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Another Kind of Knowledge
Aristotle's *Phronêsis* from an Epistemological Point of View

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Aristotle's *Phronêsis* from an Epistemological Point of View

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Lausanne, le 5 septembre 2015

Alain Boillat
Doyen de la Faculté des lettres

καὶ τὸ θεωρεῖν ποτὲ βλάπτει πρὸς ὑγίειαν
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.12 1153a20

"The more you know who you are and what you want, the less you let things upset you".
Bob Harris (Bill Murray) in *Lost in Translation*, by Sophia Coppola, 2003.

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Contents

List of Aristotle's works and abbreviations

Below is a list of the Aristotelian texts mentioned in this work:

Latin Title	**English Title**	**Abbreviation**
Analytica Priora	*Prior Analytics*	*APr*
Analytica Posteriora	*Posterior Analytics*	*APo*
De Anima	*On the Soul*	*DA*
De Caelo	*On the Heavens*	*Cael.*
Categoriae	*Categories*	*Cat.*
Ethica Eudemia	*Eudemian Ethics*	*EE*
Ethica Nicomachea	*Nicomachean Ethics*	*EN*
De Generatione Animalium	*Generation of Animals*	*GA*
De Generatione et Corruptione	*On Generation and Corruption*	*GC*
De Historia Animalium	*History of Animals*	*HA*
De Interpretatione	*De Interpretatione*	*DI*
De Motu Animalium	*Movements of Animals*	*MA*
De memoria et reminiscentia	*On Memory*	*Mem.*
Metaphysica	*Metaphysics*	*Meta.*
Meteorologica	*Meteorology*	*Meteor.*
De Partibus Animalium	*Parts of Animals*	*PA*
Physica	*Physics*	*Phys.*
Politica	*Politics*	*Pol.*
Rhetorica	*Rhetoric*	*Rhet.*
Topica	*Topics*	*Top.*

The abbreviations are modelled on the basis of the Latin titles, not the English ones. For instance, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is abbreviated as *EN* not *NE*.

Most of the translations of Aristotle's works are mine. However, I have found support from various existing translations. For the *EN*: Broadie and Rowe 2002; for the *EE* Inwood and Woolf 2013; for the *DA* Hicks 1907; for the rest of Aristotelian treatises, I have used the Revised Oxford Translation (Barnes 1985). Translations of other texts are indicated *ad locum*. When I add something in the text that does not figure in the Greek, I have used angle brackets <...>, whereas when I make a part of the Greek text explicit (e.g. pronouns), I have used square brackets [...].

I intended the text for any reader interested in Aristotle's moral epistemology with basic knowledge of ancient philosophy. I have not presupposed knowledge of Greek. I have used transliteration of Greek texts in the main text and left the use

of Greek characters in footnotes so that the whole text is accessible to readers without skills in Ancient Greek. However, when I have made extensive quotations, I have left the Greek text in the main text close to the translation, for the sake of convenience. I have borrowed the transliteration system used in this work from Labarrière 2005 (see esp. p. 1). Notably, η becomes *ê*; ω = *ô*; ε = *e*; ο = *o*; υ = *u*; χ = *ch*.

There are at least two ethical treatises that we attribute to Aristotle, the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I did not include the *Magna Moralia* because it is spurious. Nor did I include two further minor ethical works, the *De virtutibus et vitiis* and the *Protrepticus*. The former is considered as apocryphal, while the latter is known to us only in fragments. This dissertation is essentially a reading of books VI and VII of the *EN*. These two books are in fact common to the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. They are known as books V and VI of the *EE*. I refer to the common books as if they are Nicomachean. Thus, "*EN* VI" refers both to the sixth book of the *EN* and to the fifth book of the *EE*. When I speak of "the *Ethics*" of Aristotle, I refer to both the *EN* and the *EE*. Since this dissertation is essentially about two of the common books, I have not attempted to account for the differences between the two treatises.

Concerning the references to Aristotle's work, I follow Bekker's numeration. One thing should be noted concerning the division into chapters of the *EN*. There are two competing systems. On the one hand, there is a division into chapters used in an old edition of the text due to Zell. This system corresponds to the numeration of chapters in Roman numerals in the edition by Bywater. This system is the one mostly used by English-speaking scholars. The other system appears in Bywater's edition in Arabic numerals and is usually followed by German- and French-speaking scholars. These competing ways of dividing the books of the *EN* into chapters are not from Aristotle himself. They come from medieval editions of the treatise (Irwin 1985: xxv). In this dissertation, I follow Zell's chaptering, except on one occasion, where I mention the alternative way to chapter the *EN*, that is, the chaptering according to Bekker.

All examples are about masculine agents. It was easier during the writing process to restrict the examples to men. I did not have the time to revise this policy to include some feminine subjects. I apologize for this.

CHAPTER 1

1 Introduction

1.1 Aristotle and practical knowledge

Intuitively, practical knowledge can be conceived in opposition to theoretical knowledge and can be described broadly as the kind of knowledge we use when we perform actions: I *know* that I should arrive on time for this meeting; I *know* how to cross the road at a pedestrian crossing; I *know* that I am crossing the road. All these examples are instances of practical knowledge. On the contrary, theoretical knowledge can be conceived as being purely descriptive and as aiming at accounting for how things actually are. E.g. 'I know that this is a crosswalk' or 'I know that crosswalks are made of yellow stripes on the road'.

In the philosophical tradition, practical knowledge has been interpreted in at least three different ways: 1) knowing *how*; 2) knowing what one is doing; 3) knowing what one should do.[1] All these notions of practical knowledge have enjoyed considerable success in various areas of philosophy, psychology, cognitive

[1] Knowledge how became a philosophical topic with the work of Gilbert Ryle *The Concept of Mind* (Ryle 1949, esp. chap. 2). In that work, theoretical knowledge is expressed as 'knowing that something is the case' (or knowing *that*), practical knowledge as "knowing how to do something". Both notions have usually been interpreted as a relation to a proposition for the former, and as an ability for the latter (Hornsby 2011: 80 for the 'usual interpretation', which she actually challenges in her article).
Practical knowledge as 'knowing what one is doing' was first made popular by Elizabeth Anscombe and has become a major topic in the philosophy of action. Anscombe speaks of it as "knowledge without observation" (Anscombe 1957: 13-14).
The third understanding of practical knowledge concerns normative ethics and moral psychology and can be found as early as in Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (A633/B661). It has a prescriptive or evaluative content and can be characterized as 'knowing what one ought to do' or 'knowing what is good to do'.
There are other philosophical notions similar to something like practical knowledge. However I cannot treat them all here. An original approach worth mentionning is Bourdieu's concept of 'practical sense'. Practical sense according to Bourdieu is a kind of intuitive, socially constructed disposition to respond to one's environment. Bourdieu compares it with the skill of a tennis player who knows intuitively how to move his limbs without conscious control over them in order to hit the ball successfully (Bourdieu 1987: 77).

science, education science, etc. However, the kind of practical knowledge I intend to focus on is closer to the third understanding of practical knowledge, namely 'knowledge of what one should do'. More precisely, I shall restrict the scope of this inquiry to what I shall call 'knowledge in decision', that is, the kind of knowledge displayed at the moment we make a decision. Indeed, it seems that in specific situations we sometimes *know* what we should do and this knowledge determines our decisions. For instance, at the end of high school, I *knew* that I had to enter the Philosophy Department of my home University, that it was what was best for me. When there is a referendum about, say, restrictions on immigration policy, as it occasionally happens in Switzerland, I know what I ought to vote for. I have a feeling of certainty or conviction of what option I ought to choose. In such situations, my knowledge of what I should do is expressed in my choice.

One could argue that speaking of such a notion of practical knowledge does not make a lot of sense. At the moment of decision, it rather seems that we never really *know* what we should do, but that instead we guess what the best option would be or that we simply opt for a course of action randomly or irrationally. Think of the lost person trying to find his way in a foreign city: 'I *know* that I should turn right at the next crossroad' although this person has in fact no idea of where he is going. The most expressive situation of this absence of certainty is the case of a practical dilemma: It is a typical situation where I don't know what to do and, presumably, there is no way I can come to something like *knowing* what I should do in a strong sense. Still, in some cases, it does seem reasonable to speak of knowledge. Confronting a conflictual situation, I can for instance weigh the pros and cons of various options and come to a reasoned decision by way of a process of decision-making. My decision would then be strengthened by considerations of the various aspects that are conditions for me choosing this or that course of action. This sort of well-informed decision would then appear as the result of knowledge. I know that doing so and so given the present circumstances is the best thing to do.[2]

In spite of the notion of practical knowledge being controversial, I shall argue that it is perfectly plausible and that it has been advocated for by none the less than Aristotle. Aristotle was the first philosopher to make an explicit distinction between a theoretical and a practical form of thinking (*EN* VI.1 1139a6-15). Against his former master Plato, he argued that the realm of practical thinking can be the object of rational considerations and arguments. Also, he observed that we are not better placed to carry out certain actions when we have *theoretical* knowledge of it (1143b24) and that in practical situations experience can be more useful than

[2] This is what is studied by decision theory: minimizing the risks in decision-making.

knowledge (*Meta.* I.1 981a13-15; *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23). Correspondingly, Aristotle acknowledged that there must be "*another kind of knowledge*", distinct from theoretical knowledge (*EE* 1246b35-36). This other kind of knowledge should be what makes possible reliable intellectual procedures and evaluation concerning actions.

The Greek term that is traditionally taken to mean the concept of practical knowledge in Aristotle's work is *phronêsis*. *Phronêsis* is a *virtue* (*aretê*), i.e. an excellent disposition, and is defined as a "state accompanied by reason, which is true, which is about the good and bad things for humans, and which is conducive to action" (*EN* 1140b4-6; 20-21). In this sense, it can be understood as a kind of wisdom in the domain of moral action and political deliberation.[3] A fundamental feature of *phronêsis* is that it implies the ability to deliberate well on practical matters (1141b9-10). Correspondingly, the person having *phronêsis*, the *phronimos*, or practically wise person, seems to be such that he is able to achieve what he sets out to do (1144a24-27). Moreover, happiness, or success in life, depends on *phronêsis*, among other things (*EE* 1246b37). *Phronêsis* seems to be the kind of practical knowledge I look for, or at least, it is closely related to practical knowledge.

But is *phronêsis* practical knowledge? Which features make it a kind of knowledge? Are these features essential to it? Or is it possible to have a share in them for non-*phronimoi* people? And if *phronêsis* is not practical knowledge, how can it be that the *phronimos* is better off in making the correct decision than other types of agent? Before addressing these questions, one needs to review the existing literature on Aristotle's *phronêsis*.

1.2 Status quæstionis

Phronêsis has always been a subject of particular interest among philosophers, and not only among scholars of ancient philosophy. It seems that what has fascinated generations of readers is the ability of the *phronimos* to get things right in the practical domain. Aristotle's *phronêsis* has had a huge influence on 20th Century philosophy in various areas. German Neo-Aristotelianism has seen in *phronêsis* a description of practical knowledge that can provide a new paradigm of science of Humanities and social sciences (Arendt 1958; Gadamer 1960). Virtue ethics has followed Aristotle's description of *phronêsis* as an intellectual virtue necessary for the right exercise of virtues of character (Foot 1978; Hursthouse 2012), whereas virtue

[3] In this respect, *phronêsis*, or practical wisdom, is opposed to *sophia*, or theoretical wisdom. *Sophia* is defined as the most accurate of the sciences, which includes not only science, but intuition of the principles as well (*EN* VI.7 1141a16-20). In this sense, *sophia* is very much directed towards theoretical activities, unlike *phronêsis*. See also §3.2.1.

epistemology has developed the notion of intellectual virtue on the basis of Aristotle's *phronêsis* in order to offer an original account of knowledge in general (Zagzebski 1996).

In modern scholarship on ancient philosophy interest in *phronêsis* has arisen as early as the mid-19th century and numerous studies have been produced on the topic.[4] Studies on *phronêsis* are partly motivated by the fact that it is an essential feature of how to reach happiness (*eudaimonia*).[5] As happiness is defined as the "activity of the soul according to virtue" (*EN* I.7 1098a16-17), *phronêsis* plays a central role in attaining it. The exercise of *phronêsis* can either be identified all the way with acting virtuously, or it can be viewed as an essential feature of virtuous action. *Phronêsis* can thus be explained for the sake of understanding Aristotle's general doctrine of virtue and the good. Studies on these topics have flourished throughout the 20th century. At the same time, a specific interest for *phronêsis* has also arisen. Scholars have attempted to better understand what kind of intellectual virtue *phronêsis* is.

The main debate about *phronêsis* as an intellectual virtue has been centred on the question of whether or not *phronêsis* takes part in the acquisition of moral ends. This question matters because as happiness consists in the exercise of moral virtue, it seems that being happy presupposes some knowledge of what virtue, or the good, are. An influential direction of interpretation in the 20th century has been to ascribe only a calculative role to *phronêsis*, that is, to identify it with good deliberation (*euboulia*). According to this line of interpretation, first introduced by Walter (Walter 1874), the rational part of the soul looks for the means to realize a certain end, which is already given. This entails that *phronêsis* doesn't take part in setting the end of moral action, which is the proper task of virtue of character. This position relies on a literal reading of passages where Aristotle seems to affirm that what determines moral ends is not reason, but non-rational character, and the virtue proper to character.[6] Opponents of this line of interpretation have often understood it as akin to Hume's sentimentalism (Sorabji 1980: 209; Taylor 2008). They consider, on the contrary, that *phronêsis* consists not only in good deliberation, but also in what determines moral principles. They do not agree, however, on how exactly

[4] Before the 1950's and new openings in Aristotelian scholarship there had already been a large amount of contributions devoted entirely or to a wide extent to the notion of *phronêsis*. Amongst the most significant are Walter 1874; Teichmüller 1879; Burnet 1900; Loening 1903; Greenwood 1909; Ross 1923.

[5] On *eudaimonia* see note 37.

[6] Recent proponents of this position include Aubenque 1963; Hardie 1968; Natali 2001; Bodéüs 2004; Moss 2012.

phronêsis is supposed to provide moral principles. Some scholars claim that they are grasped in the same way as theoretical principles, i.e. by intuition or direct intellection (*nous*). Such an intuition would result from an inductive process from experience.[7] Others claim that moral principles are discovered by dialectical discussion of "reputable opinions" (*endoxa*),[8] or even by deliberation itself.[9] But what matters is that the intellectual grasp (*nous*) of the principles is a part of *phronêsis* itself, not a distinct cognitive state. In English speaking countries, the latter, 'cognitivist', position has been dominant in the past decades of Aristotelian scholarship. A recent book by Jessica Moss has however challenged this view. The English-speaking world has also received the English translation of Natali's book in 2001 (originally published in 1988) that defends a non-cognitivist approach. In the French-speaking world, however, the Humean, or rather, as I shall call it, 'desiderativist', interpretation has prevailed.[10]

This line of inquiry has led scholars to produce numerous studies on *phronêsis*. In particular, the comparison of Aristotle with Hume has entailed a focus on issues such as practical reason and the motivation of action (i.a. Anscombe 1965; Nussbaum 1978, Essay 4; Dahl 1984; Charles 1984). Commentators have focused on *phronêsis* as practical knowledge insofar as they insist on its conative component.[11] They notice that Aristotle does not offer an account of practical knowledge or practical reason in terms of decision procedure, or in terms of deontic logic. Rather, what impresses them is the close relation Aristotle establishes with the psychology of the practical agent, in particular of the *phronimos* (Reeve 1992: 196-197). They retain that *phronêsis* does not go without character virtue and that one should stress the relation between reason and desire in an account of practical knowledge. For instance, David Charles (forthcoming) analyses practical knowledge in terms of the appropriateness between thought and desire. As Aristotle defines decision as depending from both practical thought and desire, he goes on by showing that practical knowledge is achieved when thought and desire are in agreement. However, as I shall argue, the causes of error in practical thought are less the result of a disagreement between thought and desire than the result of the lack of appropriate justification for one's decision. Charles does not pay enough attention to the epistemic justification of decision.

[7] Kenny 1979; Engberg-Pedersen 1983; Dahl 1984; Tuozzo 1991; Reeve 1992.
[8] Cooper 1975: 66-70; Irwin 1988.
[9] Wiggins 1975-1976; Broadie 1991; McDowell 1998; Bostock 2000; Price 2011.
[10] This is certainly due to Aubenque's work *La prudence chez Aristote* (1963), which had a significant influence on the next generations of scholars.
[11] Natali 2001; Richardson Lear 2004; Charles forthcoming.

The reason for the insistence on the conative component of practical reason seems to reside on the comparison with Hume. Since the full Humean thesis about reason states that reason not only has no share in the determination of moral ends, but also has no motivational force, it seems then that a study of Aristotle's *phronêsis* should answer both components of the thesis. *Phronêsis* does indeed determine moral ends, and practical reason in general is sufficient to motivate our actions. Yet, in doing so, it seems that scholars have lost touch with the more fundamental question of the epistemic status of *phronêsis*. Scholars simply presuppose that *phronêsis* has to do with knowledge without inquiring more deeply into the topic.

A mark of this lack of interest for epistemological questions on *phronêsis* is that there has been no agreement in recent scholarship regarding the relation between *phronêsis* and practical knowledge. At times, commentators simply understand the expression 'practical knowledge' as a way among others of referring to *phronêsis* (Aubenque 1963). In this way, the phrase 'practical knowledge' is roughly equivalent to the other usual translation of *phronêsis*, namely 'practical wisdom. However, scholars often understand the meaning of *phronêsis* as extending beyond what the modern reader would expect from a concept of practical knowledge. Scholars sometimes insist on *phronêsis* as practical knowledge in an existential way: as promoting the authenticity of human experience of the world (Heidegger 1992, Gadamer 1960). In the same way, *phronêsis* has been described as an insight of what one should do, which also involves "a profound insight into the whole human condition" and this insight is such that it can justify the grasp of what one should do (Engberg-Pedersen 1983: 223). These interpretations of *phronêsis* correspond to a more substantial understanding of wisdom. Practical wisdom in these terms is not merely a faculty to take the correct decision, but an overarching virtue that takes an important part in defining the good life.

Contrasting such views on the identity between *phronêsis* and practical knowledge, some commentators understand 'practical knowledge' as a specific aspect of *phronêsis*. Practical knowledge has been assimilated to practical intellect (*nous praktikos*). Yet this view leaves open the issue of what this 'practical intellect' refers to, for it has been interpreted in radically different ways, either as perception of particular facts (Louden 1991), or as intuition of first principles of ethics (Reeve 1992). Other scholars focus on what is usually called "moral knowledge", i.e. knowledge of moral principles and values (Owens 1991). Finally, some others understand practical knowledge as the kind of knowledge displayed in a particular decision (Broadie 1991). This meaning is closer to the inquiry I propose. Given the complex nature of *phronêsis* in Aristotle's texts, this polysemy is not surprising. It seems that depending on which aspect of *phronêsis* one wants to highlight, the exact

cognitive achievement of *phronêsis* varies, and with it the sense one attributes to 'practical knowledge'.

Of course, epistemological questions about *phronêsis* are not totally absent from Aristotelian scholarship. There has been a direction of interpretation that considered *phronêsis* to be identical to ethical science. According to this kind of interpretation, ethical treatises such as the *EN* are the product of practical reason or *phronêsis* itself, rather than of theoretical reason as for treatises such as the *Physics* or the *Metaphysics* (Hardie 1968: 30). Ethical science would then have its own principles and methods that are distinct from those of theoretical science. Similarly, there has been an Aristotelian Renaissance of practical knowledge in the 20th century in the form of German *Praktische Philosophie*. According to such an interpretation, *phronêsis* constitutes the paradigm of a sort of reason alternative to theoretical reason. This paradigm should be used in humanities and social sciences.[12] This approach of *phronêsis* presupposes, then, that if one questions the epistemic conditions of practical science one also questions those of *phronêsis*, and vice versa.

