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Aristotle on Learning to Be Good

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The question "Can virtue be taught?" is perhaps the oldest question in moral philosophy. Recall the opening of Plato's *Meno* (70a): "Can you tell me, Socrates—can virtue be taught, or is it rather to be acquired by practice? Or is it neither to be practiced nor to be learned but something that comes to men by nature or in some other way?" This is a simple version of what was evidently a well-worn topic of discussion. Socrates' characteristic but still simple reply is that until one knows what virtue is, one cannot know how it is (to be) acquired (*Meno* 71ab). I want to reverse the order, asking how, according to Aristotle, virtue is acquired, so as to bring to light certain features in his conception of what virtue is which are not ordinarily much attended to. Aristotle came to these questions after they had been transformed by the pioneering work in moral psychology which the mature Plato undertook in the *Republic* and later dialogues; by his time the simplicities of the debate in the *Meno* lay far behind. Nevertheless, about one thing Socrates was right: any tolerably explicit view of the process of moral development depends decisively on a conception of virtue. This dependence makes it possible to read a philosopher's account of moral development as evidence for what he thinks virtue is. In some ways, indeed, it is especially revealing evidence, since in problems of moral education the philosopher has to confront the complex reality of ordinary imperfect human beings.

My aim, then, is to reconstruct Aristotle's picture of the good man's development over time, concentrating on the earlier stages. Materials for

the construction are abundant in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but scattered; the construction will be gradual, its sense emerging progressively as the pieces come together from their separate contexts. I shall have to forgo extended exegesis of the various discussions from which Aristotle's remarks are extracted, but I trust that it is not necessary to apologize for the undefended interpretative decisions this will involve; such decisions are an inescapable responsibility of the synoptic enterprise.

Aristotle's good man, however, is not the only character I have in view. I am also interested in the conflicted akratic, the weak-willed (incontinent) man who knows the good but does not always achieve it in action. I want to place his problem too in the perspective of his development through time. And while I am not going to attempt anything like a full treatment of Aristotle's account of *akrasia* (incontinence, weakness of will), my hope is that the temporal perspective I shall sketch will remove one major source, at any rate, of the dissatisfaction which is often, and understandably, felt with Aristotle's account of the phenomenon.

In both cases, the good man and the akratic, we shall be concerned with the primitive materials from which character and a mature morality must grow. A wide range of desires and feelings are shaping patterns of motivation and response in a person well before he comes to a reasoned outlook on his life as a whole, and certainly before he integrates this reflective consciousness with his actual behavior. It is this focus of interest that constitutes the chief philosophical benefit, as I conceive it, of what is a predominantly historical inquiry. Intellectualism, a one-sided preoccupation with reason and reasoning, is a perennial failing in moral philosophy. The very subject of moral philosophy is sometimes defined or delimited as the study of moral reasoning, thereby excluding the greater part of what is important in the initial—and, I think, continuing—moral development of a person. Aristotle knew intellectualism in the form of Socrates' doctrine that virtue is knowledge. He reacted by emphasizing the importance of beginnings and the gradual development of good habits of feeling. The twentieth century, which has its own intellectualisms to combat, also has several full-scale developmental psychologies to draw upon. But they have not been much drawn upon in the moral philosophy of our time, which has been little interested in questions of education and development.[1] In this respect Aristotle's example has gone sadly unstudied and ignored.

No doubt Aristotle's developmental picture is still much too simple, by comparison with what could be available to us. Let that be conceded at once—to anyone who can do better. What is exemplary in Aristotle is his grasp of the truth that morality comes in a sequence of stages with both

cognitive and emotional dimensions. This basic insight is already sufficient, as we shall see, to bring new light on akrasia.

So let us begin at the beginning, which Aristotle says is "the *that*." This somewhat cryptic phrase occurs in an admitted digression (cf. 1095b14) toward the end of 1.4. Aristotle has just begun the search for a satisfactory specification of happiness and the good for man when he pauses to reflect, with acknowledgments to Plato, on the methodological importance of being clear whether one is on the way to first principles or starting points or on the way from them (1095a14-b1). The answer to Plato's question is that at this stage Aristotle is traveling dialectically toward a first principle or starting point, namely, the specification of happiness, but in another sense his inquiry must have its own starting points to proceed from. As he explains (1095b2-13),

> For while one must begin from what is familiar, this may be taken in two ways: some things are familiar to us, others familiar without qualification. Presumably, then, what *we* should begin from is things familiar to *us*. This is the reason why one should have been well brought up in good habits if one is going to listen adequately to lectures about things noble and just, and in general about political (social) affairs. For the beginning (starting point) is "the *that*," and if this is sufficiently apparent to a person, he will not in addition have a need for "the *because*." Such a person has, or can easily get hold of, beginnings (starting points), whereas he who has neither [sc. neither "the *that*" nor "the *because*"],[2] let him hearken to the words of Hesiod:
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> > The best man of all is he who knows everything himself,
> > Good also the man who accepts another's sound advice;
> > But the man who neither knows himself nor takes to heart
> > What another says, he is no good at all.

The contrast here, between having only "the *that*" and having both "the *that*" and "the *because*" as well, is a contrast between knowing or believing that something is so and understanding why it is so, and I would suppose that Aristotle quotes the Hesiodic verses in all seriousness. The man who knows for himself is someone with "the *because*"—in Aristotle's terms he is a man of practical wisdom equipped with the understanding to work out for himself what to do in the varied circumstances of life—while the one who takes to heart sound advice learns "the *that*" and becomes the sort of person who can profit from Aristotle's lectures. These lectures are no doubt designed to give him a reasoned understanding of "the *because*" which explains and justifies "the *that*" which he already has or can easily get hold of. What, then, is "the *that*"?

The ancient commentators are agreed that Aristotle has in mind knowledge about actions in accordance with the virtues; these actions are the things familiar to us from which we must start, and what we know

about them is that they are noble or just.[3] This fits an earlier statement (1.3. 1095a2-4, quoted below) that the lectures assume on the part of their audience a certain experience in the actions of life, because they are concerned with these actions and *start from them.* It also conforms to what 1.4 says is the subject matter of the lectures for which knowledge of "the *that*" is a prerequisite: things noble and just.

