emphasises that Aristotle's aim in discussing the incontinent agent is the characterisation of someone whose practical thought almost completely matches the practical thought of someone who has practical wisdom. Practical wisdom, as we have seen, is an intellectual virtue that the fully virtuous person possesses, and is a correct conception of the end of human action (*NE* 142b31-3). According to Aristotle, this conception cannot be reduced to a system of rules that guide action, for such an abstraction could never capture the morally relevant features that are present in each unique context (*NE* 1094b11-27, 1109b12-23).

A correct conception of the end is accordingly inseparable from a kind of perception (1142a23-30, 1143a5-b5), which Wiggins helpfully glosses as “situational appreciation”: a capacity to discern which of the potential action-inviting features of a situation is the one that should be allowed to call into operation one of the standing concerns whose being put into practice on the appropriate occasions constitutes living out a correct conception of the sort of life a human being should live.⁴⁸

McDowell explores this “situational appreciation” with regard to the virtue of temperance, and considers the temperate person who abstains from some bodily pleasure to be had. He asserts that in such cases the agent is aware that there is pleasure to be had. The fact that there is an opportunity for pleasure can engage a “motivational susceptibility”, as he puts it, in the temperate person, for recall that a complete lack of interest in the pleasure that appetite can afford is equally regarded as a vice (*NE* III.11). But what matters to the virtuous agent is not that there is pleasure to be had, but whatever it is that marks the having of the pleasure as excessive. This is the morally salient feature that is apprehended by the virtuous person. McDowell goes on to draw the distinction between the continent and the virtuous agent as follows:

47 McDowell, J. 2009: 65

48 McDowell, J. 2009: 66

By separating temperance from continence as he does, Aristotle implies a picture on these lines: on an occasion like this, what is characteristic of a practically wise person, which a possessor of temperance in the strict sense must be, is not simply that he counts as irrelevant to the question what to do in an instance of a kind of consideration (the potential for pleasure) that is relevant to that question in other circumstances, but that his counting it as irrelevant is completely realised in how his motivational make-up responds to the situation. It shows in his feeling no appetitive pull towards the potential pleasure. So he stands in sharp contrast with people who are continent or (weakly) incontinent. Such people in such a situation would in a way share the practically wise person's view of the status of the opportunity for pleasure as a candidate reason for acting, namely that it counts for nothing in the face of the fact that the pleasure is excessive. But in them the opportunity for pleasure would trigger an appetite, which would need to be overcome...Fully-fledged practical wisdom is a "situational appreciation" that not only singles out just the right one of the potentially action-inviting features of a predicament, but does so in such a way that none of the agent's motivational energy is enticed into operation by any of the others...⁴⁹

On this picture, the person who has acquired "situational appreciation" does not experience any motivational pull from competing courses of action. Thus the continent and incontinent agent only possess an imperfect approximation of the "situational appreciation" that the virtuous person possesses due to experiencing this motivational pull. In such cases the agent has acquired something less than fully-fledged "situational appreciation": 'something that yields a similar selection of what matters about the situation, but without the singleness of motivation that fully-fledged practical wisdom would achieve.'⁵⁰ The important distinction between the virtuous and the continent agent is, therefore, not to be viewed as a matter of the virtuous agent being incapable of seeing the attractiveness of the bodily pleasure (in the case of temperance) while the continent person can. What sets them apart is the fact that the virtuous agent has acquired fully-fledged "situational appreciation" in virtue of which this awareness fails to engage the appetite which leads to motivational conflict:

There need be no implication that the attractiveness of the competing course goes dim, in the view of the situation that the practically wise person achieves. The pleasure is there to be had, by the practically wise person no less than by anyone else. He can be completely aware of the attractiveness of the competing course; it is just that he is not attracted by it.⁵¹

McDowell highlights several crucial points. First, it becomes apparent that the state of

49 McDowell, J. 2009: 67

50 McDowell, J. 2009: 68

51 McDowell, J. 2009: 68

the virtuous man amounts to more than one's appetite and judgement being aligned, for the fully virtuous person sets himself apart as having practical wisdom, or a correct conception of the good that consists in the "situational appreciation" that Wiggins discusses. Furthermore, McDowell resists the reading of the virtuous man as someone who is unaware of the attractiveness of pleasures that reason deems excessive.⁵² Thus the virtuous man is capable of apprehending the desirability of some bodily pleasure without actually desiring it, for the "situational appreciation" that they possess affords them a singleness of motivation that prevents these pleasures from gaining any psychological purchase that would lead to conflict. It is the continent agent who cannot be aware of the pleasure to be had without this awareness engaging the appetite, which means that the continent agent will thereby strongly desire the pleasure and experience a motivational conflict.