There have been convincing arguments against this identity. A significant objection is that ethical treatises often use dialectical method, whereas *phronêsis* does not. Nowhere does Aristotle develop a 'practical method' proper to his ethics or other treatises of practical science (Berti 1993; Natali 2001: 31). And this putative practical method cannot be constructed from Aristotle's doctrine of *phronêsis*. Yet, the question about the relation between *phronêsis* and ethical science must be answered. Is *phronêsis* a part of ethical science? The difficulty lies in that sometimes scholars focus on *phronêsis* as an individual disposition related to the moral behaviour of an agent, while at other times, *phronêsis* is described as identical to politics in the sense of legislative science (*EN* VI.8 1141b23-25). A convenient compromise is then to accept the identity of *phronêsis* with ethical science, only when considering the wide sense of *phronêsis* as an architectonic expertise (Anagnostopoulos 1994). In this sense then *phronêsis* shares its principles with ethical science. If this is so, then the epistemic status of *phronêsis* depends on the way these principles are acquired.

The cognition of the first principles of practical reason has also a significant import for the epistemology of *phronêsis*. An examination of this topic leads inevitably to the issue under what conditions *phronêsis* is true, or objective? If one opts for the cognitivist position, the most straightforward interpretation is that, regarding its epistemic status, *phronêsis* depends on the cognition of moral principles by

[12] Gadamer 1960, Bubner 1976; see Volpi 1993 for a presentation of German *Neo-Aristotelismus*; for a discussion see Berti 1993.

the intellect (*nous*).[13] In order to have practical knowledge, one has to possess the principles of this kind of knowledge. The epistemic conditions of *phronêsis* will then be expressed in terms of practical induction or dialectical discussion for establishing practical principles. It is indeed a strong rationale for the cognitivist position that if one assumes, with the desiderativists, that moral ends of our actions are not somehow determined by reason, but by our character, then there is no epistemic basis which might secure such or such principle as being correct or true (Irwin 1978: 256). This position also seems to consider that *phronêsis* uses the same principles as ethical science. An interesting exception is Cooper, who holds that moral ends are confirmed epistemically by dialectical discussion (Cooper 1975: 70-71). He seems to think that dialectical discussion is not a part of practical reason, and thus not a part of *phronêsis* (although *phronêsis* grasps the ends with practical *nous*). The method by which the ends are discussed rationally is not the same as practical reason and this seems to involve a discrepancy between *phronêsis* and ethical science. Whatever brand of cognitivism one opts for, either cognition of principles based on the intellect or on dialectic, this position faces the major problem that Aristotle never adopts this position explicitly. Quite on the contrary, he repeatedly asserts that reason, or *phronêsis*, or deliberation, does not determine the ends of our moral actions (*EN* III.3 1112b11-16; VI.12 1144a6-9; VI.13 1145a5-6; VII.8 1151a15-19).

On the other hand, the desiderativist brand of interpretation needs to establish the epistemic superiority of *phronêsis* in a different way than by a rational determination of the principles. Proponents of this view insist that even though the rational part of the soul does not determine the principles, it nonetheless has a grasp of it. Yet, this does not secure the validity of the principles. According to Natali, the issue of the objectivity of ethics and of practical reason is solved in the notion of habituation, which includes the laws of the *polis*, social practices and family teachings (Natali 2001: 75-76). However, he does not focus on the peculiar character of *phronêsis* as knowledge and seems to leave aside the question of what makes it knowledge. He seems to consider that *phronêsis* is knowledge only in a way relative to moral action: someone who is practically wise does not commit blameworthy actions. He also seems to regard *phronêsis* as a kind of knowledge in that it enables conscious and monitored actions instead of actions decided randomly (p. 178). Another feature Natali highlights is that the *phronimos* person is someone effective, who actually puts his intentions into actions. His deliberation does not result in wishful thinking (p. 180). Yet, all these features do not characterize *phronêsis* as knowledge *per se*. There is no intrinsic feature of *phronêsis* that would account for

[13] Reeve 1992; Taylor 2008: 215.

why *phronêsis* is knowledge, i.e. a cognitive state stronger and more reliable than mere belief. Moss in her recent book on the apparent good has challenged the cognitivist interpretation. She goes farther than Natali, since she attempts to ground the cognition of the good in moral perception and moral *phantasia*. Her interpretation of practical perception as pleasurable or painful perception of things as good or bad enables her to ground moral thought on perception. According to her, there is no induction of practical principles in the sense of induction of first principle as in theoretical science. What plays that role in practical thought is habituation (*ethismos*) of one's moral character along with experience (*empeiria*). She argues that this process of habituation and learning through experience is sufficient in order to obtain a true belief on the good. However, in the end she is still hesitant regarding the character of *phronêsis* as knowledge (Moss 2012: 224, n. 44).

Apart from cognitivism and desiderativism, there is a third way, which has been quite influential since the mid 1980's, dubbed "moral particularism". Moral particularism rejects the prima facie reading of Aristotle that virtue of character is what determines the end. According to this brand of interpretation, the end must be cognized and determined rationally. Yet, moral particularism is characterized by stressing the comparison of *phronêsis* with perception. Moral particularists contend that the basis of right action is perception. Stressing the fact that moral principles are not liable to strict determination, they have a deflationary interpretation of universal rules. They insist on the priority of perception of the particular circumstances of a situation. This kind of perception has been "trained" through correct education and habituation to spot the relevant features of a situation, which in turn indicate which action should be performed.[14] For instance, Broadie distinguishes between two kinds of end. On the one hand, there is the 'defining end', which is the general expression of what an agent is after. Health for the doctor, or living well for the practical agent (Broadie 1991: 195). She adds that this end is not effective in deliberation because it does not help us to make decisions. On the other hand, there is the deliberative end, which is specific and known rationally. This end is the one that the agent has in view in his deliberation. This concrete end is given to us by a kind of perception of the circumstances. From our perception of the circumstances, a concrete end occurs to us as the thing to do (p. 233). In this sense, Broadie does not count as an intellectualist, because she does not subscribe to the idea that the agent needs a general account of the defining end. There is no need for a practical induction towards the end, because practical ends are immediately available to us. Concerning the acquisition of the defining end, she limits her account to what Aristotle

[14] Wiggins 1975-1976; McDowell 1979 and 1998; Nussbaum 1986; Broadie 1991; Price 2011.

says about virtue giving the end. It is the kind of person we are, our character, that determines our defining end. Thus Broadie accommodates Aristotle's disturbing claim that virtue and character determines the end. Consequently, she pretends that there is no problem with the epistemology of practical knowledge. *Phronêsis* works on the basis of perception and daily experience. Broadie has a common understanding of knowledge as pieces of information we gather in our daily life (p. 228). In this way, she is also open to the criticism, which I addressed to Natali, that nothing distinguishes *phronêsis* from practical thought in general. *Phronêsis* seems to be just successful practical thought, without any intrinsic feature which makes it a kind of knowledge.

This short survey of Aristotelian scholarship shows that there is work to be done about the epistemic status of *phronêsis*. In the past few years, there has been more interest in properly epistemological questions. This general shift of interest in Aristotelian studies coincides with my thesis project. Gabriel Richardson Lear (2004, chap. 5) has made an interesting contribution to the epistemology of *phronêsis* in offering criteria for being a kind of knowledge. According to her, *phronêsis* is knowledge by analogy with wisdom (*sophia*). Indeed they both have truth as their function, although in the practical case 'truth' consists in something different from truth in the theoretical one, since it involves an emotional component (see §2.4.3). *Phronêsis* shows two further points of similarity: (1) both *phronêsis* and *sophia* are concerned with the good; (2) both *phronêsis* and *sophia* are 'accurate' (*akribês*) (Richardson Lear 2004: 103-104). The latter point of similarity is especially interesting, since it seems to point to an intrinsic property of knowledge. Accuracy (*akribeia*) indeed characterizes something which has achieved perfection. Applied to cognitive states, it seems "to amount (vaguely enough) to being of good epistemic quality".[15] However, Richardson Lear does not determine more precisely what it is for *phronêsis* to be accurate. She only contrasts the lack of accuracy of *phronêsis* compared to the accuracy of *sophia*. She acknowledges that *phronêsis* fulfils some of the requirements for accuracy: *phronêsis* depends on a small number of principles (pp. 109-110); it involves knowledge of the reason why (p. 111). Still, these properties concern *phronêsis* rather as a kind of science or wisdom, than as a cognitive state. They do not inform us on what it is to *know* what one should do.

A collection of articles exclusively devoted to Aristotle's moral epistemology is in preparation (Henry and Nielsen forthcoming). I had access to two papers from this collection, which have been very valuable for my purpose: Charles forthcoming, already mentioned, and Allen forthcoming. Allen's main point is that in practi-

[15] Richardson Lear, quoting a phrase from Barnes (1994: 189).

cal reason, there is a counterpart to understanding, or theoretical knowledge (*epistêmê*), in the theoretical sphere, and this counterpart is practical knowledge. As in theoretical reason, the epistemic value of understanding depends on an argument Aristotle calls a *sullogismos*, on the practical side, the epistemic strength of practical thought depends on a practical argument (Allen's point is roughly in accordance with the main point of my chap. 3).

Finally, there has been a renewed interest in the notion of experience (*empeiria*)[16]. Systematic studies on *empeiria* have increased in number in the last decade.[17] Recently, two papers (Miller 2014; Jimeñez in progress) examine the role of *empeiria* in a practical context. Miller argues that knowing particulars in practical reasoning is not as self-evident as one might think (in particular as moral particularists might have thought). Jimeñez argues that the acquisition of experience is a learning process distinct from that of habituation of character. She takes the distinction between the rational and the desiderative parts of the soul seriously and argues that the skills acquired through experience are not the same as those acquired through habituation.

My research is part of this larger movement to engage with Aristotelian moral epistemology. I have developed my insights on my own, but lately I have benefited from the latest studies I could access. This work, then, constitutes a synthesis of the latest research on these matters. But most of all, this work aims at re-evaluating the relevancy of an epistemological analysis of *phronêsis*. Behind this inquiry lurks the all-important question of 'what secures the correctness of our choices'.

1.3 Main thesis and summary of the chapters

My point is that *phronêsis* should be taken seriously as a kind of knowledge in a strong sense. By 'knowledge in a strong sense', I mean a cognitive state which is accompanied by a certain conviction or certainty about its content. If I know what I should do in a *strong* sense, I am convinced of what I should do and I am somehow aware of this decision.[18] I contend that *phronêsis* is the disposition for making virtu-

[16] *Empeiria* in Aristotle refers to a certain kind of knowledge (*Meta*. I.1 981a16). It arises in someone from a collection of memories (980b29-981a1; *APo* 100a5). It does not denote an experience in the sense of a personal contact to some fact or event as when I say 'I had a pleasant experience last evening'.

[17] See e.g. Frede and Striker 1996; Butler 2003; Gregorić and Grgić 2006; LaBarge 2006; Blackson 2006; Bronstein 2012; Jimeñez in progress.

[18] Thus, 'knowledge in a strong sense' can be opposed to 'knowledge in a weak sense' which amounts simply to grasping information about one's environment.

ous decisions and that in this respect it guarantees the correctness of one's choice. Moreover, I argue that a substantial part of *EN* VI, which is Aristotle's privileged account of *phronêsis*, is in fact devoted to answer the question of the epistemic status of *phronêsis*. In order to elaborate on these claims, here is a summary of the progression of the argument chapter by chapter.

In chapter 2, I characterize the meaning of practical knowledge I am interested in. I start from a more general notion of knowledge of practical matters, namely knowledge of the good, which was in use at Aristotle's time, especially in Plato and in the 4th century orators. I show that against this background, Aristotle develops a notion of knowledge which is eminently practical, because it aims not only at determining what is good or bad, but also at the actual performance of actions. Then, I argue that *phronêsis* is the disposition properly associated with this knowledge. Although the definition of *phronêsis* does not explicitly include virtuous decision-making, I show that it covers this function. At the end of the chapter, I discuss whether *phronêsis* is identical with practical knowledge or not. I distinguish between *phronêsis* as the disposition for practical knowledge and episodes of practical knowledge as cognitive states. In this sense, practical knowledge is not strictly identical to *phronêsis*. *Phronêsis* is practical knowledge as a disposition. It is an intellectual disposition that enables one to make virtuous decisions. In turn, a particular piece of practical knowledge is an actualization of *phronêsis*. Thus, the sense of practical knowledge which will interest us in this work is that of a cognitive state which accompanies an episode of decision.

The point of chapter 3 and 4 is to offer a framework for the conditions of practical knowledge. I argue that practical knowledge is achieved when decision is supported by a strong argument which justifies acting this way rather than otherwise. In chapter 3, I inquire into the form of practical thought, starting from the background of theoretical reason. In theoretical reason, *epistêmê* is achieved when the proposition held is explained with the appropriate demonstration (*apodeixis*, a special kind of syllogism). The explanation is not appropriate when the argument suffers from various flaws: the middle term is not the cause of the conclusion; the premises are false or are not principles; the argument is not valid; etc. In short, Aristotle invokes the theoretical syllogism in order to provide the epistemic conditions of *epistêmê*. Then I contend that, similarly to theoretical reason, there is a specific kind of argument in practical reason by which practical thought is justified. A decision is justified morally by a practical argument that gives the reasons why the agent has made such or such decision. The practical argument should similarly fulfil specific conditions for the decision to count as virtuous.

Chapter 4 investigates the content of the practical argument. In this regard, the practical argument differs significantly from the *apodeixis*. One of its premises is particular instead of having two universal premises. Moreover the universal premise has a normative content. Consequently, decision and practical thought are *evaluated* by means of a practical argument. More precisely, the practical argument offers a *moral* evaluation of decision. It shows whether the decision made by the agent is morally good or not. The moral value of decision depends indeed on both the universal and the particular premise. The universal component has to be correct and the particular one has to be appropriate to the universal one. That the major premise is correct means that the moral end the agent is pursuing is morally good. If the universal premise is morally bad, the decision will be morally bad as well. That the minor premise is appropriate to the major one means that the agent can implement his idea of the moral end into the present situation. If the particular argument is not appropriate, the outcome of practical reasoning won't be adequately justified.

But there is more to the practical argument. Apart from moral evaluation, I argue that it provides a way to evaluate one's decision *epistemically*. In other words, the analysis of the practical argument and its components enables one to determine whether the agent really knows what he should do or not. The proper epistemological inquiry into Aristotelian practical knowledge is chapter 5. The task of this chapter is to account for the epistemic strength of decision. The epistemic strength of one's decision depends on the way the agent cognizes the components of the practical argument. The agent will have a decision that is epistemically strong, and thereby achieve practical knowledge, if he has both knowledge of universal moral principles and knowledge of particulars on the other. Chapter 5 is thus devoted to examining what 'knowing moral principles' and 'knowing particulars' mean. Concerning knowledge of moral principles, I adopt a desiderativist position and argue that such knowledge depends on our character rather than on a rational cognition of universals. I argue against an intellectualist position about moral ends according to which universals in ethics are provided by a rational process of induction.[19] Concerning knowledge of particulars, my point is that knowing particulars is not just perceiving particulars, but also requires developing a sense of what is relevant in

[19] In defending a desiderativist interpretation of Aristotle's *phronêsis*, I position myself in line with Aubenque's views. In fact, this work can be seen as a continuation of Aubenque's *Prudence*, since he precisely ends his study with considerations about the kind of knowledge that *phronêsis* is, and this is where I start my own project. Besides, the title of this dissertation is a reference to Aubenque's comment of *EE* 1246b35-36: "Quel est donc cet « autre genre » de connaissance à quoi Aristote assimile la prudence ?" (Aubenque 1963: 145).

the situation. The strength of one's decision depends on the appropriateness of the relation between the universal and the particular premise. The agent ought to be able to spot what aspects are relevant in a situation and how they are connected to the moral end he is pursuing. I argue that this capacity is provided by the experience (*empeiria*) of the agent. The picture that is drawn from this investigation is a notion of practical knowledge which is grounded in how well an agent can justify the appropriateness of his decisions.

The practical argument as a tool for the epistemic evaluation of one's decision enables one to determine whether the decision is well or badly justified. In the ideal case of chapter 5, the *phronimos* agent has a good justification for his decision. This justification is good morally as well as epistemically. In other words, the reasons why the agent decides to act as he does are not only morally good, but they are also well established epistemically.

Chapter 6 extends my interpretation of practical thought and practical knowledge to the non-virtuous cases of lack of self-control (*akrasia*) and self-control (*enkrateia*). I show that in this context, too, Aristotle uses the structure of practical thought formalized as an argument. What essentially differentiates the *phronimos* from other kinds of moral character is the conviction he has in his decision. The decision that results from practical reasoning can be more or less firm. The agent can have more or less conviction in his decision. A non-virtuous agent can very well arrive non-incidentally at a well-justified decision to act, yet his decision will not be as firm as that of the *phronimos*. Typically, the *akratês* has such a weak cognitive state, which in the end is beaten by his appetite for an action opposed to what he thinks he should do. My claim is that the best account of the weak cognitive state of the *akratês* is given by using my interpretation of the appropriateness between the major and the minor premise. Lastly, although Aristotle remains silent on this matter, I argue that a sensible explanation of *enkrateia* can be given on the same model. The enkratic agent ties the relevant features of the situation to moral ends in a stronger way than the *akratês*. Consequently, he possesses a stronger justification for what he thinks he should do and is therefore able to withstand contrary desires and stick to his practical conclusion.

The notion of practical knowledge I develop in this work consists therefore in a cognitive state which results from a process of reasoning about what one should do. This cognitive state takes the form of an episode of decision that the agent holds strongly, i.e. with conviction. This kind of strong decision occurs when a decision to act is supported by reasons to act. These reasons to act must be consistent with one another and they must be relatively close in order to support one another.

This practical knowledge still needs to cope with objections one could make against knowledge in a practical domain. First, practical knowledge in decision-making seems to involve certainty in the outcome of some situation. However, in practical matters, I can never be in a situation in which I know what is going to happen. There is no possibility of reliable predictions. Some event might occur and disturb the course of things as I had planned them.

Second, if practical knowledge is the kind of knowledge which goes with virtuous decision, it involves some moral knowledge such as knowledge of the good. However, the notion of moral knowledge raises the typical issue of the objectivity of morals. Knowledge is usually very closely related to truth. If someone knows P, then P is true. One would not attribute knowledge to someone who claims that P if P is false. Yet, in the practical domain, we usually agree about the fact that rightness or goodness are relative to a point of view and that there is no absolute truth. It is quite hard to affirm that such or such position on moral concerns is true and another false. Quite on the contrary, some philosophers have recently argued that our moral statements cannot be true. Either they claim that our moral statements are systematically wrong,[20] or that our moral statements have nothing to do with being true or false; they are just expressions of our emotional states of mind.[21] I address these issues in the conclusion.[22]

Before starting the minute examination of Aristotle's texts, I need to give some important clarifications about the terminology.