Now the noble and the just do not, in Aristotle's view, admit of neat formulation in rules or traditional precepts (cf. 1.3 1094b14-16; 2.2. 1104a3-10; 5.10. 1137b13-32; 9.2. 1165a12-14). It takes an educated perception, a capacity going beyond the application of general rules, to tell what is required for the practice of the virtues in specific circumstances (2.9. 1109b23; 4.5. 1126b2-4). That being so, if the student is to have "the *that*" for which the doctrines in Aristotle's lectures provide the explanatory "*because,*" if he is to be starting out on a path which will lead to his acquiring that educated perception, the emphasis had better be on his knowing of specific actions that they are noble or just in specific circumstances. I put it as a matter of emphasis only, of degree, because often, no doubt, moral advice will come to him in fairly general terms; a spot of dialectic may be needed to bring home to the young man the limitations and imprecision of what he has learned. But even where the advice is general, this need not mean he is taught that there are certain rules of justice, say, which are to be followed as a matter of principle, without regard for the spirit of justice and the ways in which circumstances alter cases. What Aristotle is pointing to is our ability to internalize from a scattered range of particular cases a general evaluative attitude which is not reducible to rules or precepts. It is with this process in view that he emphasizes in 1.4 that the necessary beginnings or starting points, which I have argued to be correct ideas about what actions are noble and just, are not available to anyone who has not had the benefit of an upbringing in good habits.

We can put this together with some further remarks about "the *that*" at the end of 1.7 (1098a33-b4):

> We must not demand explanation [sc. any more than precision] in all matters alike, but it is sufficient in some cases to have "the *that*" shown properly, just as in the case of starting points. "The *that*" is a first thing and a starting point. Of starting points some are seen by induction, some by perception, some by a certain habituation, and others in other ways again.

This time the wider context points to the outline definition of happiness or the good for man as the particular "*that*" which Aristotle has initially in mind. The search for a satisfactory specification of happiness and the

good for man has just been completed, and Aristotle is reflecting on the extent to which he should claim precision and proof for his answer: it has the status of "the *that*" merely, and, being general, no more precision than the subject matter allows. Thus it would obviously be wrong to think of the notion of "the *that*" as intrinsically tied to particular low-level facts. Nevertheless, in this passage the thesis that we have to start from "the *that*" without an explanation, without "the *because*," is reasserted for starting points quite generally, and is complemented by a brief survey of various ways in which we acquire starting points. We already know that in ethics good habits are a prerequisite for grasping "the *that*." It is now added that habituation is actually a way of grasping it, on a par with, though different from, induction, perception, and other modes of acquisition which Aristotle does not specify (the ancient commentators fill out the list for him by mentioning intellectual intuition and experience).[4] Each kind of starting point comes with a mode of acquisition appropriate to it; to give a couple of examples from the ancient commentators, we learn by induction that all men breathe, by perception that fire is hot. In ethics the appropriate mode for at least some starting points is habituation, and in the light of 1.4 it is not difficult to see which starting points these must be.[5] The thesis is that we first learn (come to see) what is noble and just *not* by experience of or induction from a series of instances, nor by intuition (intellectual or perceptual), but by learning to do noble and just things, by being habituated to noble and just conduct.

In part, this is the well-known doctrine of 2.1 and 4 that we become just or temperate by doing, and becoming habituated to doing, just and temperate things. But the passages we have examined from 1.4 and 7 add to those chapters a cognitive slant. It turns out that Aristotle is not simply giving us a bland reminder that virtue takes practice. Rather, practice has cognitive powers, in that it is the way we learn what is noble or just. And on reflection we can see that this addition is quite in accord with 2.1 and 4, even demanded by them. For according to 2.4 the ultimate goal toward which the beginner's practice is aimed is that he should become the sort of person who does virtuous things in full knowledge of what he is doing, choosing to do them for their own sake, and acting out of a settled state of character (1105a28-33). The beginner would hardly be on the way to this desirable state of affairs if he were not in the process forming (reasonably correct) ideas as to the nobility or justice of the actions he was engaged in; if you like, he must be on his way to acquiring a mature sense of values.

Let me skip here to 7.3, where at 1147a21-22 Aristotle has an interesting remark about learners in general:

Those who have learned a subject for the first time connect together[6] the propositions in an orderly way, but do not yet know them; for the propositions need to become second nature to them, and that takes time.

We shall come later to the significance of this learner as one of Aristotle's models for the state of mind of the akratic man. At present I want simply to connect the thought in 7.3 of ideas or beliefs becoming second nature to someone with the thought in 2.4 of the learner in morals as someone who is tending toward a firmly established state of character which includes, and therefore must in part have developed out of, convictions about what is noble and just. The fully developed man of virtue and practical wisdom understands "the *because*" of these convictions—in terms of 1.4's contrast between things familiar without qualification and things familiar to us, he has knowledge or familiarity in the unqualified sense—but this state is preceded by the learner's knowledge (in the qualified sense) of "the *that*," acquired by habituation so that it is second nature to him. Although only at the beginning of the road to full virtue, the learner has advanced to a stage where, having internalized "the *that*," he has or can easily get hold of the type of starting point which is seen by habituation.

Thus the picture forms as follows. You need a good upbringing not simply in order that you may have someone around to tell you what is noble and just—you do need that (recall the Hesiodic verses), and in 10.9 and again in the *Politics* 8.1 Aristotle discusses whether the job is best done by one's father or by community arrangements—but you need also to be guided in your conduct so that by doing the things you are told are noble and just you will discover that what you have been told is *true*. What you may begin by taking on trust you can come to know for yourself. This is not yet to know *why* it is true, but it is to have *learned that* it is true in the sense of having made the judgment your own, second nature to you—Hesiod's taking to heart. Nor is it yet to have acquired any of the virtues, for which practical wisdom is required (6.13; 10.8 1178a16-19), that understanding of "the *because*" which alone can accomplish the final correcting and perfecting of your perception of "the *that*." But it is to have made a beginning. You can say, perhaps, "I have learned that it is just to share my belongings with others," and mean it in a way that someone who has merely been told this cannot, even if he believes it—except in the weak sense in which "I have learned such and such" means simply that such and such was the content of the instruction given by parent or teacher.

This is a hard lesson, and not only in the moralist's sense. How can I learn that something is noble or just by becoming habituated to doing it?

Is it not one thing to learn *to* do what is just and quite another to learn *that* it is just? Clearly, we need to look further at what Aristotle has to say about learning to do what is noble and just. Let us begin again at the beginning presupposed by Aristotle's lectures. For more is said about good upbringing and its benefits in 10.9, the very last chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which is specifically devoted to moral education.

In this chapter Aristotle gives an explanation (1179b4-31) of why it is that only someone with a good upbringing can benefit from the kind of argument and discussion contained in his lectures.