Given this picture of the distinction between the virtuous and the continent agent it is not immediately obvious how the good-willed agent is to be contrasted with both these categories. In Chapter 2, I defended a picture of the good-willed agent by considering what McDowell would call the virtuous man. I argued that the good-willed agent would be someone who is capable of perceiving the desirability of some bodily pleasure without actually desiring it in the way that the continent person does, i.e. such that a motivational conflict arises. As McDowell has pointed out, it is the fact that the awareness of the desirability of some bodily pleasure does not engage the appetite in such a way as to give rise to a motivational conflict that marks the agent as one who has practical wisdom. Therefore, the good-willed agent would equally be someone who is practically wise. This, however, is a consequence that I will not aim to resist, for my claim rests on the idea that the good-willed agent *is* able to see things in the way that the virtuous agent does. My aim is to argue that the presence of certain residual appetites that are vicious, and have been weakened by reason, are not sufficient to engage the motivational pull that characterises the continent agent. Reason has 'uprooted' the hold that these appetites have on the psyche to the extent that their presence does not prevent the agent from taking the proper pleasure in the fineness of their act. What needs to be made clear, in light of McDowell's discussion, is how the good-willed agent is to be distinguished from the virtuous agent.

52 J.M. Cooper supports this reading insofar as he claims that 'non-rational desires are according to Aristotle's view a permanent fact of human life, grounded in human nature and not eliminable, even (*especially*, one is inclined rather to say) in the perfected, fully virtuous person.' (1999, p. 247)

One comment to be made about McDowell's position at this stage is that it is not clear that his picture of the virtuous man in the case of temperance, which is the virtue that he singles out, is generalizable to *all* the virtues. That is, it is possible to apply such a picture to the case of temperance, for when it comes to bodily pleasure these pleasures are not necessarily bad – they are only bad when had in excess. After all, the fact that we enjoy food and sex is a fact about the kinds of creatures that we are and not something that we are responsible for. Our innate capacities for perception make it the case that we experience these pains and pleasures (*De Anima* II.3 414b1-6), and so to take pleasure in these things up to a certain point will not be seen as bad. Thus, when it comes to temperance, it is possible to maintain that the agent is still virtuous when they perceive the desirability of some bodily pleasure, for this perceiving it as desirable is not necessarily a bad thing with regard to this virtue. But, if we consider the other virtues, and more specifically justice, then McDowell's picture seems more difficult to maintain.

For in the case of justice there are certain appetites that are simply bad, so that if the agent were to perceive the desirability of some course of action involving such an appetite, it would seem problematic to continue to characterise him as a virtuous agent. For example, in the case under consideration, it is unjust to purchase as slaves those who are by nature free men. Thus, if one perceived the desirability of unjustly keeping slaves, and had desires in relation to unnatural slaves, one would resist calling such a person virtuous given that such a person is acknowledging the attractiveness of some course of action which is, according to Aristotle, unjust. To perceive the course of action as desirable in such a case would seem to constitute someone who is less than virtuous in light of the fact that the appetite is always bad to have, rather than only being bad in excess. Thus the distinction between perceiving the desirability of some course of action and actually desiring it keeps in place a characterisation of someone as virtuous in the case of temperance, but is less successfully done with regard to justice. It seems, then, that there *is* a gap which the good-willed agent would serve to fill, for this would be someone who perceives the desirability of some course of action as a result of residual appetites that are weak (which means that they fail to be virtuous), while failing to desire it strongly enough to give rise to a motivational conflict.