1.4 Terminological clarifications

My first approximation of the notion of *phronêsis* requires an important remark on the kind of objects practical knowledge is about. Nowadays, what we call 'action' encompasses all kinds of conduct which have a certain effect in the world and whose cause is a rational agent. Aristotle, by contrast, distinguishes between two types of actions (or activities, *energeiai*). There is, on the one hand, 'production' (*poiêsis*), which is a kind of action whose result is distinct from the activity itself. For instance, making a bed is a production, because the result, the bed, does not belong to the process of production, but is distinct from it. On the other hand, there are

[20] 'Error theory', see e.g. Mackie 1977.

[21] 'Expressivism', see e.g. Ayer 1936; Gibbard 1990; Blackburn 1993.

[22] Some philosophers also deny that there is such thing as practical knowledge that is genuinely distinct from theoretical knowledge (Stanley and Williamson 2001; Stanley 2011). This work is not thought as an answer to them. Rather, I expect that my presentation of Aristotle's position will be able to fuel the debate.

actions with no other result than themselves. Aristotle calls this kind of actions '*praxis*'. Moreover, an action can be instrumental, i.e. performed for the sake of a further goal, or it can be performed for its own sake.[23] The kind of action Aristotle has in view when he develops his doctrine of *phronêsis* is action as *praxis* that is performed for its own sake. This kind of action corresponds roughly to a notion of *moral* action, that is, an action that is morally appraisable.[24] Such an action can be evaluated as successful, or not, for its own sake, not for the quality of its product. It is moreover evaluated *morally* as good or bad for itself, not only for the end it promotes (a virtuous action must be performed for its own sake: *EN* II.4 1105a26-33). Aristotle considers moral actions done for their own sake as paradigmatic for any action. The account of practical knowledge I shall construct in this work will then hold primarily for this kind of action. Thus, actions as *poiêseis* and actions in general, which are not performed for their own sake, will not be the object of this work.[25]

Specifying the relevant meaning of an action in the context of Aristotle's ethics also requires further elaboration on normative notions. In this work, I shall use 'normative' as a generic term that comprises everything that can be evaluated. An action or proposition that can be evaluated as good or bad, right or wrong, pleasant or unpleasant, beneficial or harmful etc., is a normative action or proposition. Correspondingly, 'normative' has a larger scope than 'moral', since it extends beyond values and principles that are properly moral. 'Normative' as a generic term can also be distinguished between what is prescriptive and what is properly evaluative. The latter term concerns propositions or actions that refer to a *value*, whereas the former concerns things that refer to prescriptions, rules, or laws. More substantive-

[23] Note that this distinction does not coincide with the former between *praxis* and *poiêsis*. A *praxis* can be done either for its own sake or for a further end, even if it does not result in an external product. My taking the bus in order to go to the university is instrumental, and yet it does not result in a product external to the activity of taking the bus. Likewise, a *poiêsis* can be done either for its own sake, artistic creation for instance, or for the sake of a further goal.

[24] In fact, Aristotle's notion of *praxis* done for its own sake is more restrictive than our moral action. Indeed, nowadays we admit that an instrumental action can have an intrinsic value, as when I steal in order to finance my vacation. Stealing in this case still has a negative moral value, although it has not been done for its own sake.

In general, in this work I understand 'moral' in a broad sense as what is concerned with moral values, norms and duties. Put in a nutshell, I use 'moral' in the sense of 'morally appraisable', not in the sense of 'morally good' as when a 'moral action' is opposed to an 'immoral action'.

[25] However, I believe that for Aristotle, the epistemic strength of a practical thought concerned with production or with action in general can be evaluated derivatively from the account of *phronêsis*. See Conclusion.

ly, I regard 'prescriptive' as denoting propositions that not only express a value judgment but also set a norm or prescription of what one should do. By contrast, an evaluative proposition is less strong and merely describes states of affairs in terms of norms or value. One can understand the distinction roughly by saying that prescriptive propositions include an 'ought' clause, as in 'I ought to call my mother for her birthday', while evaluative propositions refer to a value, as in 'It would be good to call by mother for her birthday'.[26]

Finally, here are some clarifications on the psychological vocabulary I use. Having a 'representation' or a 'notion' of moral values refers to cognitive *states*, i.e. mental events with a representational content (Honderich 1995: 138). By contrast, holding such cognitive states is the result of mental *processes* such as deliberation. A cognitive process can be roughly defined as a process of connecting representational contents to one another. A cognitive process can be either rational (e.g. arguments, inferences) or non-rational (association of idea). Finally these kinds of mental event, cognitive states and processes, may also be opposed to *dispositions*. A disposition can be described as the tendency to actualize a certain capacity in a definite way.[27] For instance, having *phronêsis disposes* one to perform certain pieces of reasoning, which in turn result in holding cognitive states of a certain kind. Thus, in this work, by 'knowledge', I mean the *disposition* to grasp one of such representational content and by 'episode of knowledge' or 'piece of knowledge' I mean an actual instance of grasping such intellectual content.[28] Similarly, by 'thought', I mean the disposition to actualize a process of thinking, whereas by 'thinking' or 'reasoning' I mean mental processes of connecting intellectual contents with one another. I also distinguish between 'cognitive', 'intellectual' and 'rational'. As already said, cognition concerns the domain of representational states in general. Thought is cognitive, but so is perception or *phantasia*.[29] In this sense, 'cognitive' is opposed to 'desiderative' (or conative) and to 'emotional'. By contrast, an intellectual state is a state which is held by the intellect (*nous*), i.e. the highest cognitive capacity in Aris-

[26] However, the interesting part is that the distinction does not strictly follow this formal account. Even in the proposition 'I ought to call my mother for her birthday', the subject can be merely considering the possibility of calling his mother, without feeling compelled of doing it. Whereas a prescriptive proposition would also be motivational. I leave this discussion here, since I shall not speak more of this kind of issue.

[27] This is a very large definition of 'disposition', close to Aristotle's definition of the notion of *hexis* (see §2.6).

[28] Moreover, the term 'knowledge' in English may also refer to a body of knowledge organized more or less accurately as a theory. I comment on the distinction between these meanings on knowledge in §3.2.

[29] On this inclusive meaning of 'cognitive', see Moss 2012: 3-4.

totle's psychology.[30] Third, a rational state is a state which is held on the basis of appropriate reasons (see Honderich 1995: 744). A rational state is necessarily cognitive. 'Rational' can be opposed either to 'non-rational' (a stone is irrational), or to 'irrational' (believing in aliens is irrational).

[30] *Nous* quite generally refers to the capacity of thinking (*noein*; see e.g. *DA* I.1 402b13; II.2 413a23; II.3 414b18). This is what I shall call the 'common' sense of *nous*, by opposition to a technical sense of *nous*, developed by Aristotle himself. Indeed, in his epistemological writings, Aristotle introduces *nous* as a specific kind of cognitive state that grasps the first principles of a science (*APo* II.19 100b5-17). On the technical sense of *nous* see below, §3.2.1.

CHAPTER 2

2 Practical knowledge as an aspect of *phronêsis*

2.1 Introduction

At the time of Aristotle, knowledge was connected quite generally to an important issue, that of attaining the good life. The notion of knowledge for the sake of living well is vividly discussed in Plato and also present in the work of the orators. Yet, Aristotle states that a general notion of knowledge of the good life is not sufficient in order to account for excellence in action. In a few places in his ethical work, he carves out a notion of knowledge that is eminently practical, for its function is to implement an action that is appropriate to the situation (*EN* II.9 1109a20-30; *EN* V.9 1137a9-17). It is not knowledge of what the good life is, or of a general rule of what one should do, but a kind of knowledge that adapts such general accounts to the peculiarities of a situation.

What is this other kind of knowledge? Usual Greek terms that are roughly equivalent to the notion of knowledge are *epistêmê* or *gnôsis*.[31] Yet Aristotle has no notion such as '*gnôsis praktikê*' or '*epistêmê praktikê*' that would refer to the kind of knowledge that are alluded to in these passages.[32] The most obvious candidate of Aristotelian notions to be identified with practical knowledge is probably *phronêsis*, or 'practical wisdom'. Aristotle claims on various occasions that *phronêsis* involves knowledge (*EN* VI.7 1141b14-16; VI. 8 1142a1; VI.11 1143a33-34). *Phronêsis* is pre-

[31] In Aristotle, *gnôsis* has a general sense of knowledge as grasping information, whereas *epistêmê* generally has a technical sense of knowing as understanding something with its explanation (see Burnyeat 1981: 97-108). *Epistêmê* is therefore often translated as scientific knowledge or science. More on *epistêmê* at §3.2.1. On *gnôsis*, see note 47.

[32] True, Aristotle occasionally speaks of 'practical science' (*epistêmê praktikê*: *EN* 1094b4-5; *Meta.* 1026b4-5, 1064a10-11; *Top.* 145a15-16, 152b4, 157a10-11), but the phrase does not denote the kind of practical knowledge that accompanies action. As I shall show later (§3.2.1), *epistêmê* can mean either knowledge as a cognitive state, or knowledge as *science*, i.e. as an organized body of knowledge. *Epistêmê praktikê* means a kind of science, i.e. a kind of investigation or a body of knowledge which can be studied in a theoretical way. Practical science is composed traditionally of ethics and politics and is opposed to theoretical sciences (such as physics, psychology, biology, metaphysics, or mathematics), and to productive ones (rhetoric and poetics).

scriptive (*epitaktikê*), for the end of *phronêsis* is what one should do or not.[33] Furthermore, it is identified on two occasions with a belief, or supposition (*hupolêpsis* – 1140b12-13, 1142b33)[34]. These characteristics remind us very much of a notion of practical knowledge as *knowing what one should do*.

However, it is not so obvious whether *phronêsis* is practical knowledge. *Phronêsis* can be understood as *wisdom* rather than knowledge. Wisdom, in a practical sense, may refer to the general disposition of being a good person and of making wise decisions. It concerns life as a whole and is more comprehensive than practical knowledge, which is knowing what one should do in a particular situation. As such it encompasses various skills such as knowledge of moral values, a practical sense for spotting what matters in a situation, an ability to think efficiently to find out the best option, etc. Practical knowledge, as I have characterized it, seems to be a much simpler disposition. As a kind of knowledge, it is a disposition to have single episodes of knowledge about a certain object.[35] Moreover, Aristotle sometimes speaks of *phronêsis* as a kind of science rather than as a disposition of specific cognitive states. At *EN* VI.8 1141b23-25 he distinguishes between two sorts of *phronêsis* one of which is called 'architectonic *phronêsis*' and is equated to political science (*politikê*). Finally, being *phronimos* is something rare, whereas practical knowledge seems intuitively to be something that any rational being can achieve. Even the weak-willed person (the *akratês*) uses his knowledge while acting, although his desire turns out to weigh heavier on his action. There is a need therefore to investigate whether the idea of practical knowledge present in the text of Aristotle can indeed be identified with *phronêsis*, and if it is the case, one ought to clarify in what sense *phronêsis* can be 'knowledge' rather than 'wisdom'.

This chapter is devoted to a reconstruction of Aristotle's notion of practical knowledge. I explore Aristotle's ethical work in order to highlight passages where occurrences of knowledge fulfil a practical function. Finally, I discuss whether *phronêsis* is identical with practical knowledge or not. I argue that Aristotle's concept of *phronêsis* includes what I call practical knowledge.

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[33] *EN* VI.10 1143a8-9: ἡ μὲν γὰρ φρόνησις ἐπιτακτική ἐστιν· τί γὰρ δεῖ πράττειν ἢ μή, τὸ τέλος αὐτῆς ἐστίν·

[34] *Hupolêpsis*: supposition, or belief. It is the generic term for a cognitive state. *Epistêmê*, *doxa*, and *phronêsis* are all said to be kinds of *hupolêpsis* (Irwin 1985: 350).

[35] The majority of modern commentators render *phronêsis* as 'wisdom' (E.g. Hardie 1968; Gauthier and Jolif 1970; Engberg-Pedersen 1983; Broadie 1991; Reeve 1992; Bostock 2000). Only some of them translate *phronêsis* as 'practical knowledge' (Charles 1984; Natali 2001). Yet, they do not question the scope of *phronêsis* in these terms. Rather, they tend to identify practical knowledge with practical wisdom altogether (Natali 2001, esp. chap. 1, section 6).

2.2 Knowledge in a practical context

Despite the lack of evidence that Aristotle has a notion of practical knowledge, there are clear signs throughout his ethical work that he had an interest in it. As far as the function of practical knowledge is concerned, Aristotle was in tune with the worries of other thinkers of his time. Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle shows interest in the question of knowledge in a practical context:

> 1) "So in relation to life, too, will knowing (*gnôsis*) it [the chief good] have great weight, and like archers with a target would we be more successful in hitting the point we need to hit <if we had the chief good>? If so, then one must try to grasp it at least in outline, that is, what it might be, and to which sort of science or faculty it belongs." *EN* I.2 1094a22-26[36]
>
> ἆρ' οὖν καὶ πρὸς τὸν βίον ἡ γνῶσις αὐτοῦ μεγάλην ἔχει ῥοπήν, καὶ καθάπερ τοξόται σκοπὸν ἔχοντες μᾶλλον ἂν τυγχάνοιμεν τοῦ δέοντος; εἰ δ' (25) οὕτω, πειρατέον τύπῳ γε περιλαβεῖν αὐτὸ τί ποτ' ἐστὶ καὶ τίνος τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἢ δυνάμεων.

Aristotle presumes that knowledge of the ultimate good (*to ariston*, 1094a22) is useful for someone who aims at success in his life. He compares such a person with archers, who aim at a target. For the latter, it will be easier to achieve what they ought to do (*to deon*) if they have a target (*skopon*). Similarly, it is easier for us to perform appropriate actions if we have a target with which we can direct our actions. In other words, to lead a good life, one needs to perform one's actions according to the ultimate good.

This first occurrence of knowledge in a practical context gives a good idea of what the worry of ancient thinkers was. The present passage shows a structure of living well conceived as hitting a target by way of some kind of knowledge.[37] This

[36] Translations are all mine, except when specified. For more information, see the introductory remarks in the "List of Aristotle's works" section. There I also explain my use of square brackets and angle brackets in the translation.

[37] The Greek notion that roughly stands for our notion of living well or happiness is *eudaimonia*. It does not exactly mean the same as the English term, though. *Eudaimonia* is not happiness in the sense of an inner feeling of joy or bliss, as we often understand it. Rather, the Greek notion of *eudaimonia* is a notion that contains more aspects than a psychological one. Of course, happiness must include pleasure, but it must be self-sufficient as well. It includes therefore success in life, material goods as well as good social relations, hence the occasional translation of *eudaimonia* as 'human flourishing'. Cf. e.g. Cooper 1975: x-xi; Reeve 2013: 40.
Other terms that are close to eudaimonia are *eupraxia* (successful action) and *eu zên* (successful life). Originally in Greek all three terms have distinct meanings. *Eudaimonia* involves the notion of *daimôn* and refers to one's happy destiny. *Eupraxia* refers to success in one's busi-

way of conceiving moral life is a common one in the intellectual climate of the 4th century BCE. In particular, the archer's analogy of passage (1) can be traced back to Plato. Indeed, the analogy resembles *Rep.* VII 519c where Socrates emphasizes the importance of education as an art of guiding souls towards the contemplation of the Good:

2) "And what about the uneducated who have no experience of truth? Isn't it likely—indeed, doesn't it follow necessarily from what was said before — that they will never adequately govern a city? [...] They would fail because they don't have a single goal in life at which all their actions, public and private, inevitably aim." (Trans. Cooper and Hutchinson)

   Τί δέ; τόδε οὐκ εἰκός, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ ἀνάγκη ἐκ τῶν προειρημένων, μήτε τοὺς ἀπαιδεύτους καὶ ἀληθείας ἀπείρους ἱκανῶς ἄν ποτε πόλιν ἐπιτροπεῦσαι, [...], τοὺς μὲν ὅτι σκοπὸν ἐν τῷ βίῳ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἕνα, οὗ στοχαζομένους δεῖ ἅπαντα πράττειν ἃ ἂν πράττωσιν ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ,

It is to be found in Isocrates as well (Isocrates, *Ad filios Jasonis*, 9-10):

3) "[9] For nothing can be intelligently accomplished unless first, with full forethought, you reason and deliberate how you ought to direct your own future, what mode of life you should choose, what kind of repute you should set your heart upon, and which kind of honours you should be contented with—those freely granted by your fellow-citizens or those wrung from them against their will; and when these principles have been determined, then and only then should your daily actions be considered, in order that they may be in conformity with the original plan. [10] If in this way you seriously search and study, you will take mental aim, as at a mark, at what is expedient for you, and will be the more likely to hit it. And if you have no such plan, but attempt to act in casual fashion, inevitably you will go astray in your purposes and fail in many undertakings." (Trans. Norlin (Perseus))

   [9] Οὐδὲν γὰρ οἷόν τ' ἐστὶ πραχθῆναι νοῦν ἐχόντως, ἂν μὴ τοῦτο πρῶτον μετὰ πολλῆς προνοίας λογίσησθε καὶ βουλεύσησθε, πῶς χρὴ τὸν ἐπίλοιπον χρόνον ὑμῶν αὐτῶν προστῆναι καὶ τίνα βίον προελέσθαι καὶ ποίας δόξης ὀριγνηθῆναι καὶ ποτέρας τῶν τιμῶν ἀγαπῆσαι, τὰς παρ' ἑκόντων γιγνομένας ἢ τὰς παρ' ἀκόντων τῶν πολιτῶν· ταῦτα δὲ διορισαμένους τότ' ἤδη τὰς πράξεις τὰς καθ' ἑκάστην τὴν ἡμέραν σκεπτέον, ὅπως συντενοῦσι πρὸς τὰς ὑποθέσεις τὰς ἐξ ἀρχῆς γενομένας. [10] Καὶ τοῦτον μὲν τὸν τρόπον ζητοῦντες

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ness, whereas *eu zên* refers to the good life. However, at the time of Aristotle, all three expressions were considered as synonymous (Gauthier 1970: 27).

> καὶ φιλοσοφοῦντες ὥσπερ σκοποῦ κειμένου στοχάσεσθε τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιτεύξεσθε τοῦ συμφέροντος· ἂν δὲ μηδεμίαν ποιήσησθε τοιαύτην ὑπόθεσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ προσπῖπτον ἐπιχειρῆτε πράττειν, ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν ὑμᾶς ταῖς διανοίαις πλανᾶσθαι καὶ πολλῶν διαμαρτάνειν πραγμάτων.

These passages emphasize the indispensability of having a target in order to achieve a successful life. Successful actions must be thought out according to a general plan, a general idea of what constitutes the good life. And when performing action, one ought to keep such an idea as a goal.

More generally, Plato conceives the same structure in his ethical thought. Morally good actions are compared to technical production (*poiêsis*). A good or successful action is one that results in the production of a well-ordered outcome (*Gorgias* 503d-504b). Further, Plato considers that achieving order in this way requires a model (*paradeigma*) that provides a blueprint for one's actions or productions. Plato applied this structure in at least two specific contexts, namely the creation of the *kosmos* by a cosmic *dêmiourgos* (which originally means 'craftsman') and the ordering process at the level of the *polis* in virtue of good government performed by a political ruler, namely the philosopher-king. The cosmic *dêmiourgos* contemplates the intelligible Forms in order to create the world in which we live out of the prime matter (*Timaeus* 28a-b; 30a-c). At the level of the *polis*, the philosopher-king bases his good government of the state on the contemplation of the Forms, in particular of the Form of the Good (*Republic* 484c-d; 501b).