> Now if arguments were in themselves enough to make men good, they would justly, as Theognis says, have won very great rewards, and such rewards should have been provided; but as things are, while they seem to have power to encourage and stimulate the generous-minded among our youth, and to make a character which is well-bred,[7] and a true lover of what is noble, ready to be possessed by virtue, they are not able to encourage the *many* to nobility and goodness. For these do not by nature obey the sense of shame, but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their baseness but through fear of punishment; living by passion they pursue the pleasures appropriate to their character and the means to them, and avoid the opposite pains, and have not even a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have never tasted it. What argument would remould such people? It is hard, if not impossible, to remove by argument the traits that have long since been incorporated in the character; and perhaps we must be content if, when all the influences by which we are thought to become good are present, we get some tincture of virtue.
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> Now some think that we are made good by nature, others by habituation, others by teaching. Nature's part evidently does not depend on us, but as a result of some divine causes is present in those who are truly fortunate; while argument and teaching, we may suspect, are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must first have been cultivated, by means of habits, for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth which is to nourish the seed. For he who lives as passion directs will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does; and how can we persuade one in such a state to change his ways? And in general passion seems to yield not to argument but to force. The character, then, must somehow be there already with a kinship to virtue, loving what is noble and hating what is base.[8]

This important and neglected passage is not rhetoric but precise argument,[9] as I hope eventually to show. My immediate concern is the student Aristotle wants for his lectures. He is someone who already loves what is noble and takes pleasure in it. He has a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant which other, less well brought up people lack because they have not tasted the pleasures of what is noble. This is what gives his character a kinship to virtue and a receptiveness to arguments directed to encouraging virtue.

The noble nature here described—Aristotle's prospective student—we

met earlier as the person with a starting point. He is one who has learned what is noble ("the *that*") and, as we now see, thus come to love it. He loves it because it is what is truly or by nature pleasant. Compare 1.8 1099a13-15:

> Lovers of what is noble find pleasant the things that are by nature pleasant; and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well in their own nature.

This is from a context which makes clear that the word *love* is not idly used; Aristotle has in mind a disposition of the feelings comparable in intensity, though not of course in every other respect, to the passion of a man who is crazy about horses. And the point he is making is that what you love in this sense is what you enjoy or take pleasure in. But equally he insists (10.9 1179b24-26) that the capacity for "noble joy and noble hatred" grows from habituation. I should now like to suggest that the prominence given to pleasure in these passages is the key to our problem about how practice can lead to knowledge.

There is such a thing as learning to enjoy something (painting, music, skiing, philosophy), and it is not sharply distinct from learning that the thing in question is enjoyable. Once again we need to eliminate the weak sense of *learn*, the sense in which to have learned that skiing is enjoyable is simply to have acquired the information, regardless of personal experience. In the strong sense I learn that skiing is enjoyable only by trying it myself and coming to enjoy it. The growth of enjoyment goes hand in hand with the internalization of knowledge.

There is also such a thing as learning to enjoy something properly, where this contrasts with merely taking pleasure in it. This is a hard subject, but I can indicate roughly what I mean by a few examples of not enjoying something properly: enjoying philosophy for the sense of power it can give, enjoying a trip abroad because of the splendid photographs you are taking on the way, enjoying a party because you are meeting important people, letting a symphony trigger a release of sentimental emotion. Aristotle's virtue of temperance is about the proper enjoyment of certain bodily pleasures having to do with taste and touch. These are things that any man or beast can take pleasure in, but not necessarily in the right way. Take the example of the gourmand who prayed that his throat might become longer than a crane's, so that he could prolong his enjoyment of the feel of the food going down (3.10 1118a26-b1): this illustrates the perversion of a man who takes more pleasure in brute contact with the food than in the flavors which are the proper object of taste. Aristotelian temperance is also concerned with sexual relations:

All men enjoy in some way or other good food and wines and sexual intercourse, but not all men do so as they ought. [7.14 1154a17-18]

And this again is a thought we can understand, however difficult it might be to elaborate.

Now Aristotle holds that to learn to do what is virtuous, to make it a habit or second nature to one, is among other things to learn to enjoy doing it, to come to take pleasure—the appropriate pleasure—in doing it. It is in the light of whether a man enjoys or fails to enjoy virtuous actions that we tell whether he has formed the right disposition toward them. Thus 2.3 1104b3-13 (but the whole chapter is relevant):

We must take as a sign of states of character the pleasure or pain that ensues on acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward.[10] For moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought;[11] this is the right eduction. [Cf. 1.8 1099a17-21; 2.9 1109b1-5; 3.4 1113a31-33; 4.1 1120a26-27; 10.1 1172a20-23]

Such passages need to be received in the light of Aristotle's own analysis of pleasure in Books 7 and 10 (cf. esp. 10.3 1173b28-31): the delight of the temperate man who is pleased to be abstaining from overindulgence, or that of the brave man who is pleased to be standing up to a frightful situation, is not the same or the same in kind as the pleasure of indulgence or the relief of safety. The character of one's pleasure depends on what is enjoyed, and what the virtuous man enjoys is quite different from what the nonvirtuous enjoy; which is not to say that the enjoyment is not as intense, only that it is as different as the things enjoyed. Specifically, what the virtuous man enjoys, as the passage quoted makes very clear, is the practice of the virtues undertaken for its own sake. And in cases such as the facing of danger, cited here, and others, the actions which the practice of the virtues requires *could* only be enjoyed if they are seen as noble and virtuous and the agent delights in his achievement of something fine and noble (cf. 3.9 1117a33-b16). That is why his enjoyment or lack of it is the test of whether he really has the virtues.

Next, recall once more the statement in 2.4 that virtue involves choosing virtuous actions for their own sake, for what they are. If we are asked what virtuous actions are, an important part of the answer must be that they are just, courageous, temperate, and so forth, and in all cases noble.

(It is common to all virtuous actions that they are chosen because they are noble: 3.7. 1115b12-13; 4.1. 1120a23-24; 4.2. 1122b6-7;[12] *EE* 1230a27-29.) Accordingly, if learning to do and to take (proper) enjoyment in doing just actions is learning to do and to enjoy them for their own sake, for what they are, namely, just, and this is not to be distinguished from learning that they are enjoyable for themselves and their intrinsic value, namely, their justice and nobility, then perhaps we can give intelligible sense to the thesis that practice leads to knowledge, as follows. I may be told, and may believe, that such and such actions are just and noble, but I have not really learned for myself (taken to heart, made second nature to me) that they have this intrinsic value until I have learned to value (love) them for it, with the consequence that I take pleasure in doing them. To understand and appreciate the value that makes them enjoyable in themselves I must learn for myself to enjoy them, and that does take time and practice—in short, habituation.