I now turn to Coope's discussion of why the continent agent fails to be practically wise,

for this discussion will be crucial with regards to my characterisation of the space that the good-willed agent is meant to fill. Coope also comments on McDowell's discussion above which will help us reach an understanding of the continent, and so, the good-willed agent. She begins by setting out the problem that she aims to address:

Aristotle says that only the virtuous person has practical wisdom (*NE* V.13. 1144B30-32). This implies that I cannot have practical wisdom if my appetites are bad. Practical wisdom is, according to Aristotle, a virtue of the rational part of the soul (more specifically, of the rational part that is concerned with action). From this it follows (or so, at least, I shall claim) that someone who lacks practical wisdom must have a *rational* ailing. Hence, Aristotle is committed to the view that if I have a bad appetite, there must be something wrong with the rational part of my soul. My question in this paper is how he might justify this view.⁵³

Coope states that one can resist this conclusion only if one is able to show that practical wisdom is, not only a state of the rational part, but also of the non-rational part of the soul. McDowell argues for such a view and claims that to understand Aristotle's position, according to which practical wisdom requires virtue, we need to recognise that practical wisdom just *is* the properly moulded state of the motivational propensities, in a reflectively adjusted form.⁵⁴ Coope thinks that this interpretation is difficult to maintain in light of Aristotle's remarks about the distinction to be drawn between the intellectual and ethical virtues. In drawing the distinction, Aristotle appeals to differences between parts of the soul, and the characterisation of practical wisdom as an intellectual *as opposed to* an ethical virtue casts serious doubt on the idea that Aristotle thought that practical wisdom was also a state of the non-rational part. Coope's project, therefore, is to make sense of the thought that ethical virtue is necessary for practical wisdom, while taking into account the distinction that Aristotle draws between the different parts of the soul. Why does someone who fails to be ethically virtuous also suffer a *rational* failing? Coope maintains that we can only reach an answer to this question if we appreciate that on Aristotle's view, the function of the rational part is not purely cognitive. 'Aristotle attributes to the rational part, not only knowledge and judgement, but also a distinctively rational kind of desire, a rational kind of pleasure, and even perhaps a rational kind of seeing-as.'⁵⁵

It is easy enough to see why both the vicious and the incontinent agent fail to possess

53 Coope, U. 2012: 142

54 McDowell, J. 1998: 40

55 Coope, U. 2012: 145

practical wisdom. The vicious person fails to reason correctly and so does not grasp the right starting point, which means that they do not even see what ought to be done, and so fail to be practically wise. However, bad appetites do not always corrupt the starting point, as we see in the case of incontinence. Here the agent has bad appetites but succeeds in reasoning correctly and sees what ought to be done. Yet the agent is unable to overcome these bad appetites and so acts against reason to satisfy them. Thus the incontinent agent does not act on the prescription of practical reason, which means that practical wisdom fails to achieve what it is for, and so the agent does not exhibit the virtue of practical wisdom (*NE* 1146a5-7, 1152a8-9). These explanations do not, however, serve to explain why the presence of bad appetites prevents one from being practically wise, for in the case of the continent agent we have someone who reasons correctly, and this reasoning issues in right action despite the presence of bad appetites. Coope aims, therefore, to explain what rational flaw the continent person has in virtue of the presence of bad appetites.

Coope considers McDowell's answer to this question and rejects it. McDowell thinks that both the continent and incontinent person 'are alike shown not to see things exactly as the practically wise person does by the fact that they feel an appetitive pull towards an action other than what, as they realise, virtue requires.'⁵⁶ Someone who has bad appetites does not see the right things as good, for (as we see above) there is a sense in which the continent and the incontinent person see things differently. Coope does not think that the sense in which they see things differently as explained by McDowell serves to explain why they fail to be practically wise. It is true that, according to Aristotle, you and I will see different things as good if we have different appetites, i.e. we will differ in what appears good to us. Aristotle thinks that non-rational desire quite generally has as its object an apparent good (*EE* 1235b25-7, *De Anima* 433a27-9). But your appetite functions independently of your belief, which means that you can have an appetite for something without believing that it is good, for the object of your appetite must only *appear* good to you. So if your appetites differ to that of the virtuous person, then this does not mean that you will differ with regard to your beliefs – different things will appear good to you but you can have the same beliefs about what is good. This sort of 'seeing as good', then, resides in the non-rational part of the soul and does not determine what your beliefs are about what is good (*EE* 1235b28-9). According to