Thus, at the time of Aristotle, there was a common conception of practical life according to which a good, or successful, way of life depends on having a target, or a benchmark on which the agent can ground his choices. A condition for success in one's enterprises is to have such a target (*skopon echôn, skopou keimenou*). Text (1) shows that Aristotle is in agreement with this conception.

Moreover, in text (1), access to the target is granted by a kind of *knowledge* (*gnôsis*) that provides the agent with a better idea of what is required and that makes the agent more efficient in achieving what he intends to do (independently of the ontological status of what stands as a *skopos*). In doing so, Aristotle introduces an additional notion to his model of practical life, namely a kind of knowledge relevant in a practical context. Again, this reference to knowledge as what provides access to the target is not new. We already find it in Plato with the Socratic conception of virtue as knowledge. According to Socrates – as depicted by Plato –, what matters the most for someone is to become virtuous, for the good life flows from one's virtuous character. Being virtuous is the same as being happy (*eudaimôn*). Indeed, it was a common conception at that time that what is noble (*kalon*) is the same as what is good, or beneficial (*agathon*). If something is noble it is also beneficial.

The presence of such a conception is shown in the *Gorgias,* when both Socrates and Callicles refute Polus, who had attempted to show that something could be vile but beneficial (*Gorgias* 474c-475e; 483a-b; See Sauvé Meyer 2008: 12-13). And Socrates believes that one will not become virtuous unless one acquires knowledge or wisdom of how to use goods such as riches, health and other such conventional goods (*Euthd*. 278e-282a; *Meno* 88a-c). In other words, wisdom as knowledge of how to use the conventional goods is a necessary condition for happiness (see Sauvé Meyer 2008: 15-16).[38]

According to this brief survey, one can see that there was conceptual room at that time for a notion of knowledge that is specifically connected to practical matters like virtue and the good life. Besides, this way of introducing knowledge in moral or practical matters – in the form of knowledge of the good – had a successful reception in the philosophical discussions after Aristotle. In particular, the practical man as aiming at a target became a *topos* in the Stoic tradition in particular concerning the debate on the use of moral rules and precepts (see Annas 1993: 101-102, Sauvé Meyer 2008: 155ff.; Inwood 1985: 204).[39] By contrast, the significance of knowledge for our practical life had been rejected by other philosophers such as the Cynics or that of Pyrrho.[40]

In this context, Aristotle follows his master only up to a certain point, and then takes an original and new direction. He introduces a notion of knowledge that is not only a consideration of a general target, but involves the realization of the target in the situation. In what follows, I want to account for practical knowledge in Aristotle by uncovering what I take to be its functional role. I contend that before the main introduction of *phronêsis* in *EN* VI Aristotle has already circumscribed the main features of practical knowledge. In this functional description, Aristotle dis-

[38] Seeking *aretê* was a common ideal in ancient Greece and this was not at all particular to Socrates. What Socrates did, however, was to provide a peculiar meaning to the notion of *aretê*. He elaborated *aretê* as a proper *moral* ideal of doing well that contrasted with the archaic ideal of the warrior or with the political ideal of the sophists. Thus, according to Socrates, happiness can be reached only if one has knowledge of how to use the conventional goods, knowledge that Sauvé-Meyer has called "knowledge of the good and the bad" (Sauvé-Meyer 2008: 17).

[39] Of course, Plato as well as the Stoics did not distinguish between a kind of knowledge specifically directed at practice and a specifically theoretical notion of knowledge. Neither did they distinguish between a kind of knowledge specifically practical and knowledge in general. Knowledge of the good does not differ from knowledge in general. The distinction, as I shall show, is proper to Aristotle.

[40] About the Cynics, see Canto-Sperber et al. 1997: 169 on Diogenes; about Pyrrho, see Timo's summary of the thought of Pyrrho as reported in Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* and commented on in Canto-Sperber et al. 1997: 466-470.

tances himself from Plato's and Socrates' conceptions of knowledge at work in practical contexts.[41]

2.3 A first approximation of practical knowledge

At the end of *EE* I.5, Aristotle presents Socrates' conception of the ultimate good (1216b3-10). He attributes to Socrates the claim that the ultimate good is knowledge of virtue (*to ginôskein tên aretên* 1216b3-4). This position is grounded by the intuition that virtue is rather an intellectual state: in order to be virtuous one has to know what virtue is. And having this knowledge on the essence of virtue would simultaneously entail being virtuous, as knowing what geometry is would simultaneously enable one to be a geometer. On this matter, Aristotle follows Socrates up to a certain point (1216b10-16). It is true, he says, that some sciences, like geometry or astronomy, are nothing beyond the knowledge that they achieve. To engage in astronomy just is to have knowledge of astronomical objects. However, Aristotle disagrees with Socrates by noting that this conception of knowledge does not hold for every field of inquiry.

> 4) "But with the productive sciences, the goal is distinct from knowledge and understanding. For example, health is the goal of medicine, and good order or something of that sort the goal of political science. Now it is indeed a fine thing to know each fine thing. Nonetheless, when it comes to virtue, knowing (*eidenai*) what it is is not the most valuable point, but knowing (*ginôskein*) from which things it obtains. For we do not want to know (*eidenai*) what courage is, but to be courageous, nor to know what justice is, but to be just, as we want to be healthy rather than know (*ginôskein*) what being healthy is, and be in good physical condition rather than know what being in good physical condition is.[42] *EE* I.5 1216b16-25
>
> τῶν δὲ ποιητικῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἕτερον τὸ τέλος τῆς ἐπιστήμης καὶ γνώσεως, οἷον ὑγίεια μὲν ἰατρικῆς, εὐνομία δὲ ἤ τι τοιοῦθ'

[41] There also are major differences between Plato and Aristotle about the ontology of the object of knowledge in a practical context. Plato notoriously introduced the notion of intelligible Forms, especially the Form of the Good, as that for the sake of which we should ultimately perform our actions (*Rep*. 484b-d). By contrast, Aristotle did not link knowledge of the good to such transcendent beings (see §2.4.2 on further elements of contrast with Plato and §4.3 concerning the content of one's knowledge of the good which is supposed to justify our actions).

[42] Aristotle uses *ginôskein* and *eidenai* interchangeably in order to express either knowing what something is or knowing from what something obtains. This shows that these verbs are not related specifically to one kind of knowledge rather than to the other.

> ἕτερον τῆς πολιτικῆς. καλὸν μὲν οὖν καὶ τὸ γνωρίζειν (20) ἕκαστον τῶν καλῶν· οὐ μὴν ἀλλά γε περὶ ἀρετῆς οὐ τὸ εἰδέναι τιμιώτατον τί ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τὸ γινώσκειν ἐκ τίνων ἐστίν. οὐ γὰρ εἰδέναι βουλόμεθα τί ἐστιν ἀνδρεία, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἀνδρεῖοι, οὐδέ τί ἐστι δικαιοσύνη, ἀλλ' εἶναι δίκαιοι, καθάπερ καὶ ὑγιαίνειν μᾶλλον ἢ γινώσκειν τί ἐστι τὸ ὑγιαίνειν καὶ εὖ ἔχειν τὴν ἕξιν μᾶλλον ἢ γινώσκειν τί ἐστι τὸ εὖ ἔχειν.

Some sciences, called 'productive' (*poiêtikôn*), such as medicine and politics, are not for the sake of knowing only. They have a goal which is distinct from knowledge about their proper objects. In the case of virtue and ethics in general, too, Aristotle makes clear that knowledge about ethical matters is an end distinct from achieving the things that ethical knowledge is about, that is, acquiring the virtues. Hence, what matters in ethical inquiry is not gaining knowledge about what the virtues are, but acquiring these virtues. In the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle has indeed a summarizing formula, in a passage parallel to text (4), that "it is not in order to acquire knowledge that we are considering what virtue is, but to become good people".[43]

The Eudemian passage does establish that being virtuous is equivalent to a different form of knowledge, which Aristotle calls in this context 'to know how and from which things [virtue comes about]'.[44] In these terms, to be, say, courageous just is to know how and from which things courage comes about. This claim might surprise the modern reader, for Aristotle's description of this kind of knowledge does not sound very practical. I can very well know how courage comes about or from which things it obtains in a mere theoretical fashion, by reflecting on what courage is and so on. But Aristotle's point seems clear enough. He wants to emphasize a kind of knowledge distinct from theoretical knowledge and which is closely connected to the disposition of being courageous, or – more generally – virtuous. This way Aristotle introduces the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge, i.e. between a kind of knowledge that merely states what a thing is and a kind of knowledge that implies practical skills.

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[43] *EN* II.2 1103b27-28: οὐ γὰρ ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τί ἐστιν ἡ ἀρετὴ σκεπτόμεθα, ἀλλ' ἵν' ἀγαθοὶ γενώμεθα.
In the *EN*, Aristotle does not speak of politics as a 'productive' science, but as a *practical* one (*EN* VI.8 1141b26-27). However, the idea that its purpose differs from that of theoretical sciences is the same as in the *EE*. Moreover, in the *EN*, politics is the overarching practical science, which includes productive sciences as well (*EN* I.2 1094a24-b7).

[44] The exact phrase in passage (4) is τὸ γινώσκειν ἐκ τίνων ἐστίν, but this is a direct reminder of the more complete phrase of 1216b10 "πῶς γίνεται καὶ ἐκ τίνων".

There is another passage on the necessity of knowledge in action, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* this time, which is more informative about knowledge in this context. At *EN* II.9 1109a24-26, while concluding book II on virtue in general, Aristotle adds that virtue is not easy to achieve.

5) "Enough has been said, then, to show that virtue of character is a mean, and in what sense it is so; that it is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency; and that it is such because it is the sort of thing able to hit the mean in feelings and actions. This is why it is quite some work to be good, because in each case it is hard to find the middle point; for instance, not everyone can find the centre of a circle, but only the person with knowledge. So too anyone can get angry, or give and spend money – these are easy; but doing them in relation to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, with the right aim in view, and in the right way – that is not something anyone can do, nor is it easy. This is why excellence in these things is rare, praiseworthy and noble." *EN* II.9 1109a20-30

(20) Ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρετὴ ἡ ἠθικὴ μεσότης, καὶ πῶς, καὶ ὅτι μεσότης δύο κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ' ἔλλειψιν, καὶ ὅτι τοιαύτη ἐστὶ διὰ τὸ στοχαστικὴ τοῦ μέσου εἶναι τοῦ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσι καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν, ἱκανῶς εἴρηται. διὸ καὶ ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον εἶναι. ἐν ἑκάστῳ (25) γὰρ τὸ μέσον λαβεῖν ἔργον, οἷον κύκλου τὸ μέσον οὐ παντὸς ἀλλὰ τοῦ εἰδότος· οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀργισθῆναι παντὸς καὶ ῥᾴδιον, καὶ τὸ δοῦναι ἀργύριον καὶ δαπανῆσαι· τὸ δ' ᾧ καὶ ὅσον καὶ ὅτε καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ ὡς, οὐκέτι παντὸς οὐδὲ ῥᾴδιον· διόπερ τὸ εὖ καὶ σπάνιον καὶ ἐπαινετὸν καὶ καλόν.

In *EN* II, Aristotle has introduced virtue as a mean (*meson*) between an excessive and a deficient disposition (1106b15-24). For instance, the virtue of courage is a mean between the deficiency of cowardice and the excess of boldness; the virtue of temperance is a mean between the excess of self-indulgence and the deficiency of insensibility, and so on. Now he wants to add that finding the mean is not easy. To hit the *meson* is a difficult task (*ergon*) because it requires an action which must be appropriate in different respects. Acting virtuously is not only responding to a situation with an action related to the situation. Rather, acting virtuously consists in doing the right thing, to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, with the right aim in view and in the right way. Aristotle compares such an achievement with the task in geometry of pointing to the centre of a circle (*kuklos*). This is certainly not an easy task and coming close to the geometrical centre of the circle without any tool requires some training. Besides, this comparison recalls the analogy of the archer in passage (1). Now, Aristotle mentions that achievements such as finding the mean in a practical situation and pointing to the centre of a cir-

cle require some kind of knowledge. Only the one who 'knows' (*tou eidotos*) is able to determine the *meson*.[45] A further passage makes a similar point.

The end of *EN* V.9 is devoted to clearing up a mistaken common opinion on justice and injustice, namely that being just is something easy to achieve. This passage is therefore thematically close to text (5). Aristotle's answer to this belief relies on the distinction between action and character. Doing something unjust such as sleeping with one's neighbour's wife or hitting someone seems to be easy to do and up to us, however doing it in the corresponding state of character, i.e. on purpose, is not so easy (1137a4-9). Similarly, *performing* a just act does not involve *being* a just person. One can do something just by accident. Then, Aristotle seems to refine the argument. Granting that being a just person is less easy than doing a just act, one could argue nevertheless that at least knowing what a just act is would be easy.

> 6) In the same way, people think that knowing what things are just and what things are unjust does not require being *sophos*, because it is not difficult to grasp what the laws say (though the laws are not the just things themselves, except incidentally). But knowing how things are to be done and distributed if they are to be just is more of a job than knowing what things are healthy. For, even in that case, knowing about honey, wine, hellebore, cautery or surgery may be easy, but knowing how one should administer them in order to produce health, and to whom and at what time, is as demanding a task as it is to be a doctor." *EN* V.9 1137a9-17
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> ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὸ (10) γνῶναι τὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ ἄδικα οὐδὲν οἴονται σοφὸν εἶναι, ὅτι περὶ ὧν οἱ νόμοι λέγουσιν οὐ χαλεπὸν συνιέναι (ἀλλ' οὐ ταῦτ' ἐστὶ τὰ δίκαια ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ συμβεβηκός)· ἀλλὰ πῶς πραττόμενα καὶ πῶς νεμόμενα δίκαια, τοῦτο δὴ πλέον ἔργον ἢ τὰ ὑγιεινὰ εἰδέναι· ἐπεὶ κἀκεῖ μέλι καὶ οἶνον καὶ (15) ἐλλέβορον καὶ καῦσιν καὶ τομὴν εἰδέναι ῥᾴδιον, ἀλλὰ πῶς δεῖ νεῖμαι πρὸς ὑγίειαν καὶ τίνι καὶ πότε, τοσοῦτον ἔργον ὅσον ἰατρὸν εἶναι.

Proponents of the view that it is easy to exercise justice have the further argument that it is easy to know (*gnônai*) which things are just and which are unjust. The reason for that is that it is not difficult to understand (*sunienai*) the things the laws say, i.e. what the laws prescribe or forbid.[46] Aristotle's reply to this argument

[45] Some take this occurrence of *eidenai* in a deflationary way: *tou eidotos* would merely refer to a skilled person, without insisting on a cognitive component (see translation *ad locum* in Broadie and Rowe 2002). But the next passage I examine shows that there is indeed a cognitive component in play in determining the virtuous mean.

[46] That the laws are not hard to understand can sound funny to a modern ear. However, Aristotle sometimes evokes the common opinion that every citizen should be familiar with

is very close to the previous passage of *EN* II.9 (text 5). What matters is knowledge of what one should do that is appropriate to a very specific situation. One ought to know *how* to perform a particular action in a given context. In order to make his point clearer, Aristotle invokes a comparison with medicine. It is not sufficient to know what different remedies are (honey, wine, hellebore, etc.). One could even add that it is not sufficient to know what these medicines are supposed to cure in general. Rather, what matters is to know how to prescribe these remedies, to whom and when. In other words, the knowledge required in such situations is knowledge how to deal with a *particular case*. The same holds for justice – and for virtue in general, as text (5) has shown.

This passage confirms that the exercise of virtue involves a cognitive component. Aristotle explicitly refers to a sort of know-how for the successful exercise of medicine, and thereby for the successful exercise of justice.

Thus, we find scattered in the ethical works occurrences of epistemic verbs that point to a notion of practical knowledge.[47] Such a conception involves the following features: a certain type of knowledge is useful for living a successful life; this knowledge enables the agent to reach his purposes; the target of such knowledge is not knowledge itself, but something else, namely a practical goal; such knowledge is necessary in the exercise of virtue in order to attain the mean; this knowledge is not about what things are, but rather about how to do things. In order to better conceive how knowledge might import in practical situation, Aristotle relies on the framework provided by technical expertise (*technê*). This framework enables him to specify the relation between the production of something (health in the case of medicine and just action in the case of justice) and the knowledge of that product (text 4). Yet, he shows at the same time which component one ought to focus on. It is one thing to know what health is, but it is another to take profit from this knowledge in practice (text 6). Thereby, Aristotle takes his distance from Plato. Plato had made the same extensive use of analogies with productive crafts, yet he had greatly insisted on knowledge of the model. Instead, Aristotle reverses the pri-

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the laws (cf. *EN* III.5 1113b3-1114a1). He probably means that the content of laws is not difficult to understand *prima facie*, without implying that one knows every implications of these laws in one's every day life or in court.

[47] Note again that the terminology used by Aristotle is not relevant in order to understand the specificity of practical knowledge. In order to express one's grasp of the ultimate good at *EN* I.2 1094a23 (text 1), Aristotle uses the term *gnôsis*. *Gnôsis*, and its cognate *gignôskein*, are very general terms and could refer to different notions of knowledge. Aristotle uses it for instance to refer to Plato's knowledge of the intelligible Forms (*EN* 1097a6). *Gnôsis* also points to a very general meaning of knowledge when Aristotle attributes some knowledge to any animal, for every animal has perception (*GA* 731a31-33).

orities. He goes as far as to deflate the importance of the model ('it is not difficult to grasp what the laws say'), insisting on the implementation of such knowledge in practice. These passages also make clear that the kind of knowledge at stake in practice is knowledge in a strong sense, not knowing as mere grasping information. In particular, the comparison of practical knowledge with medicine in text (6) shows that a certain expertise is required in order to attain the middle term of a virtuous action.[48]

Now, the evidence gathered concerns a few passages which are found in *EN* I, II and V, as well as in *EE* II. These passages occur in contexts either general or related to virtue of character. They all point at some notion of knowledge which functions as practical knowledge and which ought to complete the account of Aristotle's moral psychology. However, they do not take into account Aristotle's more general moral psychology and the way he sees the organization of the soul. Now, I wish to address the question of practical knowledge by examining the comprehensive account of moral psychology as introduced in the *EN*. In particular, what will interest me is the rational side of this psychology, which is introduced most of all in book VI of the *EN* (book V of the *EE*). In this book, Aristotle offers a technical treatment of his notion of *phronêsis* as an intellectual virtue related to action. My aim is to assess whether *phronêsis* is identical with practical knowledge.

2.4 The rational side of moral action

Before continuing the Aristotelian account of practical knowledge, I need to say a few words on Aristotle's conception of virtue and virtuous action. This will help in understanding Aristotle's general doctrine of *phronêsis* and will also be useful in the next chapters.

2.4.1 The project of *Nicomachean Ethics* book VI

One of the main purposes of *EN* VI is to give an account of practical knowledge. However, making sense of this project is not possible unless one steps

[48] More generally, I distinguish knowledge in a strong sense from knowledge in a weak sense. Knowledge in a weak sense refers to a casual use of 'knowing' which is more or less equivalent to belief, as when I ask someone: 'Did you know that the Duchess of Cambridge has a sister?' In this case, knowing that the Duchess of Cambridge has a sister just means that the subject possess a particular piece of information. However, there is no questioning the truth of this piece of information. By contrast, knowledge in a strong sense requires a certain belief to be somehow warranted or justified by further elements. If I know strongly that the Duchess of Cambridge has a sister, it entails that necesarily the object of my knowledge is true and that I have good reasons to believe that it is true.

back a little and outlines the general conception of virtuous action in Aristotle's ethics. As already mentioned, Aristotle conceives moral virtue (*aretê*) as a mean between excess and deficiency. More specifically, virtue is defined as follows by Aristotle:

> 7) "Therefore, virtue is a disposition to decide which consists in a mean relative to us, which mean is determined[49] by reason – the reason, that is, by reference to which[50] the practically wise person would determine it [i.e. the mean]." *EN* II.6 1106b36-1107a2
>
> Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα (1107a.)
> τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὡρισμένῃ λόγῳ καὶ ᾧ ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὁρίσειεν.