Back now to 10.9. We have come to see that the young person there spoken of as a true lover of what is noble is not simply someone with a generalized desire to do whatever should turn out to be noble, but someone who has acquired a taste for, a capacity to enjoy for their own sake, things that are in fact noble and enjoyable for their own sake. He has learned, really learned, that they are noble and enjoyable, but as yet he does not understand why they are so. He does not have the good man's unqualified knowledge or practical wisdom, although he does have "the *that*" which is the necessary starting point for acquiring practical wisdom and full virtue. He is thus educable. According to 10.9, argument and discussion will encourage him toward virtue because he obeys a sense of shame (*aidōs*) as opposed to fear. What does this mean?

Aristotle discusses shame in 4.9:

> Shame should not be described as a virtue; for it is more like a feeling than a state of character. It is defined, at any rate, as a kind of fear of disgrace. . . .
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> The feeling is not becoming to every age, but only to youth. For we think young people should be prone to the feeling of shame because they live by feeling and therefore commit many errors, but are restrained by shame; and we praise young people who are prone to this feeling, but an older person no one would praise for being prone to the sense of disgrace, since we think he should not do anything that need cause this sense. [1128b10-12, 15-21]

Shame is the semivirtue of the learner. The learner is envisaged as a young person who lives by the feelings of the moment and for that reason makes mistakes. He wants to do noble things but sometimes does things that are disgraceful, ignoble, and then he feels ashamed of himself and his conduct.[13] Now Aristotle holds that all young people (and many older

ones) live by the feeling of the moment and keep chasing after what at a given time appears pleasant. A sample statement is the following from 8.3. 1156a31-33:

> The friendship of young people seems to aim at pleasure; for they live under the guidance of emotion, and pursue above all what is pleasant to themselves and what is immediately before them. [cf. 1.3. 1095a4-8]

The point about those of the young who have been well brought up is that they have acquired a taste for pleasures—namely, the pleasures of noble and just actions—which others have no inkling of. The less fortunate majority also live by the feelings of the moment (10.9. 1179b13, 27-28), but since they find no enjoyment in noble and just actions, the only way to get them to behave properly is through fear of punishment (10.9. 1179b11-13). They will abstain from wrongdoing not because it is disgraceful, not because of what the actions are, unjust, but simply and solely as a means of avoiding the pains of punishment. Whereas the well-brought-up person has an entirely different sort of reason for avoiding them. Insofar as he realizes they are unjust or ignoble, they do not appear to him as pleasant or enjoyable; insofar as he does not realize this and so desires and perhaps does such things, he feels badly about it, ashamed of his failure. The actions pain him internally, not consequentially. He is therefore receptive to the kind of moral education which will set his judgment straight and develop the intellectual capacities (practical wisdom) which will enable him to avoid such errors.

The fundamental insight here is Plato's. For in discussing the development in the young of a set of motives concerned with what is noble and just, we are on the territory which Plato marked out for the middle part of his tripartite soul. The middle, so-called spirited part strives to do what is just and noble (*Rep.* 440cd), and develops in the young before reason (441a; cf. Ar. *Pol.* 1334b22-25). It is also the seat of shame: implicitly so in the story of Leontius and his indignation with himself for desiring to look on the corpses, explicitly in the *Phaedrus* (253d, 254e). The connection with anger, which we shall also find in Aristotle, is that typically anger is this same concern with what is just and noble directed outward toward other people (cf. *NE* 5.8. 1135b28-29). Aristotle owes to Plato, as he himself acknowledges in 2.3, the idea that these motivating evaluative responses are unreasoned—they develop before reason and are not at that stage grounded in a general view of the place of the virtues in the good life—and because they are unreasoned, other kinds of training must be devised to direct them on to the right kinds of object: chiefly, guided practice and habituation, as we have seen, but Aristotle also

shares with Plato the characteristically Greek belief that musical appreciation will teach and accustom one to judge rightly and enjoy decent characters and noble actions through their representation in music (*Pol.* 1340a14 ff.). In both cases the underlying idea is that the child's sense of pleasure, which to begin with and for a long while is his only motive, should be hooked up with just and noble things so that his unreasoned evaluative responses may develop in connection with the right objects.

To say that these responses are unreasoned is to make a remark about their source. The contrast is with desires—the reasoned desires to which we shall come shortly—which derive from a reflective scheme of values organized under the heading of the good. But where desires and feelings are concerned, the nature of the response and its source are connected. It is not that the evaluative responses have no thought component (no intentionality): on the contrary, something is desired as noble or just, something inspires shame because it is thought of as disgraceful. The responses are grounded in an evaluation of their object, parallel to the way appetite is oriented to a conception of its object as something pleasant; in this sense both have their "reasons." The point is that such reasons need not invariably or immediately give way or lose efficacy to contrary considerations. There are, as it were, pockets of thought in us which can remain relatively unaffected by our overall view of things. This is a phenomenon which the century of psychoanalysis is well placed to understand, but the Greek philosophers already saw that it must be central to any plausible account of akrasia. It is that insight which backs their interweaving of the topics of akrasia and moral development.[14]

From all this it follows not only that for a long time moral development must be a less than fully rational process but also, what is less often acknowledged, that a mature morality must in large part continue to be what it originally was, a matter of responses deriving from sources other than reflective reason. These being the fabric of moral character, in the fully developed man of virtue and practical wisdom they have become integrated with, indeed they are now infused and corrected by, his reasoned scheme of values. To return to temperance:

> As the child should live according to the direction of his tutor, so the appetitive element should live according to reason. Hence the appetitive element in a temperate man should harmonize with reason; for the noble is the mark at which both aim, and the temperate man desires the things he ought, as he ought, and when he ought; and this is what reason directs. [3.12. 1119b13-18; cf. 1.13. 1102b28; 9.4. 1166a13-14]

This is Aristotle's version of the psychic harmony which Plato sought to establish in the guardians of his ideal republic.

But Aristotle, as 10.9 makes clear, draws an important conclusion from the requirement of unreasoned beginnings which is not, perhaps, so evident in Plato (though we shall come back to Plato in a while). In Aristotle's view it is no good arguing or discussing with someone who lacks the appropriate starting points ("the *that*") and has no conception of just or noble actions as worthwhile in themselves, regardless of contingent rewards and punishments. To such a person you can recommend the virtues only insofar as they are required in a given social order for avoiding the pain of punishment—that is, for essentially external, contingent reasons. You cannot guarantee to be able to show they will contribute to some personal goal the agent already has, be it power, money, pleasure, or whatever; and even if in given contingent circumstances this connection with some antecedent personal goal could be made, you would not have given the person reason to pursue the virtues for their own sake, as a *part* of happiness, but only as a means to it.