56 McDowell, J. 1996: 105

Coope

[i]t follows that if you differ from the virtuous person in what you (in this sense) see as good, that is not in itself enough to show that you differ from the virtuous person in respect of your rational part. Hence it is not enough to show that you lack practical wisdom, which is a virtue of the rational part.⁵⁷

And even if the perception involved in practical wisdom is a rational kind of seeing, as Aristotle indicates at *NE* 1142a23-30, this does not by itself reveal why practical wisdom requires virtue, or why inappropriate appetites would interfere with this rational perception. The self-controlled person, after all, must have a good enough “situational appreciation” in order to see which action is right and act upon it, so what is it that the continent person has that prevents them from being practically wise?

This is where Cooper offers her own answer to this question. She aims to argue that (1) the continent person does not sufficiently enjoy acting virtuously, and (2) that the failure to enjoy acting virtuously is a failure of the rational part, for it is a failure to sufficiently appreciate the fineness of fine action.⁵⁸ She reaches these conclusions by carefully considering the features of the continent agent. The continent agent is pained by acting in accordance with reason and would be pleased by satisfying their desires that are strong even though they will never do so (*EE* 1224a34-6). As such the continent person is not sufficiently pained by the shameful of alternative actions, for they would still take pleasure in so acting (*NE* 1152a2-3). The continent person also experiences good action as being painful, and, more importantly, we are told that the pleasure she experiences in acting rightly stems from the hope of some benefit such as good health (*EE* 1224a34-6, 1224b16-19), rather than the fineness of her act. Coope construes the failing of the continent agent (that consists in this motivational conflict) as a rational failing even though it is caused by bad appetites. She claims that it is the rational part that enjoys the fine, so when someone does not take enough pleasure in the fineness of an act – due to being pulled in different directions by the strength of her powerful desires – it is a failing of the rational part.

Coope thinks that we can see that the ability to discern fineness in action is a rational

57 Coope, U. 2012: 149

58 Coope, U.2012: 153

capacity based on Aristotle's doctrine of the mean.⁵⁹ The ability to discern whether an action is in accordance with the mean is a rational capacity, because Aristotle states that this is precisely what the practically wise person is able to do, and practical wisdom is an intellectual virtue. Intellectual virtues are virtues in the rational part of the soul (*NE* I.13 1103a5-6). This capacity, Coope thinks, is identical to the capacity which allows us to determine whether an action is fine. For in the realm of ethics that which is fine, or fitting, is exhibited by that which is in accordance with the mean. One equally, therefore, utilises a rational capacity in determining which action is fine. If the capacity to discern fineness is rational, then the pleasure that follows must be a pleasure of the rational part. As such, the pleasure at issue is a rational pleasure.⁶⁰ Coope concedes that Aristotle does not explicitly endorse this notion of a rational pleasure, but it is suggested by several remarks about the relation between pleasure and perceptual or intellectual activity. Aristotle describes the pleasure taken in fineness as a kind of completion of the activity of perceiving or grasping fineness:

That everyone desires pleasure one might put down to the fact that everyone also seeks to be alive, and living is a sort of activity, each person being active in relation to those objects, and with those faculties, to which he also feels the greatest attachment: the musical person, e.g. with hearing in relation to melodies, the lover of understanding with thought in relation to the objects of reflection, and so on in the case of every other type too; and pleasure completes the activities, and so the life, that they desire. It makes sense, then, that they seek pleasure; for it adds completeness to living, which is something desirable, for each. (*NE* 1175a10)

The pleasure that an excellent man takes in his own action is also compared to the pleasure that a musician takes in fine melodies at *NE* 1170a8-11. It is thereby suggested that the pleasure involved is one that completes the activity of practical thought, which would be a pleasure of the rational part given the fact that practical wisdom is an intellectual virtue.