I shall linger a bit on the claim that virtue consists in an intermediacy (*mesotês*). In other words, Aristotle conceives virtue as a mean (*meson*) between excess and deficiency (1106b15-24). For instance, the virtue of courage is a mean between the deficiency of cowardice and the excess of boldness; the virtue of temperance is a mean between the excess of self-indulgence and the deficiency of insensibility, and so on. Correspondingly, virtuous *action* consists in an action which achieves this balance and brings about a state of affairs which is neither excessive nor deficient (*EN* II.2 1104a11-b3; *EE* II.3 1220b21-1221b27). For instance, in the domain of contracts, i.e. trade and justice, the action-type proper to an evaluation in terms of excess or deficiency is the distribution of goods. I can distribute too few goods and keep the exceeding part for myself; or I can distribute goods with too much largess, with the consequence that not enough resources are available for everyone and that I cannot honour my contract with my last contractors (or that there is not enough left for myself); or I can distribute them appropriately, that is, each receives a part appropriate for his needs. (See the general description of distributive justice at *EN* V.1 1129b1-11). When an action is excessive or deficient, it is bad, or at least not good, whereas when it corresponds to the middle, it is a good action.[51]

More generally, this kind of virtue is a particular case of what Aristotle calls 'character' (*êthos*). One's character is the set of propensities one has to act in a certain

[49] Reading ὡρισμένῃ instead of ὡρισμένη, like most of the scholars. The only recent commentator I know who reads ὡρισμένη and follows the OCT is Bodéüs. However his reading is motivated by his desiderativist position on the grasp of moral ends. As I shall show in the rest of this work, this reading is not necessary to such a position.

[50] Here I follow the OCT, along with Crisp and Irwin. Ross and Rowe read καὶ **ὡς** ἂν instead of καὶ ᾧ ἂν, rendering "and in the way the *phronimos* would determine it".

[51] That the mean is 'relative to us' (*pros hêmas* 1107a1) means that the intermediate is not the same for everyone. It is not an arithmetical mean. Rather, the intermediate between excess and deficiency must be calculated by reference to one specific individual and cannot be transposed to any other without qualification (*EN* II.6 1106a36-b7).

way. Courage, softness, liberality, self-indulgence are all traits of character. Particular virtues, such as courage or temperance, just are virtuous versions of the corresponding traits of character. Virtue and more generally character are dispositions (*hexeis*) to respond to situations in a determined way. The various virtues and character traits all concern domains of human activity which can be objects of moral evaluation (warfare, justice, spending money, etc.).[52] Correspondingly, virtues and character traits are evaluative dispositions. An agent is said to be well or badly disposed towards such or such a domain of activity. For instance, if the agent is courageous, he is well disposed towards activities involving danger. By contrast, if the agent is self-indulgent, he is badly disposed towards activities involving bodily pleasures (*EN* II.5 1105b25-28).

Aristotle also depicts virtue as a 'disposition to decide' (*hexis proairetikê*). What is the import of decision in the definition? More generally, the kind of response fostered by virtue or character is a response in terms of desire and feeling. A disposition (*hexis*) is a tendency to feel a certain kind of affection (*pathos*) towards a certain kind of object. Such an affection can either be appetite (*epithumia*), or anger, fear, boldness, etc. Aristotle sums up the list of such *pathê* with the formula that "in general [*pathê*] are things attended by pleasure and pain" (*EN* II.5 1105b21-23). From this, one can infer that the actualization of a disposition of character, let it be virtuous or not, is a desire to act in a certain way. Thus, in a virtuous case, the kind of desire prompted by one's reaction towards the situation will ultimately take the form of a decision (*proairesis*).[53] Note that being a disposition to decide is not proper to virtue, because wickedness as well involves actions which are done on the basis of decision. By contrast, akratic (weak-willed) people do not act on the basis of decision (*EN* III.2 1111b13-14; *EN* VII.3 1146b22-24; VII.4 1148a17; *EN* VII.8 1151a5–7; See §6.2.2). Decision is a mixed-state. It is described by Aristotle either as intellective desire or as desiderative thought (*EN* VI.2 1139b4-5). Aristotle's definition of *aretê* shows that a virtuous agent does not act on the basis of mere non-rational desire, but on the basis of desire informed by reason (*logos*). In other words, in human beings, the gap between project and execution in one's response to one's environment is *mediated* by reason (McDowell 1998: 107).

[52] Aristotle identifies a virtue proper to each domain of man's activity. Instances of such domains with their proper virtue are: warfare (courage), bodily pleasures (temperance), the domain of contracts (justice), spending money (generosity and munificence), etc. Note how these domains still show some similarities with the various ministerial areas in modern governments: defence, economy, health, leisure, trade, justice, etc.

[53] On *proairesis*, see note 67.

Aristotle locates virtues and character traits in what he calls the 'desiderative part of the soul' (*EN* I.13 1102b30).[54] This part is opposed to the rational part of the soul to a certain extent. Aristotle notices that certain kinds of people, namely self-controlled people (*enkrateis*) and those lacking self-control (*akrateis*), do exhibit some reason, which encourages them to do what is correct and best. However, he observes, there is something within them which goes against such *logos* (1102b13-18). Self-controlled people are prone to feel violent non-rational desires, although they eventually act according to reason. By contrast, people lacking self-control are such that they know what the best thing to do is; yet they also feel non-rational appetite and end up acting against reason (on self-control (*enkrateia*) and lack of self-control (*akrasia*), see chap. 6). Aristotle adds that this part of the soul is not completely non-rational, because it is able to follow the prescriptions of reason. Aristotle describes this as "to listen to reason as a son listens to his father" (1102b29-32; 1103a3). Indeed, virtue when attaining the mean follows a certain norm which is the same as what is given by reason. According to the definition of virtue, the intermediacy in which the virtuous response consists is given by a *logos* and this *logos* is a product of the rational part of the soul.

Thus, Aristotle makes a significant distinction in his moral psychology between two parts of the soul. One is properly rational: it is said to 'have' reason in the proper sense (*ton logon echon kuriôs* 1103a2). The other is called 'desiderative' and is rational only to the extent that it can listen to the properly rational one "like a son listens to his father".[55] Correspondingly, there are two kinds of excellent state of

[54] The exact phrasing is 'appetitive and, generally, desiderative part' (*epithumêtikon kai holôs orektikon* 1102b30). Such a part would then include the three kinds of desire distinguished by Aristotle: wish (*boulêsis*), spirit (*thumos*) and appetite (*epithumia*) (See e.g. *DA* 414b2; *MA* 700b22; *EE* 1223a26-27). There is a controversy about *boulêsis*, though, because Aristotle also describes this kind of desire as rational (*logistikê orexis* – *Rhet*. I.10 1369a2; see also *Top*. IV.5 126a13; *DA* III.10 433a23-25; *MA* 7 701a36-b1; *Mem.* 451b29-31; *EE* 1234b28-29). Thus *boulêsis* would not be included in the desiderative part after all. Yet, Moss has convincingly argued that, at least in an ethical context, *boulêsis* is not rational in the sense that it is a state of the rational part of the soul, but in the sense that it is based on rational cognition (Moss 2012: 162).

[55] Such a distinction differs from the 'canonical' tripartition of the soul found in the *De Anima*. In the *EN* Aristotle also distinguishes between three parts. In addition to the rational and the desiderative parts, he mentions the nutritive part (*threptikon*). However, the tripartition of the *DA* distinguishes a 'perceptual' part (*aisthêtikon*) instead of a desiderative one. I do not think that at *EN* I.13 Aristotle is holding a conception of the soul different from that of the *DA*, as has sometimes been held by scholars (Nuyens 1948; Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 93). Accordingly, then, the distinction into a rational and a desiderative part would refer to a real partition of the soul. The real distinction position has been contested by Hardie 1968: 68-73 and Lefèvre 1978: 19-20. Bostock 2000: 34 considers that the reason/desire opposition

the soul, those pertaining to the properly rational part and those pertaining to the desiderative part (1103a3-7). Aristotle calls the former 'intellectual virtues' (*aretai dianoêtikai*) and the latter 'virtues of character' (*aretai êthikê*).

An important consequence of this distinction is that each part does not develop in the same way. They each involve a specific process in order to develop their respective virtue. The desiderative part develops through habituation (*ethismos*), whereas the intellectual part through teaching (*didaskalia* – 1103a14-18). Habituation consists in the repetition of actions of a certain type under some guidance (by one's parents or teacher). Performing a given action, at an early age, ought to be monitored by someone who can describe reliably whether this action is courageous or not, temperate or not, etc. Thanks to this tutorage, the young learner is able to make sense of his responses, which were spontaneous and non-reflexive at the beginning, and grasp them as being good or bad.[56] By contrast, teaching, Aristotle says, takes experience and time (*empeiria kai chronou*). As I shall show in chapter 5, *empeiria* is an ability to recognize a particular action as an instance of a moral no-

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is not a real one because it is at odds with Hume's distinction between reason and passion. Hence, for Bostock it would merely be a distinction in account, not a real one. I consider that Aristotle draws a partition depending on the context and that these parts of the soul should not be taken as real parts. This is suggested by his rather nonchalant use of the psychological material. Even though inquiring about the soul is useful to the political expert, the latter needs not study it for its own sake and in too much detail. He may rely on what Aristotle calls the 'discussion from outside' (*exôterikos logos*), which seems to refer to discussions about the soul which are different from the *De Anima*:

> "The political expert, too, should consider the soul, and should consider it for the sake of these things [i.e. understanding virtue], and to the extent which will suffice for the object of our inquiry, for attaining a higher degree of precision is perhaps too laborious for our present purpose. Some things about the soul have been sufficiently explained in our published works as well and we should make use of them." *EN* I.13 1102a23-27
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> θεωρητέον δὴ καὶ τῷ πολιτικῷ περὶ ψυχῆς, θεωρητέον δὲ τούτων χάριν, καὶ ἐφ' ὅσον ἱκανῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὰ ζητούμενα· τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐξακριβοῦν ἐργωδέστερον ἴσως ἐστὶ τῶν προκειμένων. λέγεται δὲ περὶ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐξωτερικοῖς λόγοις ἀρκούντως ἔνια, καὶ χρηστέον αὐτοῖς·

The partition of the soul is a logical one rather than a real one. Rather than dividing the soul into several parts that each has a specific capacity, Aristotle rather sees the soul as a unity having several capacities. I contend that this way of seeing the partition of the soul is still at work at *EN* VI.1. On the various sorts of 'parts' of the soul, see Whiting 2002 esp. section 1 and p. 184.

[56] For a careful description of habituation, see Burnyeat 1980.

tion. It involves a higher order conceptual apparatus. One should not deduce from the distinction that habituation is a totally mindless process. On the contrary, as Burnyeat says, "practice has cognitive powers" (Burnyeat 1980: 73). Habituation enables the young learner to develop a moral sensitivity and to acquire a conceptual apparatus, although a limited one, to name his encounters with his surroundings. Nevertheless, teaching involves a different, more developed conceptual apparatus.[57]

Aristotle explores extensively the different virtues of character related to a specific domain of human activity in books II to V of the *EN*, as well as in books II to IV of the *EE*. Then, he devotes book VI to the inquiry of the rational side of moral action. Although the main endeavour of *EN* VI can be seen as accounting for various virtues of the rational part of the soul[58], Aristotle gives special attention to one crucial point. He explains his project in the first lines of book VI.

> 8) "Since we have said earlier that one must choose what is intermediate, not excess, and not deficiency, and that what is intermediate is 'as the correct reason prescribes' (*hôs ho orthos logos legei*), let us delimit this. For with all the dispositions we have discussed, just as with everything else, there is a target (*skopos*), as it were, that the rational person has in view as he tenses and relaxes, and a kind of mark (*horos*) that determines the intermediate states, which we declare to be in between excess and deficiency, being as they are 'according to the correct reason'." *EN* VI.1 1138b18-25
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> Ἐπεὶ δὲ τυγχάνομεν πρότερον εἰρηκότες ὅτι δεῖ τὸ μέσον αἱρεῖσθαι, μὴ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν μηδὲ τὴν ἔλλειψιν, τὸ (20) δὲ μέσον ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὀρθὸς λέγει, τοῦτο διέλωμεν. ἐν πάσαις γὰρ ταῖς εἰρημέναις ἕξεσι, καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ἔστι τις σκοπὸς πρὸς ὃν ἀποβλέπων ὁ τὸν λόγον ἔχων ἐπιτείνει καὶ ἀνίησιν, καί τις ἔστιν ὅρος τῶν μεσοτήτων, ἃς μεταξύ φαμεν εἶναι τῆς ὑπερβολῆς καὶ τῆς ἐλλείψεως, οὔσας κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον.

That the intermediate is given by a correct reason (*orthos logos*)[59] refers to Aristotle's previous definition of virtue at *EN* II.6 (1106b36-1107a2), where virtue as a

[57] On the distinction between habituation and teaching as involving two distinct conceptual apparati, I follow Jimeñez (forthcoming). See her paper with a useful discussion of her position against scholars who believe that habituation and teaching are two different stages of a single process of acquisition of a moral sense (p. 12-13, with note 8). This account of moral learning is a sketchy one. I deal with *empeiria* in a detailed way in chap. 5 and with habituation in chap. 6.

[58] For a discussion on the scope of *EN* VI, see Natali 2001: 18.

[59] *Logos* is a term with a rich polysemy in Greek. As the verbal noun of *legein* (to speak, to say), its meanings span from 'phrase, expression' to 'speech or discourse', covering 'account,

mean is realized following the *logos* given by the wise man (*phronimos*) (see also the definitions of particular virtues of courage and temperance in *EN* III: 1115b20; 1119b17; 1119a20, see §4.2) One ought to take notice of the way Aristotle speaks of the intermediacy as a 'target' that the agent ought to hit. He uses the same vocabulary as in the previous passages (1) and (5), in which attaining the mean depended on practical knowledge. In book VI, then, Aristotle gives special attention to the problem of determining the intermediate action to perform, i.e. determining what the 'correct reason' is and how to find it. This, I argue, is the same as looking for a description of practical knowledge.

It is difficult to track down the argument of book VI about practical knowledge, because Aristotle is combining different issues. First he wants to make it clear that the practical domain is indeed an object of rational consideration, which had not always been fully acknowledged by his predecessors. His first concern is thus to introduce a practical part of the soul opposed to the theoretical one (*EN* VI.1 1139a3-15). Then, he wishes to introduce the chief virtue of this practical part (1139a15-b13) and uses for that purpose an argument similar to the *ergon* argument of *EN* I.7 that led to a definition of *eudaimonia* for human beings (1097a22ff.). Third, as he collects the various intellectual dispositions which are candidates to be intellectual virtues (*EN* VI.3-7), he introduces *phronêsis*. He will eventually identify it with the virtue of the practical part of the soul, but first he describes it according to the traditional views of his time (*EN* VI.5). In the rest of book VI, Aristotle treats in a more or less systematic way various intellectual dispositions which could be minor intellectual virtues or parts of *phronêsis* (*EN* VI.9: good deliberation (*euboulia*); VI.10 comprehension (*sunesis*); VI.11 discernment (*gnômê*)). Finally, he tackles a couple of issues which his depiction of intellectual virtues has raised and while doing so he investigates the relation between *phronêsis* and virtue of character (*EN* VI.12-13).

This way of introducing *phronêsis* as the virtue of the practical part of the soul does not exactly match the conceptual framework set above in the books on the virtues. Aristotle's presentation of *phronêsis* might at first give the impression of

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argument', 'reason, ground', 'reasoning'. It also means concepts less obviously connected to speaking such as 'proportion' or 'reason' as a faculty. Lately, scholars have tended to agree that *logos* at *EN* VI-VII, and especially in the phrase '*orthos logos*', means 'account or argument' (Broadie 1991: 118, n. 2; Natali 2001: 16-17; Moss 2012: 71; Reeve 2013: 101-102; Charles forth., n. 1; See also Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 147 and Bénatouïl 2006: 71-77 who argues that the concept of *logos* as a faculty first occurs in Stoic thought). In particular, one should not understand it as the faculty of reason. *Logos* does not appear in Aristotle's list of states of the soul that say the truth (*EN* VI.3 1139b15-18). On the contrary, it can be true or false (1139a24; 1140a10).

falling short of the expectations of the picture I have drawn in the previous sections. However, in the rest of the current chapter, I argue that all these different vantage points are in agreement and that *phronêsis* fulfils in the end the role of practical knowledge as I have described it before. In order to do so, I want to present carefully the beginning of book VI.

2.4.2 The practical/theoretical distinction

In book VI, Aristotle starts his inquiry into intellectual virtues by making a division between two parts of the soul (*meros tês psuchês* 1139a4). This is in fact a subdivision of the rational part of the soul, distinguished from the desiderative one (*EN* I.13 1102b28-1103a3). So, he resumes dividing the rational soul in the following way:

> 9) "Let us assume the parts possessing reason to be two, one by virtue of which we consider (*theôroumen*) the sorts of things whose principles[60] cannot be otherwise, one by virtue of which <we consider> those that can be otherwise; for with things that are generically distinct, the part of the soul that stands in a natural relationship to each genus will itself be generically distinct, given that they have cognition (*gnôsis*) in accordance with a certain likeness and affinity to their objects. Of these, let the first be called 'scientific', the second 'calculative'; for deliberation and calculation are the same thing, and no one deliberates about things that cannot be otherwise. So the calculative is one distinct part of the part possessing reason." *EN* VI.1 1139a6-15
>
> καὶ ὑποκείσθω δύο τὰ λόγον ἔχοντα, ἓν μὲν ᾧ θεωροῦμεν τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ὅσων αἱ ἀρχαὶ μὴ ἐνδέχονται ἄλλως ἔχειν, ἓν δὲ ᾧ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα· πρὸς γὰρ τὰ τῷ γένει ἕτερα καὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς μορίων ἕτερον τῷ (10) γένει τὸ πρὸς ἑκάτερον πεφυκός, εἴπερ καθ' ὁμοιότητά τινα καὶ οἰκειότητα ἡ γνῶσις ὑπάρχει αὐτοῖς. λεγέσθω δὲ τούτων τὸ μὲν ἐπιστημονικὸν τὸ δὲ λογιστικόν· τὸ γὰρ βουλεύεσθαι καὶ λογίζεσθαι ταὐτόν, οὐδεὶς δὲ βουλεύεται περὶ τῶν μὴ ἐνδεχομένων ἄλλως ἔχειν. ὥστε τὸ λογιστικόν ἐστιν (15) ἕν τι μέρος τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος.