This casts some light on what Aristotle takes himself to be doing in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and on why he asks for a good upbringing as a condition for intelligent study of the subject. If he is setting out "the *because*" of virtuous actions, he is explaining what makes them noble, just, courageous, and so on, and how they fit into a scheme of the good life, not why they should be pursued at all. He is addressing someone who already wants and enjoys virtuous action and needs to see this aspect of his life in a deeper perspective. He is not attempting the task so many moralists have undertaken of recommending virtue even to those who despise it: his lectures are not sermons, nor even protreptic argument, urging the wicked to mend their ways. From 10.9 it is clear that he did not think that sort of thing to be of much use; some, perhaps most, people's basic desires are already so corrupted that no amount of argument will bring them to see that virtue is desirable in and for itself (cf. 3.5. 1114a19-21). Rather, he is giving a course in practical thinking to enable someone who already wants to be virtuous to understand better what he should do and why.[15] Such understanding, as Aristotle conceives it, is more than merely cognitive. Since it is the articulation of a mature scheme of values under the heading of the good, it will itself provide new and more reflective motivation for virtuous conduct. That is why Aristotle can claim (1.3. 1095a5-6; 2.2. 1103b26-29; 2.4. 1105b2-5; 10.9. 1179a35-b4) that the goal of the study of ethics is action, not merely knowledge: to become fully virtuous rather than simply to know what virtue requires.[16] Someone with a sense of shame will respond, because he wants to do better at the right sorts of things. Someone with nothing but a fear of punishment will not respond; the only thing to do with him is tell him what he will get into trouble for.

After these rather general remarks about the character of Aristotle's enterprise we can begin to move toward the topic of akrasia. We need first to round out the picture of the motivational resources of the well-brought-up young person. For the unreasoned evaluative responses with which his upbringing has endowed him are not the only impulses that move him to act. Being a human being he has the physiologically based appetites as well. The object of these is, of course, pleasure (3.2. 1111b17; 3.11. 1118b8 ff.; 3.12. 1119b5-8; 7.3. 1147a32-34; 7.6. 1149a34-36; *EE* 1247b20), but they can be modified and trained to become desires for the proper enjoyment of bodily pleasures; this, we saw, is what is involved in acquiring the virtue of temperance. There are also instinctive reactions like fear to be trained into the virtue of courage. In a human being these feelings cannot be eliminated; therefore, they have to be trained. It would also be wrong to omit, though there is not room to discuss, the important fact that Aristotle in Books 8 and 9 takes seriously his dictum that the human being is by nature a social animal: friendship is itself something noble (8.1. 1155a29), and among the tasks of upbringing and education will be to give the right preliminary shape to the feelings and actions bound up with a wide range of relationships with other people.[17]

That said by way of introduction, we can consider a passage that takes us from moral education to akrasia (1.3. 1095a2-11):

> Hence a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and, further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether he is young in years or youthful in character; the defect does not depend upon time, but on his living, and pursuing each successive object, as passion directs. For to such persons, as to the incontinent, knowledge brings no profit; but to those who form their desires and act in accordance with reason knowledge about such matters will be of great benefit.

Reason will appeal and be of use to the well-brought-up student because he is ready to form his desires in the light of reasoning; that we have already discovered. Other people, the immature of whatever age, form desires in a different way, and this is what happens in akrasia; or rather, as we shall see, it is one half of what happens in akrasia. We have here two kinds of people, distinguished by two ways of forming desires. What are these two ways of forming desires and how are they different?

As Aristotle describes what he calls deliberation (cf. esp. 3.2-4), it is a process whereby practical thought articulates a general good that we wish for and focuses it on a particular action it is in our power to do, thereby producing in us a desire to do this thing. A desire is formed by

the realization that the action will fulfill one of the ends endorsed by our reasoned view of the good life, and this more specific desire—more specific, that is, than the general wish from which it derived—is what Aristotle calls choice:

> The object of choice being one of the things in our own power which is desired after deliberation, choice will be deliberated desire of things in our own power; for when we have decided as a result of deliberation, we desire in accordance with our deliberation.[18] [3.3. 1113a9-12]

Or, to paraphrase his remarks in a later book (6.2. 1139a21-33), choice is desire pursuing what reason asserts to be good.

So much for the forming of desires in the light of reasoning, which means: reasoning from the good. If a piece of practical reasoning does not relate to one's conception of the good, Aristotle does not count it deliberation, nor its outcome choice. But that does not mean he denies that reasoning and thinking are involved when desires are formed by the alternative process mentioned in 1.3. On the contrary, he describes such thinking in some detail, as we shall see if we now turn to his discussion of akrasia in Book 7.

The akratic (weak-willed) man is one who acts against his knowledge (judgment) and choice of the good;[19] he has a reasoned desire to do one thing, but under the influence of a contrary desire he actually does another. Clearly, however, this contrary desire itself needs to be generated if we are to understand how it fixes upon some particular object and fits into an adequate explanation of the akratic's behavior. Equally clearly, at least one main purpose Aristotle has in 7.3 is to exhibit akratic behavior under a standard pattern of explanation which he schematizes in the practical syllogism. His model case turns on the point that bodily appetite can supply a major premise of its own having to do with the pleasant rather than the good ("Everything sweet is pleasant" or "Sweets are nice"). That is to say, appetite sets an end that is not integrated into the man's life plan or considered scheme of ends, his overall view of the good. Unlike the self-indulgent man, whose (perverted) reason approves of every kind of sensual gratification as good in itself, the akratic is tempted to pursue an end which his reasoned view of life does not approve. But he acts, Aristotle emphasizes (7.3. 1147a35-b1), under the influence of a sort of reason and an opinion. His action is to be explained on the standard pattern by a combination of desire and thought, articulated in the syllogism "Sweets are nice; this is a sweet; so I'll have this." For the akratic this is only half the story—we have explained the action he actually performs but not the conflict behind it—but it is presumably the whole story of the immature people in 1.3. They form desires and

undertake actions not in accordance with reason because their ends are simply things that strike them as pleasant at a given moment; they have no steady conception of the good to reason from.[20]

But there are other sources of incontinence than the bodily appetites: most notably, the unreasoned evaluative responses we met before as an important characteristic of the well-brought-up beginner. A parallel procedure to the one we have just followed will give us a picture of the sort of error that makes Aristotle's prospective student ashamed of himself. What in him is a mistake is one half of the conflict involved in nonappetitive akrasia.

The details appear in 7.6. 1149a25-b2:

> Spirit seems to listen to reason to some extent, but to mishear it, as do hasty servants who run out before they have heard the whole of what one says and then mistake the order, or as dogs bark if there is but a knock at the door, before looking to see if it is a friend; so spirit on account of the warmth and hastiness of its nature, no sooner hears—even though it has not heard an order—than it springs to take revenge. For reason or imagination informs us that we have been insulted or slighted, and spirit, reasoning as it were that anything like this must be fought against, boils up straightway; while appetite, if reason or perception merely says that an object is pleasant, springs to the enjoyment of it. Therefore spirit follows reason in a sense, but appetite does not.