As we have seen, Aristotle takes the experience of pleasure and pain to be a sign of what our dispositions are. In this case, a failure to experience the appropriate pleasure might be said to amount to a failure to fully appreciate the fineness of the action. The continent person may believe that he is doing the right thing and that it is a fine act, but the felt pain that accompanies the act, and which effectively excludes the proper

59 Coope, U. 2012: 155

60 Coope, U. 2012: 155

pleasure that Coope has discussed, she thinks, suggests that this belief does not rest upon full understanding.⁶¹ For full understanding involves this sort of pleasurable engagement as part of the completion of the activity. This is part of what is involved in grasping its fineness. The presence of bad appetites and, more importantly, the strength of these desires in the case of the continent agent, gives rise to a motivational conflict that prevents the agent from appreciating the fineness of their act.⁶²

It now seems clear how the good-willed agent is to be distinguished from the continent agent. Evander is aware of those pleasures that he has sacrificed as being desirable, but in their weakened form these desires are not such as to give rise to a motivational conflict. Through a process of reasoning Evander has come to possess the “situational appreciation” that affords him a 'single-minded' motivation. The difficulty, as I have mentioned above, is that if Evander can be said to possess practical wisdom in the way that I have indicated it is not immediately obvious how he is to be distinguished from the virtuous agent in a significant way.

This difficulty can be dealt with by considering the fact that the good-willed agent has residual appetites that are vicious and, more importantly, weak. As I have already mentioned, these appetites are such as to place the good-willed agent in the space that McDowell argues the virtuous agent occupies when it comes to temperance – the agent can perceive, and is aware of, the desirability of some course of action but fails to be motivationally directed towards it such that a conflict arises which would prevent them from sufficiently enjoying the fineness of their act. Coope herself considers the possibility of an intermediate state of this kind based on her discussion of the continent agent:

[I]t might seem that this [argument] opens up the possibility of a state intermediate between self-control and virtue: the state of someone who has bad desires, but would *not* enjoy acting on them against reason; someone who enjoys the fineness of acting rightly, in spite of the fact that in so doing he is frustrating some bad appetites. So it might seem that, even if I have shown the self-controlled person cannot be practically wise, I still haven't shown that one needs to be *virtuous* in order to be

61 Coope, U. 2012: 159

62 Coope takes appreciation of the fine, and the pleasure that arises from it, to be a rational capacity that gives rise to a rational pleasure, and neglects to mention the role of spirited desire as discussed by Cooper and Gronroos. However, Cooper makes it clear that spirited desires are not generally directed towards the fine but are only so orientated once they have been imposed on by reason and once the person has progressed quite far in terms of their moral development. This means that prior to this point reason is responsible for directing us towards the fine.

practically wise. Someone in this nameless intermediate state *would* take proper pleasure in fine action. If his non-rational part did not listen to his rational part, that would not be because of anything that his rational part was doing wrong.⁶³

Coope wonders why Aristotle does not explicitly address this possibility and give reasons to dismiss it. She speculates by offering two suggestions. First, having strong desires effectively excludes one from appreciating the fineness of good action, as is shown by the discussion of the continent agent. So if one appreciated the fineness of good action it would suggest that one's bad appetites could at most be weak. Coope states that '[p]erhaps Aristotle would be happy to allow that someone who had a few weak bad appetites, and was in other respects like the virtuous person, could count as practically wise.'⁶⁴ Her other suggestion is that perhaps Aristotle would allow for this possibility but insist that such a person would be in a very unstable state regarding their character, and this is why they would not be practically wise. A defense of their state as unstable would have to be provided, but Coope claims that perhaps Aristotle would argue that one's state cannot be stable if one is strongly drawn to opposing pleasures. The self-controlled person is, then, not in an unstable state because they are not strongly attracted to the pleasure of acting finely. This intermediate state would, Coope suggests, be such as to prevent the agent from remaining in that state and would rapidly deteriorate into either continence or virtue given its volatility. The risk of deterioration is such that the person could not be relied upon to take the proper pleasure in fine action which would exclude them from being practically wise.

My focus here is her first point of speculation. Perhaps if the person has strong appetites we would want to describe their state as unstable because they would be strongly pulled in opposing directions. Such a state could arguably not be sustained, and this prevents the agent from possessing practical wisdom. But if their appetites did not pull strongly in the other direction because they are weak, it becomes less clear why their state is unstable and why they would not possess practical wisdom. The significance of this suggestion also becomes apparent in light of Coope's discussion, for if we find such a phenomenon plausible then it indicates that one *can* be practically wise without being fully virtuous. This is something that Aristotle does not allow for, yet why he maintains this position is less clear. Coope has aimed to make sense of Aristotle's claim that practical wisdom requires virtue in light of Aristotle's failure to explain this dependence.