Aristotle assumes (*hupokeisthô*) that there are two distinct parts of the soul that are both rational (*logon echon*). In order to make this distinction, he offers an

[60] 'Principle' translates '*archê*'. Basically, *archê* means starting point. Yet, it sometimes has a more technical sense in Aristotle. It sometimes means 'cause', as the four causes in the *Physics* are called *archai* (*Phys.* II.3 194b16-23). An *archê* also can take the sense of an epistemic principle, i.e. if I want to understand why P, I must know the principle of P which explains why it is the case. For the polysemy of *archê*, see *Meta* V.1. In this work, the translation of *archê* varies between starting point and principle.

argument based on the objects of the soul. There are two kinds of thing: those whose principles cannot be otherwise as they are, and those which can be otherwise as they are. These correspond more or less to *necessary* and *contingent* things or states of affairs respectively.[61] Now, the soul has a certain cognition (*gnôsis*) of one kind of object according to a certain "likeness and affinity" (*homoiotêta kai oikeiotêta*) with the objects in question. From this, Aristotle infers that to one kind of thing corresponds only a *part* in the soul. There is no overlap, for if the two kinds of thing are genuinely different, so are the parts of the soul.[62] Thus, necessary things are cognized by one part of the soul which has a likeness and affinity with such objects, and so are contingent things. Aristotle then associates the part of the soul he calls 'scientific' (*epistêmonikon*) with necessary things, and the part of the soul he calls 'calculative' (*logistikon*) with contingent things.

Aristotle seems to comply with the traditional intuition that changeable things cannot be the objects of science (*epistêmê*, that is, understanding the reason why P is Q; see § 3.2) for we cannot reliably determine in which state they are. Such a view is spelled out by Plato in the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates attributes it to Heraclitus and Empedocles (*Theaetetus* 152b-d). Aristotle also acknowledges that at the level of individual things, the world is indeterminate and contingent.[63] One individual can be F as well as ¬F. For instance Plato was short when he was a boy, but now that he has grown up he is tall. I cannot know in a strong sense whether Plato is tall, because nothing prevents the content of my belief from turning out to be false. However, Aristotle observes that there are regularities in the world as well. He understands the world as being structured by principles that determine regular patterns of change, for instance growth in living things. That Plato used to be small as a boy and is now taller is an instantiation of such a principle. Similarly, reproduction in living things obeys the same kind of regularity: 'A man comes from a man' in virtue of the form of man which the parent shares with the offspring (*PA* I.1

[61] The usual definition of necessity and contingency concerns propositions. *cf. De Interpretatione* 13 22a14*ff.* where Aristotle equates necessity and possibility (or contingency) with other modal quantificators, namely: $\Box P \equiv \neg\Diamond\neg P$ and $\Diamond P \equiv \neg\Box\neg P$. At times, however, it seems that Aristotle does not really distinguish between real things and epistemic objects. See Reeve 1992: 8.

[62] This argument has been criticized for its hastiness as an arbitrary 'ontological prejudice' (Richardson Lear 2004: 96-98). If two kinds of things ought to be cognized by two different parts of the soul, then how is it that there are no further divisions in the soul in order to cognize e.g. objects of action (*praxis*) on the one hand and objects of production (*poiêsis*) on the other?

[63] *EN* 1110b7-8: "there are a lot of differences in the particulars" (πολλαὶ γὰρ διαφοραί εἰσιν ἐν τοῖς καθ'ἕκαστα); *EN* VI.3 1139b19-23; *EN* X.9 1180b7-12.

640a25-26; *EE* 1222b17-18). There are even more fundamental principles, e.g. the principle of non-contradiction: a thing cannot bear a property and the contrary property at the same time (*Meta.* IV.3 1005b19-20), and such principles can be experienced in everyday life in relation to contingent beings. These regularities, by contrast to individuals, are stable and Aristotle views them as eternal and following some kind of necessity. Hence, they are proper objects of knowledge. The fundamental intuition that there are two kinds of thing relies on the epistemological condition that we cannot know things that can change, but we can know things that remain always the same (*EN* VI.3 1139b19-23; see also *APo* I.2 71b12; I.4 73a21).

Aristotle's association of necessary things with the *epistêmonikon* part is quite sensible and follows the tradition handed over by Plato. However, what is new in the distinction between parts of the soul is the way Aristotle handles the other part, the one that deals with contingent things.[64] Plato, especially in the so-called 'middle dialogues', had made a distinction in the soul similar to Aristotle's, where he relates parts of the soul to a definite range of things in the world. In the *Republic*, Plato distinguishes between two 'faculties' (*dunameis*) that have knowledge (*epistêmê*) and opinion (*doxa*) as their function respectively (*Rep.* 477c-478b). The knowledge part is directed towards 'what is', that corresponds roughly to the Aristotelian '*mê endechetai allôs*', whereas the opinion part is directed towards 'what is and is not', which corresponds to the '*endechetai allôs*'.[65] In Plato's view, there is no knowledge to be gained from the consideration of contingent realities themselves. On the contrary, knowledge involves a grasp of the intelligible Forms and is therefore concerned with eternal beings only. Plato even claims that reason should not linger on the particulars. Reason is concerned with the particulars in a secondary way only, for particulars act as reminders of eternal Forms to the reminiscent soul (*Meno* 81a-d; *Phaedo* 74-75). Particularly in the *Phaedo* the realm of sensible things is described as a dream from which the soul will awake only at the time of death, when the soul is set free from the body. Therefore the philosopher must strain to contemplate Forms, in particular the Form of the Good, and this implies getting away from perceptible things as much as possible. Therefore, contingent things cannot be the objects of reason. More generally, the realm of practice is not properly the domain of reason.[66]

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[64] I owe what follows largely to Broadie 1991: 213-214.

[65] For a discussion of the exact meaning of 'what is' and 'what is and is not', see Annas 1981: 195*ff.*

[66] This interpretation of Plato – dubbed the 'two-world view' – is disputed. See especially Fine 1990. A recent contribution by Rowe consists in arguing that one should not understand the end of *Rep*. V as rigorous Platonic doctrine, but rather as an argument limited in

In text (9), Aristotle, unlike Plato, posits a part of the soul which is specifically devoted to the contingencies of the concrete world and which is *rational*. Unlike Plato in the *Phaedo*, Aristotle does not restrict reason solely to necessary things. This part of the soul is not simply 'partaking in *logos*', as the desiderative part is – it listens to reason as a son to his father –, but it *has* reason (*logon echon*). Contingent realities, that are the object of practice, are not the object of reason in a secondary way only. Aristotle admits thus of a part of reason which is specifically devoted to practice. An eloquent sign of Aristotle's move is how he names this second rational part. He calls it the 'calculative' part (*to logistikon*), which was a name that Plato used to refer to the rational part of the soul (*Rep.* 439d), the one that is responsible for *epistêmê*. Moreover, Aristotle explains *logismos* (calculation) by invoking a key concept in his ethics, the concept of 'deliberation' (*bouleusis*), arguing that calculation and deliberation are the same thing (*to gar bouleuesthai kai logizesthai tauton*, *EN* VI.2 1139a12). Thus, in reusing Platonic terminology while diverting its original meaning, Aristotle marks a rupture from his master (Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 441; Richardson Lear 2004: 95, n. 6.).

For Aristotle, reason does not pertain to the account of necessary truth only. Particular things do not just fall into a 'contingent mess' altogether. Rather, there must be some truth or knowledge in different areas than at the level of the necessary. Besides, Aristotle has on many occasions in the corpus attempted to extend the reach of knowledge and reason to the entire domain of human activity. At the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, he does have a characterization for knowledge, which seems general enough: knowledge differentiates itself from mere experience or opinion by giving the cause of *why* something is the case (*Meta.* I.1 981a29-b6). Yet in doing so, he does not consider scientific knowledge only (*epistêmê*), but adds technical expertise as well (*technê*). The typical example Aristotle uses in order to make his point is medicine, which is a *technê*. Furthermore, Aristotle considers more generally that there are three kinds of area for rational activity: theoretical, practical and 'poetical' (*Meta.* 1026b4-5; 1064a17; *Top.* 145a15-16; 157a10-11).

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its purpose (Rowe 2007, chap. 6). According to Rowe, Plato just aims at convincing people who have one view of their cognitive states that they should take a different view about them (p. 200). Thus, Plato's argument about the distinction between two kinds of beings related to two kinds of cognitive states would be influenced by this rhetorical purpose. Yet, as Rowe argues, this does not mean that we should infer conclusions about the ontology of the objects of each cognitive state. The argument is directed at the 'sight-lovers' of *Rep.* V 474d-475a, not at the educated interlocutor (Glaucon) or the reader, who both have an idea that the proper objects of knowledge are the Platonic Forms (p. 205-206).

Thus, with the distinction between two rational parts in the soul, Aristotle conceptualizes the notion of practical rationality.[67] This means that Aristotle intends to show that the realm of practice and human behaviour can be subject to rational explanation and expertise. From this he will be able to develop an account of rational action and above all an account of the evaluation of such an action. The next step in the progression of book VI is then to find out the virtue (*aretê*) of each rational part of the soul.

> 10) "We must, then, grasp what the best disposition of each of these two parts is; for this will be the virtue of each, and its virtue will relate to its own peculiar function." *EN* VI.1 1139a15-17
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> (15) ληπτέον ἄρ' ἑκατέρου τούτων τίς ἡ βελτίστη ἕξις· αὕτη γὰρ ἀρετὴ ἑκατέρου, ἡ δ' ἀρετὴ πρὸς τὸ ἔργον τὸ οἰκεῖον.

Finding the virtue of the rational part of the soul already belonged to Aristotle's agenda. Now that he makes a distinction between two rational parts, there will not be one virtue of the rational side of the soul only, but two of them. Another significant result of the account of the conceptualization of practical rationality is thus that there is a *virtue* of the practical part. In the case of the Platonic description of the rational soul, the doxastic part is an imperfect part. There cannot be a virtue of that part. True *doxa* is not a virtuous state. By contrast, in Aristotle, the fact that practical rationality is distinct from theoretical rationality entails that the former can be evaluated independently from the latter. What it is to be excellent for practical reason will not be the same as for theoretical reason.

2.4.3 The function of practical reason

At *EN* VI.1 1139a15-17 (text 10), Aristotle discloses the path he intends to follow in order to find out the virtue of each part of the rational soul. He says that the virtues relate to the respective function of each part. In *EN* VI.2 Aristotle intends to

[67] In passage (9), he may not refer to the freshly distinguished 'calculative' part as '*practical*', but later in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, he eventually identifies the proper object of this part, viz. things that allow of being otherwise, as consisting in both objects of production (*poiêton*) and objects of action (*prakton*) (1140a1-2), and since production is subordinate to action, as the latter is ultimately the goal of the former, the main function of the calculative part is *praxis*. Similarly, Aristotle first calls the other part the 'scientific' one, but later names it the *theoretical* part of the rational soul. In particular, a few lines after the distinction between rational parts of the soul, Aristotle contrasts theoretical thought (*theôretikê dianoia*) with practical and productive thought (1139a27-28).

deduce the virtue of each part from its function, in a similar way to how he deduced the definition of *eudaimonia* in *EN* I.7.[68]

Aristotle eventually concludes chapter 2 by stating that the function of each part is truth (1139b12). However, when one looks back at the course of the chapter, it is clear that by 'truth' he does not mean the same thing in the practical and in the theoretical case. Indeed, Aristotle makes an explicit distinction between two kinds of truth:

> 11) "So, since virtue of character is a state involving decision, and decision is deliberative desire, the reason must be true and the desire correct, if the decision is a good one, and reason must assert the same things that desire pursues. This [viz. good decision],[69] then, is practical thought and truth. In the case of theoretical thought, however, which is neither practical nor productive, what constitute its being good or bad are truth and falsity, because truth is the characteristic activity of everything concerned with thought. But in the case of what is practical and concerned with thought, [its being good] consists in truth in agreement with correct desire." *EN* VI.2 1139a22-31
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> ὥστ' ἐπειδὴ ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἡ δὲ προαίρεσις ὄρεξις βουλευτική, δεῖ διὰ ταῦτα μὲν τόν τε λόγον ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθήν, (25) εἴπερ ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ τὸν μὲν φάναι τὴν δὲ διώκειν. αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ διάνοια καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια πρακτική· τῆς δὲ θεωρητικῆς διανοίας καὶ μὴ πρακτικῆς μηδὲ ποιητικῆς τὸ εὖ καὶ κακῶς τἀληθές ἐστι καὶ ψεῦδος (τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι παντὸς διανοητικοῦ ἔργον)· τοῦ δὲ πρακτικοῦ (30) καὶ διανοητικοῦ ἀλήθεια ὁμολόγως ἔχουσα τῇ ὀρέξει τῇ ὀρθῇ.

In the case of theoretical thought, working well or badly consists merely in being true or false. This seems to indicate that the function of theoretical thinking is asserting true propositions, where 'true' refers to truth as correspondence, i.e. truth that consists in the agreement between what is asserted and what is the case in the world.[70] But the notion of truth in play in the practical case is more complex. Aristo-

[68] See Richardson Lear 2004: 95, who refers to Greenwood (1909: 74) and to Kraut (1989: 58–59).

[69] *Hautê* is most naturally taken to refer back to *proairesis*, which can be read with its complement *spoudaia*. Pakaluk remarks in a footnote that *proairesis* is not a plausible relative for *hautê*, without giving any argument (Pakaluk 2010: 151, n. 17). Yet, if one conceives of decision as the bearer of practical truth, as I shall argue below, taking *proairesis* as the reference for *hautê* makes perfect sense. An episode of virtuous decision is an instance of practical thought which is true.

[70] See Aristotle's definition of truth at *Meta.* IV.7 1012a26-27: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it

tle elaborates a notion of *practical* truth, that consists roughly in the congruity of thought and desire. To be right in a situation of action depends not only on whether I entertain a true proposition regarding what is the case, but also on whether I am appropriately attracted to (or repulsed by) the situation. Hence, the function of the practical part of the soul is asserting, or achieving, practical truth. This text also adds another crucial element in Aristotle's moral psychology, namely the notion of *decision* (*proairesis*)[71]. Decision has been introduced as a state which reveals people's character more than actions, and which can thereby reveal a virtuous character (*EN* III.2 1111b5-6). Also, decision is described as being at the origin of action (*archê* 1113a5-7, which is confirmed later on in *EN* VI at 1139a31). Decision appears as the state of the soul which determines a particular action, which in turn actualizes the state of intermediacy to which virtue tends.

Text (11), I contend, shows that decision can be evaluated in terms of practical truth. Aristotle uses the notion of *proairesis* in order to formulate the notion of practical truth. If decision is good or correct (*spoudaia*), then, necessarily (*dei*), *logos* is true and desire is correct (*orthê*), and *logos* asserts the same thing that desire pursues. This seems to imply that decision is the bearer of practical truth.[72] In other words, a decision is 'true' or 'false' (or, for the sake of clarity, *correct* or *incorrect*), depending on both a cognitive and a conative component. This is confirmed by two further characterizations of decision. At 1139a32-33, decision is said to have desire and *logos* as its principle (*archê*) (the exact wording for *logos* is '*logos* that is for the sake of something' – *logos ho heneka tinos*). Finally, at 1139b4-5, decision is called

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is not, is true." (τὸ μὲν γὰρ λέγειν τὸ ὂν μὴ εἶναι ἢ τὸ μὴ ὂν εἶναι ψεῦδος, τὸ δὲ τὸ ὂν εἶναι καὶ τὸ μὴ ὂν μὴ εἶναι ἀληθές).

[71] I choose to translate *proairesis* as 'decision', like Gauthier and Jolif, Irwin, Broadie and Rowe, and Inwood and Woolf. Some commentators prefer the translation of 'preferential choice' in order to emphasize that a decision must have been deliberated beforehand (Charles 1984). They claim that not all decisions we take are necessarily the result of a prior deliberation. However, in my view 'preferential choice' is not better at emphasizing a prior deliberation. The notion of 'preference' does not refer particularly to any rational consideration. On the contrary, preferences seem rather to belong to the larger class of feelings. On the other side, 'decision' implicates sufficiently well that there must have been a prior deliberation. 'Decision' is the preferred term when it comes to opt for a course of action of great consequences: I have decided to run for the next election, I have decided to move house, etc.

[72] More precisely: decision *d* is true *if* (1) *logos* P is true; (2) desire *o* is correct; (3) P and *o* assert the same thing. I understand that Aristotle is actually giving necessary *and* sufficient conditions here and that the conditional above ought to be construed as a biconditional. This interpretation is not shown in the text. However, some lines later Aristotle speaks of *logos* and desire as the *archê* of decision, which seems to mean that decision depends on these two components exclusively (1139a32-33). I thank Alex Bown for making me aware of this difficulty.

either 'desiderative intellect' (*orektikos nous*) or 'intellectual desire' (*orexis dianoêtikê*). This confirms the mixed nature of decision as both cognition and desire and thereby the complex way to evaluate decision as true or false *practically*.

What are practical thought and practical truth? Practical thought can be understood in different ways. It can merely refer to thought (*dianoia*) when it is concerned with objects of practice (*prakta*); it can refer to the kind of thought which causes movement; or it can refer to the kind of thought which is motivational in that it is accompanied by desire. I think *dianoia praktikê* in this context possesses all three properties. That it is concerned with *ta prakta* need not be questioned. That it causes movement is confirmed some lines later, when Aristotle explains that thought alone moves nothing, but practical thought (*dianoia praktikê*) moves the agent (*EN* VI.2 1139a33-34). Lastly, in my view, text (11) above precisely shows that practical thought is a mix of a cognitive and a conative psychic state. Practical truth, then, to which one should add practical falsehood, is a way to evaluate practical thought not only in terms of its descriptive content, but also in terms of the attitude of the agent towards the situation. Practical truth means that the content of decision is true, i.e. appropriate to the situation. In other words, practical truth means that the action type the agent intends to perform is the right thing to do. On the other hand, practical truth means that the agent is correctly attracted or repulsed by the situation. Summing up, S thinks that O is to be done, *iff* S is attracted to doing O; but on the contrary: S thinks that O is to be avoided *iff* S is repulsed by O. Practical truth does not refer to the content of practical thought, but to the state itself (Broadie & Rowe 2002: 362).

There is no more complexity than this in the notion of practical thought and practical truth. It is not possible in a single episode of decision that the cognitive content be positive and the conative one negative (opposed to it). It is not possible that they should not be oriented towards the same object in the same way. This implies that even in a case such as the *akratês*, there is no discrepancy between what the *akratês* believes is good to do and his desire for such a thing. Rather, in the *akratês*, there is an additional desire (an appetite, *epithumia*), which is in competition with the agent's rational desire.[73] I think this is confirmed by the end of the passage under scrutiny. Aristotle finishes this bit on practical truth by saying that in the practical case, its good achievement consists in truth in harmony with correct desire (1139a29-31). He does not say 'thought in harmony with correct desire', which would mean that in some other – non-virtuous – cases thought could be in conflict with desire.

[73] See my account of *akrasia* in chap. 6. See also Moss 2012: 104-105.

Commentators often understand text (11) as saying that practical thought can be divided into four different kinds according to the correct or incorrect values of thought or desire. For instance, if thought is true and desire correct, this is a case of good decision; if thought is correct, but desire is incorrect, it is case of *akrasia*; if thought is incorrect, but desire is correct, it is a case of wickedness (*kakia*); and lastly, if thought is incorrect and desire as well is incorrect, this is a case of inability to act (Natali 2001: 15).[74] However, the text itself does not imply such a reading. Against this interpretation, one can argue that the fourth case is a strange one. Why would Aristotle be interested in speaking of such a case? Moreover, and more importantly, such an interpretation is at loss when it comes to accounting for the case of the *enkratês*. The *enkratês* makes a correct decision, however his desire is partly incorrect, because he feels appetite towards a course of action incompatible with what he thinks he should do. Thus, one needs to appeal to two distinct desires in order to account for this case. But then, it turns out that the akratic case also encounters such a problem. In chapter 6, I shall show that the *akratês* is also under the spell of two distinct desires, one of which is a non-rational appetite, whereas the other is a desire which goes with his belief about what he should do.