The description, which owes much to Plato (*Rep.* 440cd again),[21] implies the usual pattern of practical thought and reasoning: "Slights and injustices must be fought against; I have been wronged/slighted; so I should take revenge." Aristotle does not specify in detail the better syllogism which must also be present if this is to be a case of full incontinence, but we can supply the order which spirit does not stop to hear—for example, "It is better to wait and investigate an apparent wrong before taking revenge; this is an apparent wrong; so wait and investigate." As in Plato, the overeager dog in us[22] is concerned with what is noble and just, with honor and self-esteem, without taking thought for the consequences or the wider view.

If, then, these evaluative responses are in us as a result of our upbringing, and the bodily appetites are in us as a part of our natural inheritance as human beings, the seeds of akrasia are going to be with us as we enter Aristotle's lecture room. He will encourage us to think about our life as a whole, to arrive at a reasoned view of the good for man; but to begin with, until our understanding of "the *because*" has had a chance to become second nature with us, this will be superimposed upon well-established, habitual patterns of motivation and response which it will take time and practice to integrate with the wider and more adult perspective that Aristotle will help us achieve.

This seems to me important. I think many readers feel that Aristotle's discussion of akrasia leaves unexplained the point most in need of explanation. What they want to know is why the better syllogism is overcome. Not finding an answer they look for one in what Aristotle says in 7.3 about the akratic's knowledge and the way this is not used, not had, or dragged about. And then they are dissatisfied because no adequate answer is to be found in the discussion of *that* issue, for the good reason, I believe, that none is intended. The treatment of knowledge pinpoints what is to be explained. It is not itself the explanation. Even in the relatively easy case where a man simply fails to bring to bear on the situation (fails to use) some knowledge that he has, the fact of his failure requires explanation: he was distracted, overanxious, in haste, or whatever. For the more difficult cases Aristotle announces his explanation at 1147a-24-25:

> Again, we may also view the cause as follows with reference to the facts of human nature.

Thus Ross's translation, but I think that the scope of "also" is the whole sentence,[23] which means this: we may also give an explanation of the phenomenon we have been endeavoring, with some difficulty, to describe. The explanation that follows is in terms of the two syllogisms, which together account for the conflict, and one of which explains the action the akratic man performs. But the outcome of the conflict might have been different. In the continent man it is; his action is to be explained by the better syllogism. So what determines whether it is appetite or reason that is victorious?

I submit that the question is misguided, at least so far as it looks for an answer in the immediate circumstances of the conflicted decision. If there is an answer, it is to be found in the man's earlier history. We must account for his present conflict in terms of stages in the development of his character which he has not yet completely left behind. For on Aristotle's picture of moral development, as I have drawn it, an important fact about the better syllogism is that it represents a later and less established stage of development. Hence what needs explanation is not so much why some people succumb to temptation as why others do not. What calls for explanation is how some people acquire continence or, even better, full virtue, rather than why most of us are liable to be led astray by our bodily appetites or unreasoned evaluative responses. It is no accident that Aristotle gives as much space to the akratic as a type of person as to isolated akratic actions, and it is characteristic of him that he measures the liability to incontinence by comparison with the normal man. Thus 7.10. 1152a25-33:

Now incontinence and continence are concerned with that which is in excess of the state characteristic of most men; for the continent man abides by his resolutions more and the incontinent man less than most men can.

Of the forms of incontinence, that of excitable people is more curable than that of those who deliberate but do not abide by their decision,[24] and those who are incontinent through habituation are more curable than those in whom incontinence is innate; for it is easier to change a habit than to change one's nature; even habit is hard to change just because it is like nature, as Evenus says:

> I say that habit's but long practice, friend,
> And this becomes men's nature in the end.

I trust that this second set of verses will by now reverberate in their full significance.

Given this temporal perspective, then, the real problem is this: How do we grow up to become the fully adult rational animal that is the end toward which the nature of our species tends? How does reason take hold on us so as to form and shape for the best the patterns of motivation and response which represent the child in us (3.12. 1119a33 ff.), that product of birth and upbringing which will live on unless it is brought to maturity by the education of our reason? In a way, the whole of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle's reply to this question, so that this paper is nothing but a prolegomenon to a reading of the work. But I would like, in conclusion, to make a few brief comments concerning one important aspect of the process.

Consider 2.3. 1104b30-35:

There being three objects of pursuit[25] and three of avoidance, the noble, the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, the painful, about all of these the good man tends to go right, and especially about pleasure; for this is common to the animals, and also it accompanies all objects of pursuit; for even the noble and the advantageous appear pleasant. Again, it has grown up with us all from infancy; which is why it is difficult to rub off this feeling, dyed as it is into our life.[26]

There are three irreducibly distinct categories of value for the fully virtuous man to get right—the three we have been discussing. Pursuit of pleasure is an inborn part of our animal nature; concern for the noble depends on a good upbringing; while the good, here specified as the advantageous,[27] is the object of mature reflection. We have seen that each of the three categories connects with a distinct set of desires and feelings, which acquire motivating effect at different stages of development. It has also become clear that Aristotle's insistence on keeping these distinctions is a key tactic in his vindication of akrasia against Socratic intellectualism.

Historically, the greatest challenge to the intelligibility of akrasia was the argument mounted by Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras* (351b ff.), which showed that weakness of will is unintelligible on the assumption, precisely, that there is only one "object of pursuit"—one category of value, within which all goods are commensurable, as it were, in terms of a single common coinage. Pleasure was the coinage chosen for the argument, but the important consideration was that if, ultimately, only one factor counts—call it F—and we have measured two actions X and Y in terms of F, and X comes out more F than Y does, there is nothing left to give value to Y to outweigh or compensate for its lesser quantity of F. The supposed akratic cannot possibly find reason to do Y, the less valuable action, rather than the better action X, because Y offers him less of the only thing he is after: pleasure or whatever else the F may happen to be. If what Y offers is less of the only thing the man seeks, pleasure, its offering that pleasure cannot intelligibly function as a reason for doing Y instead of the admittedly more attractive X.[28] The moral is close to hand: Y must offer something different in kind from X if the temptation and the man's succumbing to it are to be intelligible. Plato came to see this, and in the *Republic* it was in part to make akrasia and other forms of psychological conflict intelligible that he distinguished different objects of pursuit for the three parts of the soul. The passage quoted is Aristotle's version of that Platonic insight.[29]