63 Coope, U. 2012: 161

64 Coope, U. 2012: 162

If Coope's suggestion as to why the continent person fails to be practically wise is correct, then it would seem that Aristotle would have no principled reason for excluding the good-willed agent from being practically wise. For, I have aimed to explain why the good-willed agent would still be in a position to take the proper pleasure in the fineness of their act – reason has acted on the psyche such as to weaken appetites that were once strong, and these appetites in their weakened form fail to give rise to a motivational conflict that would prevent the person from sufficiently enjoying the fineness of their act.

The continuing obstacle to my suggestion is whether the distinction I have drawn is significant enough to be delineated as a further category. If Aristotle implicitly acknowledges that given the process of moral development the agent will, on the path to virtue, reach a point at which their appetites will be weakened, then surely he himself thought that there was nothing significant about this state that would justify explicitly articulating a further category. This state, it can be argued, is so fleeting and is simply a matter of degree (in the sense that one still has bad appetites that are simply weaker), such that it fails to reveal anything further about our psychology. But I would like to suggest that we might think that an intermediate state of this kind is relevant, firstly, because it presents an objection to Aristotle's claim regarding the relation between virtue and practical wisdom, but also because it marks a state that could be a 'tipping point'. That is, the weakened appetites may remain for some time and this state could be, not merely a swift phenomenon on the path to virtue, but a point from which regression to continence may occur. Aristotle, does, after all, acknowledge the possibility of regression in the *Politics*, as I mentioned in Chapter 2 (*Pol.* VII 1332b6-8, footnote 33). Thus, the state of the good-willed agent marks a significant moral state that we could find ourselves in, and reveals a possibility that Aristotle does not adequately address or rule out.

Conclusion

The significance of the consideration that I have raised also rests on the fact that I am considering a specific agent in a particular context. My agent is someone who has some true beliefs and good appetites along with his bad appetites, and it is situational complexity that Aristotle is often at pains to emphasise as being a mark of morality. To be practically wise is to have the skill to look at each unique context and pick out the

morally salient features so as to choose the right course of action. I have, therefore, put Aristotle's case by case methodology to the test by considering a particular state of affairs with regard to psychological features that an agent may possess. Consideration of the complex example that I have raised allows us to employ Aristotle's moral framework and consider whether the complexity he emphasises with regard to morality is genuinely being accommodated by this framework.

I have aimed to argue that Evander's case presents us with an instance of acting morally that cannot be accounted for by means of the categories that Aristotle explicitly sets out. I have described a case that I take to be a plausible phenomenon, and which I think an ethical theory should be able to accommodate. It seems to be a genuine possibility that, given the right sort of agent, moral conversion can take place by exposing this agent to a process of reasoning, and that upon such conversion he is able to achieve a full understanding of what ought to be done and why. I have argued that it is possible to make sense of a case of this kind within an Aristotelian framework, and have highlighted the respects in which it is consistent with Aristotelian thought. Though the argument has led to a conclusion that Aristotle does not endorse – i.e. that someone can be practically wise without being fully virtuous – it is not obvious why Aristotle would refute such a possibility. For throughout the course of this discussion I have revealed the respects in which my suggestion is consistent with his overall account. I have aimed to argue that Aristotle should have acknowledged a further moral category – i.e. the category of good-will – and why this category is significant enough to be set apart from the categories of continence and virtue. Not only does this category serve to capture instances of moral action that the other categories do not, but it also seems to be suggested by Aristotle's remarks regarding the continent agent, as Coope's discussion reveals. Thus Aristotle's ethical theory is vindicated to the extent that his framework is able to accommodate a case that seems not only conceivable but highly plausible.

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Abbreviations:

NE – 'Nicomachean Ethics'

Rhet. – 'Rhetoric'

EE – 'Eudemian Ethics'

DA – 'De Anima'

Pol. - 'The Politics'