Thus, if the *ergon* of practical reason consists in practical truth, and if practical truth obtains in a state of decision, then the *ergon* of practical reason is achieved by taking a 'practically true', i.e. correct, decision. The function of practical reason can therefore also be expressed as taking correct (i.e. practically true) decisions.

Why does Aristotle not simply speak in terms of a decision being 'correct' (*orthos*), as he usually does, rather than being 'true' in such a counter-intuitive sense? At *EN* III.2 1112a5-7, for instance, decision is opposed to *doxa* on the basis that the latter is evaluated in terms of truth and falsehood, whereas the former is evaluated in terms of correctness and incorrectness (other occurrences of *proairesis orthê*: 1144a20; 1145a4; 1151a29-35). I assume that at *EN* VI.2 it is crucial that the function of practical reason includes a cognitive element. Aristotle has just established the practical aspect of rationality. If it truly is a part of reason, it must be possible to speak of it in terms of truth and falsity.[75] However, this also shows that the concept of practical truth is a difficult one even for Aristotle and that on other occa-

[74] Similar interpretations: Charles forthcoming; Pakaluk 2010: 154, although Pakaluk does not think that being true or false in practical cases concerns mental states. He argues that the bearers of practical truth are propositions.

[75] See also Taylor 2008: 206. This evolution of the notion of *proairesis* is also noticeable concerning its psychology. In *EN* III, Aristotle says that decision is a sort of desire, even though distinct from wish and appetite. Now, he says that *proairesis* is in fact both: desire and thought at the same time.

sions he prefers to speak in terms of a decision being correct rather than true for the sake of clarity.[76]

Thus, the function of the practical part of the soul is practical truth, which occurs in an episode of decision, and the function of the theoretical part is theoretical truth. The next task, then, is to determine what the respective virtue of each part of the soul is, which Aristotle does in the following chapters of *EN* VI (chap. 3-7). He proceeds by first numbering all the possible candidates, that is, states of the soul, "in virtue of which the soul always speaks the truth by asserting or denying".[77] These are: science (*epistêmê*), craft (*technê*), practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), intellect (*nous*), and wisdom (*sophia*) (1139b16-17). Then, after an inquiry of each of these cognitive states, he points out the two virtues, namely *sophia* for the theoretical part (1143b15)[78], and *phronêsis* for the practical one (1140b25-28).

[76] There is another issue: why is the *ergon* of each part of the soul expressed in terms of a state evaluated positively, namely truth? In the *ergon* argument of *EN* I.7, the *ergon* of human beings is given independently of an evaluation (1098a8-18). The function of human beings is activity of the soul in accordance with reason, not excellent activity, just as the function of the cithara player is to play cithara, not to play cithara *well*. By contrast, here, when Aristotle expresses the function of rational parts of the soul in terms of truth, he presupposes that this function has a value, and indeed a positive one, as if any outcome of each kind of reason is good. In other words, if one compares Aristotle's definition of the function of both rational parts of the soul with the *ergon* argument of *EN* I.7, one would expect that these functions are 'asserting propositions' for the theoretical part, and 'making decisions' for the practical part. However, Aristotle determines that the function of the theoretical part is asserting *true* propositions, whereas the function of the practical part is taking *correct* (or *practically true*) decisions, as if the function of the cithara player would not simply be playing the cithara, but playing it *well*. One could consider that Aristotle is being rash and commits a slip by inferring immediately what the *excellent* exercise of a function is, rather than building his argument step by step. Thus, when saying that the *ergon* of each rational part of the soul is truth, he would actually mean the virtuous exercise of such an *ergon*. He actually seems to commit the same slip at *EN* I.7 when he suggests for the first time to look at the function of human beings in order to find their ultimate good. There he asserts that the good for a flute-player or a sculptor resides in their function (ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ δοκεῖ τἀγαθὸν εἶναι καὶ τὸ εὖ – 1097b26-27). However, this explanation seems to presuppose that determining the virtuous exercise is possible on the basis of the mere notion of the *ergon* alone. But if one applies this way of thinking to the *ergon* argument of *EN* I.7, this seems to induce a naturalist fallacy, as if from the mere notion of the *ergon* of human beings (rational activity of the soul), one could discover the definition of its virtuous exercise, which in that case is the definition of happiness.

[77] 1139b15: ἔστω δὴ οἷς ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ καταφάναι ἢ ἀποφάναι.

[78] The explicit statement that *sophia* is the virtue of the theoretical part occurs only at the end of *EN* VI.11. However, it seems already clear at *EN* VI.7 that this is what Aristotle means when he says that *sophia* is a combination of *epistêmê* and *nous*, with the things that are highest by nature as its objects (ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων δῆλον ὅτι ἡ σοφία ἐστὶ καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ νοῦς τῶν τιμιωτάτων τῇ φύσει. 1141b2-3).

Before I turn to a proper study of *phronêsis*, one can already make the following remark. In §2.3, I have described practical knowledge as the kind of knowledge thanks to which one can attain the mean in action, i.e. thanks to which one knows *how* to perform courageous, just, or temperate actions and the like. Now, a more painstaking inquiry into Aristotle's moral psychology has revealed that the notion of decision (*proairesis*) is central in his account of moral action. Decision, or rather virtuous decision, is what implements the mean in which virtue consists into an action. This also means that the kind of knowledge I have identified as practical knowledge is closely related to decision. More precisely, I contend that practical knowledge has a substantial share in determining the content of decision.

Since *phronêsis* is finally identified as the virtue of the practical part of the soul, it should also have as its function virtuous decision-making. Although Aristotle is not explicit about that, I argue in the next section that the definition of *phronêsis* covers this function.

2.5 Aristotle's definition of *phronêsis*

In chapter 5 of *EN* VI, after having introduced *epistêmê* (*EN* VI.3) and *technê* (*EN* VI.4), Aristotle develops his account of practical wisdom (*phronêsis*). Aristotle's first approximation of *phronêsis* is based on the description of an individual endowed with *phronêsis*, that is, the *phronimos* person. The everyday use of the term *phronimos* refers to someone who can deliberate well. Aristotle's favourite example of a *phronimos* person is the 5th century statesman Pericles (1140a25-31; 1141b8-14; 1142b31-33). Aristotle has departed from Plato, who had a highly intellectual conception of *phronêsis*, and bases his own on a popular or traditional picture of the *phronimos* (Burnet 1900: 261). The popular picture of the *phronimos* is especially clear in Democritus (*DK* 68B2) and is displayed on several occasions in the work of Isocrates, who links *phronêsis* to the activity of the political man (*In Sophistas* 2; *Evagoras* 41, 65, 80; *Panathenaicus* 196; *Ad Nicoclem* 10-14, 21; *Nicocles* 23).[79]

Aristotle's next move towards a technical definition of *phronêsis* is to contrast *phronêsis* with *epistêmê* and *technê*. The contrast with *epistêmê* is made on the same ground as the practical/theoretical distinction between parts of the soul (cf. §2.4). *Epistêmê* relies on principles that cannot be otherwise, whereas *phronêsis* has starting points that can indeed be otherwise (*hôn d'hai archai endechontai allôs echein* 1140a34). On the other hand, the distinction between *phronêsis* and *technê* relies on a distinction between their respective activity. The proper activity of *technê* is production

[79] See Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 464-467 for sources; see also Aubenque, 1963: 155-156.

(*poiêsis*)[80], while that of *phronêsis* is *praxis*, and *poiêsis* and *praxis* are not of the same genus (*allo to genos* 1140b3-4). Aristotle explains this difference between *poiêsis* and *praxis* some lines below (b6-7): the former has its end beyond itself, whereas the latter is its own end. In other words, the execution of a production results in a product which is distinct from the activity of producing, whereas the realization of an action has no further end than itself. This distinction recalls a fundamental distinction at the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* between ends that are external to the activity which promotes them and ends that consist in the activity (see *EN* I.1 1094a3-5).

Next, Aristotle seems to infer from this contrast the complete definition of *phronêsis*:

> 12) "It remains therefore (*ara*) that *phronêsis* is a state accompanied by reason, which is true,[81] which is about the good and bad things for humans, and which is conducive to action" *EN* VI.5 1140b4-6; 20-21
>
> λείπεται ἄρα αὐτὴν εἶναι (5) ἕξιν ἀληθῆ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικὴν περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά.

This definition is somewhat surprising at this stage of the argument, since the connection with what precedes is not obvious. The notion of deliberation does not appear in the definition, although Aristotle uses deliberation as a first way to describe the activity of the *phronimos*, and one does not see at once how *phronêsis* differs from *epistêmê* and *technê*. Besides, the mention of the 'things good and bad for human beings' seem to pop up out of nowhere. I contend that lines 1140a31-b1, that stand immediately before the first occurrence of the definition of *phronêsis*, are a mere recollection of opposition between *phronêsis* and both *epistêmê* and *technê* that should be clear by now. Such contrasts should not be thought as providing a further development. First of all, the contrast between *phronêsis* and *epistêmê* has already been dealt with. Indeed, *epistêmê* deals with necessary things, whereas contingent things are related to the practical part of the soul (1139b19-23; see also 1139a6-15 (text 9)). Concerning *poiêsis*, Aristotle clearly stated that contingent things are divided into those that can be produced (*poiêta*) and those that can be done (*prakta*) (*EN* VI.4 1140a1-2). Thus, one should not expect the definition of *phronêsis* as 1140b4-6 to complete a preceding line of argumentation, despite the logical con-

[80] Correspondingly, the definition of *technê* is "*hexis meta logou alêthous poiêtikê*": a disposition which follows a true reason and which results in production (*EN* VI.4 1140a10; a20-21).
[81] Reading *alêthê* at both b5 and b21, along with Bywater. I do not follow the variant of manuscripts Mb and Γ that read *alêthous* at b21. See explanations below.

nector '*ara*'[82]. Rather, elements of the definition of *phronêsis* ought to be present in what *follows* the first statement of it.

What is more important, though, is that the definition of *phronêsis* does not appear to fulfil the requirements settled in *EN* VI.2 concerning the function of the practical part of the soul. The function of this part has been described as practical truth, and I have interpreted it as correct decision-making. Then, at the end of *EN* VI.5, Aristotle argues that *phronêsis* is the virtue of the practical part of the soul. Consequently, it should be characterized by this function, as the virtue of practical truth. Yet, this feature is not obvious in the definition of *phronêsis*. Thus, in what follows, I shall show that the definition of *phronêsis* is fully appropriate, although surprising, and that it is consistent with the function of the practical part of the soul as laid down in *EN* VI.2.

Given that one should not understand the first statement of the definition of *phronêsis* as a consequence of what precedes, some elements in the definition make in fact quite a lot of sense. First, that *phronêsis* is a *hexis praktikê* stresses well the contrast with *technê*, which is a *hexis poiêtikê*, since *praxis* is the counterpart of *poiêsis*. Had Aristotle made up his definition from his first approximation of *phronêsis* in terms of being able to deliberate (a *'hexis bouleutikê'*), the contrast would not have been made so clearly. Besides, defining *phronêsis* as a *hexis bouleutikê* would not emphasize the effectiveness of *phronêsis* enough. The *phronimos* person is not just able to deliberate well, since his deliberation might remain pure wishful thinking without any intention of putting one's result into practice. Speaking of a *hexis praktikê* instead underlines the fact that the *phronimos* is also an effective agent who is able to realize his projects.[83]

A puzzling point of the definition of *phronêsis* is the 'true state' part. Speaking of a *hexis* as *true* is apparently mistaken, since truth and falsity are usually attributed to *propositions*, namely statements in which something is said of something else (*DI* 16a12-13; *Meta*. 1011b26-7). Passages *EN* VI.5 1140b4-6 and 20-21 (text 12) are the only ones in the whole corpus where the phrase 'true state' occurs. Moreover, when Aristotle defines the intellectual virtue of *technê*, he uses a similar form of definition, speaking of *technê* as a "*hexis meta logou alêthous* " (1140a10; 21). Hence,

[82] Denniston notes that in Aristotle ἄρα has become a pure connective particle (Denniston 1954: 41). However, one could suppose that now and then Aristotle also uses this particle with a slightly different, and more archaic, function, namely that of denoting "the apprehension of an idea not before envisaged", especially in reported speech (Denniston 1954: 38), which would still be in use in Plato.

[83] On the meaning of *praktikos* in *EN* VI-VII, see §3.3.2.3.

for the sake of terminological coherence, many commentators have read *alêthous* instead of *alêthês* in the definition of *phronêsis*.[84]

However, I do not follow this reading and consider that Aristotle does speak of a 'true *hexis*'. Indeed, Aristotle sometimes offers a non-propositional meaning of *alêthês*. He sometimes uses 'true' in the sense of 'truthful', when speaking of people: 'true man' (*ho alêthês*) means 'truthful man'.[85] This use of *alêthês* could be justified by Aristotle's doctrine of the plurality of attributions (*to pollachôs legesthai*). For instance, at *Metaphysics* IV.2, Aristotle explains that something can be called healthy if it *somehow* relates to health. However, there are different ways to relate to it: promoting health, producing health, being a sign for health, or being prone to be healthy, etc. (*Meta.* IV.2 1003a33-b1). Occurrences of 'true man' or 'false man' seem to follow the same idea. The subject described as *alêthês* is so not because it verifies what is the case in the world, but because it is related to truth in another way. A 'true' man is simply a person who speaks the truth. This use of *alêthês* seems to hold for *hexis* at 1140b4-6 as well. A *hexis* of the kind of *phronêsis* is said to be 'true', not in the proper sense of 'true', but because it is a state in virtue of which one asserts the truth.[86] This interpretation is consistent with Aristotle's earlier characterization of intellectual states as states "thanks to which the soul speaks the truth by asserting or denying".[87] A 'true *hexis*' would therefore be a short formulation for this kind of state.[88]

Aristotle's definition of *phronêsis* is not as surprising as it first looks. In fact, it could very well be composed of these two elements only: being *praktikos* and being a true state. *Phronêsis* would then be defined as a 'true *hexis* conducive to action'. Thus, such a definition would show a nice and clean symmetry with the definition

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[84] Alexander of Aphrodisias *In Meta. ad* 981b25: I.7; Eustratus (312); Robert Grosseteste, see Gauthier and Jolif 1970: 461.

[85] *EN* II.7 1108a20; *EE* III.7 1233b38; see also *MM* I.33 1193a33; *Rhet.* III.19 1419b14. By contrast, at *Metaphysics* V.29, he speaks of a "false man", i.e. a man who is fond of false *logoi* and who tends to deceive others (1025a1*ff.*).

[86] For a similar interpretation, see Gauthier and Jolif 1970: 461.

[87] 1139b15-16: ἔστω δὴ οἷς ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ καταφάναι ἢ ἀποφάναι.

[88] Should we then see a substantial difference between τέχνη and φρόνησις, which are described respectively as being "a state following true reason" and "true state following reason"? The *alêthous* reading seems to suggest that the norm for decision, the *orthos logos*, is given by something other than *phronêsis* itself. One solution would be that τέχνη does not set its rules by itself, whereas φρόνησις does (Gauthier & Jolif). Volpi (1993: 477) finds it significant that Aristotle does not use the same formula to define *technê* and *phronêsis*. According to him, Aristotle speaks of a true *hexis* instead of a true *logos* because he wants to insist that in the case of *phronêsis* what must be correct is not a *logos* but a state. This is an interesting suggestion, but it cannot be confirmed.

of *technê*, and also with that of *epistêmê*. Still, Aristotle is not content with these and feels the need to add a further element, namely the specification of the objects of *phronêsis*. *Phronêsis* is about the 'good and bad for human beings'.

Here I contend that the remaining text of *EN* VI.5 offers two arguments of why this is so.[89] First, Aristotle comes back to the contrast between *phronêsis* and *technê*.

> 13) For the end of production is something distinct <from the productive process>, whereas the end of action will not be <distinct from the process>, for doing well (*eupraxia*) itself is the end. It is for this reason that we think that Pericles and people of that sort are *phronimoi* – because they are able to see (*theôrein*) what is good for themselves and what is good for human beings in general. And we think that such people are good at managing property (*oikonomikous*) and at politics (*politikous*). *EN* VI.5 1140b6-11
>
> τῆς μὲν γὰρ ποιήσεως ἕτερον τὸ τέλος, τῆς δὲ πράξεως οὐκ ἂν εἴη· ἔστι γὰρ αὐτὴ ἡ εὐπραξία τέλος. διὰ τοῦτο Περικλέα καὶ τοὺς τοιούτους φρονίμους οἰόμεθα εἶναι, ὅτι τὰ αὑτοῖς ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δύνανται (10) θεωρεῖν· εἶναι δὲ τοιούτους ἡγούμεθα τοὺς οἰκονομικοὺς καὶ τοὺς πολιτικούς.

As already said, *phronêsis* differs from *technê* insofar as *praxis* differs from *poiêsis*, that is, they differ in the structure of their respective activity. The end of a process of *poiêsis* is something that is distinct from the process, whereas the end of a *praxis* is the activity itself. There is no further end beyond the activity. Now, Aristotle specifies here that the end of *phronêsis* is not merely *praxis* but the more general *eupraxia*, i.e. doing well (which, according to Aristotle, is synonymous with *eudaimonia*)[90]. This is a significant addition, because a particular *praxis*, when virtuous, is constitutive of *eupraxia*. A single instance of a virtuous action is an actualisation of happiness.[91] So, Aristotle considers that a successful *praxis* is not merely successful in an instrumental or prudential way, but in a *moral* way, by promoting *eudaimonia*. When we perform a *praxis*, we do it both for its own sake, rather than for some further goal (the product), and for the sake of the ultimate end, which is *eupraxia*, or *eudaimonia*. The example of Pericles confirms that having *eupraxia* as one's overarching goal involves having a grasp of things good and bad for human beings. There-

[89] I have been struck in my research by how commentators do not read the passage between both statements of the definition of *phronêsis* according to the context. Commentators often use this passage in order to show that *phronêsis* has a grasp of universals. Doing so, however, they disregard the actual point Aristotle is making.

[90] See note 37.

[91] See Natali 2001: 20, 119-120.

fore, the mention of *eupraxia* explains why the objects of *phronêsis* are not merely 'things that can be done' in general (*ta prakta*), but things that are either good or bad for human beings. To say that *phronêsis* would be about any object of action (*to prakton*) would not be sufficient for it to be the virtue of the practical part of the soul.