However, the fact that there are three irreducibly distinct categories of value need not mean that one and the same thing cannot fall under two or more of them at once. To vindicate akrasia it is necessary only that this need not happen. The continent and the incontinent man do find the good and the pleasant or, in the anger case, the good and the noble in incompatible actions. Therein lies their conflict. The self-indulgent man, on the other hand, has no use for the noble and identifies present pleasure with his long-term good (cf. 3.11. 1119a1-4; 7.3. 1146b22-23; 7.7. 1150a-19-21; 7.8. 1150b29-30; 7.9. 1152a5-6). It would seem to follow that what we need to do to become fully virtuous instead of merely continent or worse is to bring those three categories of value into line with each other. We have already seen how a good upbringing makes the noble a part, perhaps the chief part, of the pleasant for us. Aristotle's lectures are designed to take the next step and make the noble a part, perhaps the chief part, of one's conception of the good (cf. *EE* 1249a11). That is why in 2.4 he makes it a condition of virtue that virtuous actions be chosen for their own sake. Choice, which is reached by deliberation from a conception of the good, includes a desire for them as good in themselves as well as noble and pleasant. But then he adds a further condition, and rightly, since choice by itself is compatible with incontinence and indeed continence. The further condition is that all this must proceed from a firm and

unchangeable character. That is, it is second nature to the virtuous man to love and find his greatest enjoyment in the things he knows to be good (cf. 8.3. 1156b22-23). In him the three categories of value are in harmony. They have *become* commensurable in terms of pleasure and pain, but not in the objectionable way which led to Socratic intellectualism, since the virtuous person's conception of what is truly pleasant is now shaped by his independent, reasoned conception of what is good, just as it was earlier shaped by his father's or his teacher's advice about what is noble. Indeed, one definition of the noble given in the *Rhetoric* (1366a34) is to the effect that the noble is that which, being good, is pleasant because it is good (cf. *EE* 1249a18-19). And with all three categories in harmony, then, and then only, nothing will tempt or lure him so much as the temperate or brave action itself. Nothing else will seem as pleasurable. That is how Aristotle can assert (7.10. 1152a6-8) that the fully formed man of virtue and practical wisdom cannot be akratic. Quite simply, he no longer has reason to be.[30]

NOTES

For details of the works cited in these notes see the Bibliography at the end of this essay. References by name alone, without page number, are to a commentator's note on or a translator's rendering of the passage under discussion.

1. One exception is John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, chaps. 8-9, but the exception that most completely exemplifies what I am looking for is Richard Wollheim, "The Good Self and the Bad Self: The Moral Psychology of British Idealism and the English School of Psychoanalysis Compared"; it is noteworthy that he too has to go to the history of philosophy—specifically, to F. H. Bradley—to find a serious philosophical involvement with developmental questions.

2. *Contra* Aspasius, Stewart, Burnet, Ross, and Gauthier-Jolif, who take Aristotle to be speaking of a person of whom it is true neither that he has nor that he can get starting points.

3. So Aspasius, Eustratius, Heliodorus ad loc. and on 1098a33-b4. Stewart agrees. Burnet's proposal that "the *that*" is the much more general fact that the definition of happiness is such and such is right for 1.7 (see below), but at the moment the definition of happiness is the first principle or starting point we are working towards. For sane remarks on this and other misunderstandings of 1.4, see W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, pp. 34-36, although Hardie's own suggestion ("the *that*" is "a particular moral rule or perhaps the definition of a particular moral virtue") also errs on the side of generality.

4. Some scholars (Peters, Grant, Stewart, Gauthier-Jolif) keep the modes of acquisition down to the three explicitly mentioned by reading καὶ ἄλλαι δ' ἄλλως (1098b4) as a summary rather than an open-ended extension of the list:

"some in one way, some in another" rather than "others in other ways again." The rendering I have preferred has the support of Ross as well as the ancient tradition.

5. Not, or at least not in the first instance, the definition of happiness, as Burnet thinks: although this is "the *that*" which initiates the passage, it was secured by argument, not habituation, and Aristotle has turned parenthetically to a survey of wider scope (cf. T. H. Irwin, "First Principles in Aristotle's Ethics," p. 269 n. 18). Of course, the starting points in question and the habituation they presuppose will lead further (cf. esp. 7.8. 1151a15-19), but we are still at the beginning of Aristotle's lectures and of the progress they are designed to encourage.

6. Ross translates "string together"; he may not have intended the disparaging note the phrase now sounds. The fact is, the verb συνείρειν is not invariably, or even usually, disparaging in Aristotle's vocabulary. It is disparaging at *Met.* 1090b30, *De div.* 464b4, but not at *Soph. El.* 175a30, *Met.* 986a7, 995a10, 1093b-27, *De gen. et corr.* 316a8, 336b33, *De gen. anim.* 716a4, 741b9, *Probl.* 905a19.

7. Ross translates "gently born," which has aristocratic overtones irrelevant to the argument, even if Aristotle's sympathies happened to run in that direction. In fact, in the *Rhetoric* (1390b22-25) Aristotle says that most of the products of noble birth are good for nothing, and he makes a sharp distinction between noble birth (εὐγένεια) and noble character (γενναιότης). His view in the *Politics* is that it is likely that good birth will go with moral merit, but no more than that (*Pol.* 1283a36 in its wider context from 1282b14).

8. From here on I quote Ross's translation, corrected in a few places.

9. Strictly, the argument occurs twice, each paragraph being a distinct version, as Rassow saw ("Zu Aristoteles," pp. 594-596). But all that shows is that Aristotle thought the material important enough to have had two goes at expressing it satisfactorily.

10. Strictly, as Grant observes, doing the right thing with reluctance and dislike is rather a sign of continence (self-control) than of vice proper (cf. 3.2. 1111b-14-15, *EE* 1223b13-14, 1224b16-18); the attributions of self-indulgence and cowardice should not be pressed.

11. The reference is to Plato *Laws* 653a; cf. also *Rep.* 395d, featuring the idea that habit becomes second nature.

12. In the first and third of these passages Ross rather misleadingly translates "for honour's sake."

13. The connection between shame and the desire to do what is noble is very clear in the Greek. Shame is felt for having done αἰσχρά (things disgraceful, ignoble, base), and αἰσχρά is the standard opposite of καλά (things noble, fine, honorable). Hence to do something from fear of disgrace is not incompatible with doing it for the nobility of the act itself. This is made clear at 3.8. 1116a27-29, on "citizenly" courage: the only thing that is "second best" about this form of courage is that the citizen soldier takes his conception of what is noble from the laws and other people's expectations (1116a17-21) rather than having his own internalized sense of the noble and the disgraceful (cf. 3.7. 1116a11-12).

14. For a twentieth-century philosophical discussion that makes interesting use of Greek ideas to bring out the significance of the different sources of desire, see

Gary Watson, "Free Agency." Watson goes so far as to claim (pp. 210-211) that there are desires carrying absolutely no positive favoring of their object, not even an idea that it is pleasurable. But the cases he cites (a mother's sudden urge to drown her bawling child in the bath, a man who regards his sexual inclinations as the work of the devil) cry out for treatment in terms of the thought of pleasure having to be kept unconscious.

15. An example to the point is the celebrated argument in 1.7 which uses considerations about the distinctive activity (*ergon*) of man to show that happiness is activity in accordance with virtue: it is not an argument that would appeal to anyone who really doubted or denied that he should practice the virtues—so much is made clear in the closing pages of Book 1 of Plato's *Republic*, where Thrasymachus remains totally unmoved by an earlier version of the same argument—but it would say something to the reflective understanding of someone with the basic moral concerns which Aristotle presupposes in his audience. (Irwin, pp. 260-262 seems to be more optimistic.)

16. Not that Aristotle ever suggests that attendance at lectures such as his is the only way to get practical wisdom nor that attendance is sufficient by itself for developing the needed intellectual virtues. But he is serious about aiming to help his students in that direction, in a quite practical way. This is the solution to the traditional problem (most sharply formulated by Joachim, pp. 13-16) about why Aristotle failed to recognize that the *Ethics* is not itself practical but a theoretical examination *of* the practical. The real failure here is in the impoverished conception of practical reason which finds it a puzzle to accept the practical orientation of Aristotle's enterprise (see further Irwin, pp. 257-259).

17. Here again Aristotle borrows from the middle part of Plato's tripartite soul: the *Republic* (375a ff.) likened the guardians to noble dogs, with special reference to their warm and spirited nature, and in the *Politics* (1327b38-1328a1) Aristotle expressly alludes to the *Republic* when he suggests that the capacity of the soul in virtue of which we love our familiars is spirit (θυμός).

18. It might be objected that Aristotle did not need to make choice a new and more specific desire. Given a wish for X and the realization that Y will secure X, explanation is not furthered by adding in another desire; it should be enough to say that the man wanted X and saw Y as a way of securing it (for intimations of this line of argument see Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism*, chaps. 5-6). But a new and specific desire is not explanatorily redundant in Aristotle's scheme if it helps to explain the pleasure taken in a virtuous act, a pleasure that ought to be more specific to the particular action than the pleasure of simply doing *something* to fulfill one's wish to be virtuous.

19. Against knowledge or judgment: 7.1. 1145b12; 7.3. 1146b24 ff. Against choice: 7.3. 1146b22-24; 7.4. 1148a9-10; 7.8. 1151a5-7; 7.10. 1152a17.

20. That this is the point, not a denial that they engage in practical thinking at all, is clear from 10.9. 1179b13-14: "living by passion they pursue the pleasures appropriate to their character and *the means to them.*" Cf. 6.9. 1142b18-20; *EE* 1226b30.

21. This is one of the reasons why it seems preferable to translate θυμός "spirit" throughout, rather than "anger" (Ross).

22. The dog image of 1149a28-29 brings with it an allusive resonance to large tracts of Plato's *Republic:* cf. n. 17 above.

23. Compare W. J. Verdenius, " Καί Belonging to a Whole Clause." A good parallel in Aristotle is *An. Post.* 71b20-22, where καί emphasizes not the immediately following τὴν ἀποδεικτικὴν ἐπιστήμην, which merely resumes τὸ ἐπίστασθαι and the point that this must be of necessary truths, but rather the subsequent characterization of the premises from which these necessary truths are derived; that is the new point signaled by καί (here I am indebted to Jacques Brunschwig).

24. For these two forms of akrasia see 7.7. 1150b19-22.

25. Ross's translation "choice" badly misses the point, since not every pursuit (αἵρεσις) is a choice (προαίρεσις) in the technical sense explained earlier. Note that this means that Aristotle does not endorse in every particular the commonplace (*endoxon*) which forms the famous first sentence of *NE*: he does not, strictly, think that every action aims at some good—for one thing, akratic action does not.

26. The dyeing metaphor is yet another allusion to Plato's treatment of these topics: cf. *Rep.* 429d-430b.

27. Perhaps because Aristotle is making argumentative use of a commonplace (endoxon): cf. *Top.* 105a27, 118b27. For the sense in which the advantageous = the good is the object of practical wisdom see 6.5. 1140a25-28, 6.7. 1141b4-8: the man of practical wisdom deliberates correctly about what is good and advantageous to himself with reference to the supreme goal of living the good life; but of course the same equation can be made when the deliberation concerns a more particular end (6.9. 1142b27-33).

28. Here I can only sketch my account of the *Protagoras* argument, but various people have independently been propounding similar accounts for quite a time, and the key idea is beginning to emerge in print: see, for example, David Wiggins, "Weakness of Will, Commensurability, and the Objects of Deliberation and Desire."

29. In a different context (*Pol.* 1283a3-10) Aristotle expressly denies that all goods are commensurable (συμβλητόν); similarly *EE* 1243b22, *NE* 9.1. 1164b2-6. Earlier in life Aristotle may have been tempted to think otherwise. *An. Pr.* 68a25-b7 is a sketch toward a calculus of preference relations as envisaged in *Top.* 3.1-3, where 116b31-36 aspires to cardinal measurement, not just a relative ordering. Yet it is difficult to judge how far Aristotle thought he could take the project, for *Top.* 118b27-37 seems to be clear that there is no question of quantitative commensurability across the three categories of the noble, the pleasant, and the advantageous. Hence when Aristotle at *De an.* 434a8-9 says that deliberation requires the measurement of alternatives by a single standard, it is important that in the context he is concerned to mark the difference between rational agents and unreasoning animals, for which purpose the simplest achievement of deliberative calculation will suffice. ἀνάγκη ἑνὶ μετρεῖν need not be generalized to all deliberation.

30. This paper was one result of the leisure I enjoyed from my tenure of a Radcliffe Fellowship. I am grateful to the Radcliffe Trust for the gift of the Fellowship

and to University College, London, for allowing me to take it up. The paper has been improved by discussions at a number of universities (London, Cambridge, Reading, Sussex, Princeton, Berkeley, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst) and by the comments of David Charles, James Dybikowski, Martha Craven Nussbaum, Amélie O. Rorty, Richard Sorabji, and Susan Khin Zaw. I only regret that to deal adequately with all their criticisms would require the paper to be even longer than it is. But perhaps my greatest debt is to the members of my graduate seminar at Princeton in 1970 (two of them now writing in the present volume), from whom I received my first understanding and appreciation of Aristotle's ethics.

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