Then, in a second argument, Aristotle makes the same point by using a pseudo-etymology of temperance (*sôphrosunê*):

> 14) That is also why (*enthen*) we give temperance (*sôphrosunê*) its name, as something that preserves *phronêsis* (*sozei tên phronêsin*). And it does preserve the following sort of belief (*hupolêpsis*). What is pleasant and painful does not corrupt, or distort, every sort of belief, – e.g. that the internal angles of a triangle do or do not add up to two right angles –, but only beliefs about things doable (*prakton*). For the starting points of things doable are constituted by the things that the things doable are for the sake of [i.e. the ends of ta prakta]; and to the one that has been corrupted through pleasure or pain, there doesn't immediately seem to be a starting point, nor does it seem that he should choose and do everything for this reason and because of this – for badness is corruptive of the starting points. From all this, necessarily, *phronêsis* is a state accompanied by reason which is true, which is about the good and bad things for humans, and which is conducive to action." *EN* VI.5 1140b11-21
>
> ἔνθεν καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην τούτῳ προσαγορεύομεν τῷ ὀνόματι, ὡς σῴζουσαν τὴν φρόνησιν. σῴζει δὲ τὴν τοιαύτην ὑπόληψιν. οὐ γὰρ ἅπασαν ὑπόληψιν διαφθείρει οὐδὲ διαστρέφει τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ λυπηρόν, οἷον ὅτι τὸ (15) τρίγωνον δύο ὀρθὰς ἔχει ἢ οὐκ ἔχει, ἀλλὰ τὰς περὶ τὸ πρακτόν. αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχαὶ τῶν πρακτῶν τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα τὰ πρακτά· τῷ δὲ διεφθαρμένῳ δι' ἡδονὴν ἢ λύπην εὐθὺς οὐ φαίνεται ἀρχή, οὐδὲ δεῖν τούτου ἕνεκεν οὐδὲ διὰ τοῦθ' αἱρεῖσθαι πάντα καὶ πράττειν· ἔστι γὰρ ἡ κακία φθαρτικὴ (20) ἀρχῆς. ὥστ' ἀνάγκη τὴν φρόνησιν ἕξιν εἶναι μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἀγαθὰ πρακτικήν.

Aristotle takes the same etymology as Plato in the Cratylus (411e). Here Aristotle considers a part of *phronêsis*, namely a certain kind of belief (*hupolêpsis*). That *sôphrosunê* preserves *phronêsis* (*sôzei tên phronêsin*) suggests indeed that *sôphrosunê* preserves a belief of a certain kind. Aristotle distinguishes kinds of belief that are affected by pleasure and pain from those that are not. It seems clear, indeed, that propositions about geometrical states of affairs – and probably every scientific claim more generally – are not affected by pleasure and pain. My belief that all hu-

mans are mammals will similarly not be affected by my emotional state.[92] By contrast, the kind of belief liable to get disturbed by non-rational feelings are those about things that can be done, that is, contingent things that are up to us (*ta prakta*). Temperance preserves my beliefs about things doable, but on the contrary, if I get overwhelmed by pleasure or pain, then these beliefs are not preserved.

But Aristotle goes further. He adds remarks on the 'starting points of things doable' (*hai archai tôn praktôn*). They are characterized as being that for the sake of which we do the *prakta*, that is, they are the *reasons why* we do such or such actions. And the starting points do not appear to people that have been corrupted by pleasure or pain, at least not immediately (*euthus*). A person so corrupted does not see that he should choose everything and act for the sake of such starting points. So, my understanding of the passage is that *sôphrosunê*, by preserving *phronêsis*, preserves judgements about practical things, on the one hand, as well as one's representation of the starting points of those things, on the other.[93] Aristotle calls the starting points 'that for the sake of which the *prakta* are' (*to hou heneka ta prakta*), i.e. the ends of the things we do. Now, in Aristotle's conception of the hierarchy of action types, the end of an action must ultimately be something valuable. Everything we do, we do for the sake of some good or for some apparent good. Obviously, the end of a virtuous action done for its own sake is a real good. Thus, in Aristotle's view, it is not sufficient to say that *phronêsis* is about the *prakton*, because grasping the *prakton* alone does not imply a grasp on the ends of practical reasoning.[94] If *phronêsis* had only *to prakton* as its objects, it would not have a grasp on the starting point and *sôphrosunê* would not be significantly different from badness (*kakia*).

Thus, right after he states his definition of *phronêsis*, Aristotle offers an explanation why *phronêsis* is not just about any object of *praxis* in general, but about things good and bad for human beings. Besides, if the definition of *phronêsis* was in terms of being *praktikê* about *to prakton*, it would not be very informative. Note that the definition of *phronêsis* is in fact the only one which includes a mention of its object, by contrast to the definitions of *technê* and *epistêmê*.

To sum up, an analysis of the definition of *phronêsis* at 1140b4-6 shows that it comprises the determination of *phronêsis* as the state which makes virtuous decisions, which results from my interpretation of the function of the practical part of

[92] Yet, Broadie mentions the case where a scientist has his view distorted by his desire of fame or money; Broadie & Rowe 2002: 368.

[93] Hence, *phronêsis* involves both states: judgements on practical things as well as moral principles, see *EN* VI.7 1141b14-16. I shall tackle this important passage in §3.3.2.3 and §4.2.

[94] However, as I shall show in §5.2.2, this does not mean that *phronêsis* involves an *intellectual* or *rational* grasp of the end.

the soul. Being a disposition about the good and the bad for human beings includes being about things doable. Being a truthful disposition is consistent with the requirement of an intellectual virtue that always speaks the truth. Finally, being a *hexis praktikê* includes deliberation. More generally, one can characterize *phronêsis* as the virtue of excellent decision-making.[95]

This interpretation of the function of *phronêsis* involves a restricted conception of *praxis*. In its widest sense, the notion of *praxis* does not involve deliberation. I can act voluntarily without having deliberated about what I should do (*EN* III.2 1111b6-10). However, the notion of *praxis* at work in the definition of *phronêsis* should be understood in a restricted way, as an action that has been deliberated. Here my interpretation of the function of practical reason as being decision-making helps. If *phronêsis* is the virtue of the practical part of the soul, then it is also the disposition in the soul that fulfils the function of that part most excellently. This implies that the kind of action Aristotle is thinking of in the definition of *phronêsis* must be decided action, and thereby deliberated action, since every decided action has been deliberated. According to Aristotle, the scope of decision and practical reason concerns primarily significant decisions in life rather than trivial questions, such as what I should wear today (*pace* Owens 1991: 145). There are some elements in Aristotle which show that. Aristotle notes that we do not deliberate whether this bread is cooked as it should be (*EN* III.3 1113a1). Also, the object of one's action, which is also the object of decision (*proairesis*), is always chosen for its own sake (1105a31-32). This excludes daily actions and worries as the object of *proairesis*, for obviously I do not choose to wear my Mickey Mouse T-shirt for its own sake, but rather as a means to something else (my looking good, or boasting in front of others).

But is this notion of *phronêsis* as the virtue of the practical part of the soul consistent with the larger requirement of Aristotle's ethics, namely the notion of practical *knowledge*?

2.6 Is *phronêsis* practical knowledge?

I have constructed an implicit notion of practical knowledge from the first part of the *EN* which is characterized by its function. Practical knowledge is a kind of knowledge that differs from knowing-that in that it grasps the means to be achieved in a situation (§2.3). In spite of this important function, Aristotle does not elaborate on this meaning of practical knowledge, at least not in the usual terms of

[95] For a similar characterization of *phronêsis* as the disposition for virtuous choice, see also Engberg-Pedersen 1983: 163; Natali 2001: 19; Taylor 2008: 206.

gnôsis or *epistêmê*. Now, although he never explicitly defines *phronêsis* in terms of practical knowledge, Aristotle seems to do so implicitly. I have construed the function of *phronêsis* as taking virtuous decisions. Such a function corresponds indeed to attaining the mean, which is the function proper to practical knowledge I have outlined. Virtue of character consists in an intermediacy between excess and efficiency and is realized in actions which achieve such an intermediacy.

However, the identification of *phronêsis* with practical knowledge might surprise us, because the description of *phronêsis* does not fit our usual conception of the *form* of knowledge. Nowadays, we usually conceive an episode of knowledge as a belief of a certain kind, that is, a cognitive state with a propositional content. Yet, Aristotle does not clearly introduce *phronêsis* in this way. It is true that on some occasions he assimilates *phronêsis* to a kind of belief (*hupolêpsis* – 1140b12-13; 1142b33), but he does not explicitly mention instances of phronetic judgement that could be subject to epistemic evaluation as true or false. Aristotle does not speak in terms of 'knowing that' or 'thinking that' in the case of *phronêsis*. He does not use expressions such as '*phronein hoti*' + object. *Phronêsis* is also related to a *process* of thinking. Aristotle holds that the *phronimos* achieves his *ergon*, his proper function, by deliberating well (*kalôs bouleusasthai* 1140a26; *eu bouleusasthai* 1141b9-10). Deliberation is an intellectual process of thinking or reasoning. By contrast, knowledge of what to do corresponds to a cognitive *state*, i.e. a mental episode which is not a process.

There is a need to agree about what one means by knowledge here. First of all, knowledge is not conceived as 'justified true belief', as the more recent – 'Cartesian' – tradition has it. Rather, the range of cognitive states relevant in ancient epistemology is wider than mere knowledge understood as justified true belief (Everson 1990: 5). The best known instance of a kind of knowledge which does not amount to our notion of knowledge is Aristotle's 'scientific knowledge' (*epistêmê*), which does not only correspond to a kind of knowledge that P, but also involves understanding *why* P.[96] *Phronêsis* is a cognitive state close to *epistêmê*. As a virtue, *phronêsis* is a 'state' of the soul, a *hexis* (1106a11-12).

A *hexis* is a state of the soul which can be subject to evaluation, by contrast to a mere capacity (*dunamis*) or a passion (*pathos*) (*EN* II.5 1105b19-28).[97] At *EN* II.5, when Aristotle introduces the notion of *hexis*, he defines it in the following way.

[96] On the difference between the modern knowledge as justified true belief and the ancient knowledge as understanding, see below, p. 81.

[97] For *hexis* as a state subject to evaluation, see Hutchinson 1986: 8-13. Note that having a value is not part of the essence of a *hexis*. It is rather a necessary property. I thank Susan Sauvé Meyer and Richard King for having made me aware of this point.

15) "Dispositions (*hexis*) are that in virtue of which we are well or badly disposed towards affections; for instance, if I tend to get angry either too much or too little, I am badly disposed towards anger, while if I tend to get angry moderately, I am well disposed" *EN* II.5 1105b25-28

(25) ἕξεις δὲ καθ' ἃς πρὸς τὰ πάθη ἔχομεν εὖ ἢ κακῶς, οἷον πρὸς τὸ ὀργισθῆναι, εἰ μὲν σφοδρῶς ἢ ἀνειμένως, κακῶς ἔχομεν, εἰ δὲ μέσως, εὖ·

This notion of *hexis* is close to the notion of capacity, but it differs from the latter in that one can ascribe a value to it. A capacity is the mere ability to be subject to a certain affection. For instance, if I am capable of anger, it means that I am so built that I am able to feel anger. By contrast, a disposition is the feature thanks to which I actualize this capacity, but in a qualified way, as well or badly. To be well disposed towards anger – i.e. neither too much, nor too little – is to have a good *hexis* for feeling anger, which Aristotle calls mildness (*praotês*). In the case of intellectual *hexeis*, it seems that they are liable to a similar sort of evaluation, yet *epistemic* evaluation this time. Aristotle says for instance that *epistêmê* is always true, whereas *doxa* can be true or false (*DA* III.3 428a16-19). Thus, although intellectual states are not concerned with passions as *hexeis* of character are, what characterizes them is the ability to be evaluated in terms of truth and falsehood.[98] Intellectual *hexeis* are the sorts of disposition thanks to which an agent is disposed to say true or false propositions. Indeed, when Aristotle starts his inquiry for the virtues of both rational parts of the soul, he first enumerates *hexeis* of the soul thanks to which we speak truly or falsely (*EN* VI.3 1139b15-16). One ought to distinguish therefore between *phronêsis* as a disposition and the statements which are asserted by *phronêsis*. According to my interpretation such statements are episodes of decision. Practical knowledge can be understood in both ways. Either it is a disposition for correct decision and is thereby identical to *phronêsis*, or it is a particular instance of cognition, which is identical to decision.[99]

[98] Moreover, intellectual virtues do not consist in a mean between excess and deficiency. It is not possible to be excessively disposed toward truth.

[99] It might be the case that Aristotle is ambiguous about *hexis*, and that the term refers both to a disposition and to an actual instance of cognition. Indeed, *epistêmê* and *doxa* are *hexeis*, but they also are said to be subject to epistemic evaluation (*epistêmê* is true; *doxa* can be true or false). Similarly, *phronêsis* is sometimes identified with a *hupolêpsis*, which is true (1142b33). The ambiguity of the term *hexis* is palpable at *Meta.* V.20, where a *hexis* is defined both as a kind of *activity* (*energeia* 1022b4) and as a kind of 'disposition' (*diathesis*), in the sense of an arrangement of parts in a definite form (*Meta.* V.19 1022b1-3).

Speaking of *phronêsis* as practical knowledge also requires some clarifications for another reason. What I mean with practical knowledge can be mistaken for other kinds of knowledge relevant in practical or moral situations. First, *phronêsis* should not be identified with Aristotle's conception of ethical inquiry, although they share some common features. What I call ethical inquiry in Aristotle is the kind of study he does in both his *Ethics*. It is a *methodos* (1094b11) and in other works he refers to it as *êthikoi logoi* (e.g. *Meta.* 981b25; *Pol.* 1261a31; 1280a18) or *êthikê theôria* (*APo* 89b9). The connection between practical knowledge and ethical inquiry is strong. They both have the good life as an end. The aim of ethical inquiry is not knowledge, but being virtuous (*EN* II.2 1103b26-31; X.9 1179b1-5; *EE* 1216b19-25, text (4)).[100] However, ethical inquiry and *phronêsis* do not share exactly the same aim. The purpose of *phronêsis* is actual action, whereas the aim of ethical inquiry is a more abstract notion of becoming virtuous and of being happy. Such an end is not proper to one individual or particular to a definite action, but is general and could be applied to any individual. Aristotle seems to be aware of this distinction of purpose when he mentions 'architectonic *phronêsis*' at *EN* VI.8 1141b23-28:

> 16) Political expertise and wisdom are the same disposition, but their being is not the same. Of the disposition as it relates to the city, the one wisdom as 'architectonic' is legislative expertise, while the other at the level of particulars is given the generic name 'political expertise', and this one is practical and deliberative, since a decree is something to be acted upon, as it is last in the process. *EN* VI.8 1141b23-28
>
> Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἡ φρόνησις ἡ αὐτὴ μὲν ἕξις, τὸ μέντοι εἶναι οὐ ταὐτὸν αὐταῖς. τῆς δὲ περὶ (25) πόλιν ἡ μὲν ὡς ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ φρόνησις νομοθετική, ἡ δὲ ὡς τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα τὸ κοινὸν ἔχει ὄνομα, πολιτική· αὕτη δὲ πρακτικὴ καὶ βουλευτική· τὸ γὰρ ψήφισμα πρακτὸν ὡς τὸ ἔσχατον.

One form of *phronêsis* is identified as the activity of legislation, whereas the other one is identified with decision-making, although at a political level. Then, clearly, even though ethical inquiry is directed towards a practical goal, it has a sub-goal which is descriptive, and this purpose is alien to *phronêsis* as mere decision-making. Moreover, ethical inquiry and *phronêsis* do not share the same principles. The former as a discipline has its principles in the *endoxa* and in this respect is not different from other sciences (Barnes 1980; Irwin 1981). On the contrary,

[100] In this sense, Aristotelian ethical inquiry is also distinct from modern ethical theory, whose primary concerns are not practical, namely the study of the truth of ethical statements.

phronêsis draws its principles from the agent's character and in the best case from his virtue (as I shall argue in chap. 5).[101] What I am interested in, then, is the aspect of *phronêsis* which is centred on the moment of decision.

Also, *phronêsis* is not the same as modern 'moral knowledge', i.e. knowledge about moral values and norms. As I intend to show (chap. 3), *phronêsis* includes such knowledge but not this alone. A crucial feature of *phronêsis* is the ability to implement a concrete action from the consideration of a general moral end. More generally, my description of *phronêsis* as practical knowledge should be distinguished from modern ethical theory, which is above all descriptive and which aims at defining moral notions such as values or moral obligations. *Phronêsis* as practical knowledge is normative in that its purpose is to perform virtuous actions. It is a cognitive state engaged in action, whereas ethical science today is a body of knowledge and none of the contents of such an ethical theory can be an immediate cause of virtuous action.

2.7 Conclusion

From a common conception of what is required for the good life, Aristotle develops a framework for virtuous action. Indeed, the good life is realized in virtuous action. In order to perform virtuous actions, the notion of a target is required. And this target requires in turn some knowledge of what it is. Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not see in the target some model of virtuous action which would be available thanks to intellectual cognitions of the Forms. Rather, the target is the particular action itself. Consequently, the kind of knowledge required is not knowledge of some transcendent models, but knowledge of how to implement some action successfully. Aristotle's conception of knowledge at work in practical matters is therefore eminently practical, i.e. directed at the performance of actions. Ultimately, such knowledge is about a particular action itself and its content is the description of such an action.

I have argued that the elaboration of the notion of *phronêsis* is Aristotle answers to the requirements of such an idea of practical knowledge. As the virtue of the practical part of the soul, *phronêsis* has virtuous decision as its function, and virtuous decision is precisely what enables one to 'attain the mean', i.e. to implement a virtuous action.

Phronêsis has various aspects: it can be understood as a disposition for practical knowledge, but also as a kind of architectonic intellectual virtue by reference

[101] On these matters, see also Anagnostopoulos 1994, §3.2-3; and Natali 2001:31.

to which all activities of one's life are organized. The kind of *phronêsis* I am interested in is *phronêsis* as a disposition for correct decision. I take it that practical knowledge consists in correct decision and is thereby the result of the activity of *phronêsis*. In this sense, Aristotle's notion of practical knowledge should not be mistaken with other forms of knowledge concerned with practice. It is not the same as Aristotelian ethical inquiry, nor is it equivalent to our modern notion of moral knowledge of values and norms.

Finally, as Aristotle introduces *phronêsis* in a context where he has shown that practice is also subject to rational thinking, this leaves open the possibility for practical knowledge to be evaluated in terms of truth. What I propose to do in the rest of this work is therefore to study the epistemic conditions for practical knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

3 The rational structure of practical knowledge

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, I introduced practical knowledge as an aspect of *phronêsis*. *Phronêsis* as a *hexis* refers to a disposition to make correct decision. An episode of practical knowledge corresponds to the actualization of *phronêsis*. Moreover, the psychological state in which practical knowledge is actualized is decision (*proairesis*). A particular virtuous decision is also an instance of practical knowledge. Another significant aspect of this discussion of *phronêsis* is that Aristotle makes room for rationality in the practical realm. Aristotle argues against Plato that the domain of contingent things is the object of rational consideration, just like the theoretical domain of necessary truths, and that there can be expertise and knowledge in this area, too. Correspondingly, *phronêsis* is not mere guessing or intuition but a disposition for practical knowledge in a strong sense.

If there is indeed practical knowledge, it must be possible to state the epistemic conditions of such knowledge. What exactly are these conditions? Aristotle has an extensive theory of what makes the kind of knowledge proper to the theoretical realm, i.e. *epistêmê*. He devotes the entirety of the *Posterior Analytics* to the description of *epistêmê*. However, there is no parallel treatise about practical knowledge, or so it seems. Still, I contend that one can use Aristotle's account of *epistêmê* in order to elaborate an epistemology of *phronêsis*.[102] Theoretical knowledge consists in syllogistic argument, the 'demonstration' (*apodeixis*), and the study of its properties enables one to understand how a given assertion can be an instance of *epistêmê*. Practical thought shows striking similarities with its theoretical counterpart. Both the theoretical and the practical parts of the soul have truth as their func-

[102] Besides, in *EN* VI, Aristotle starts his search for the intellectual virtues of the practical and the theoretical parts of the soul with *epistêmê*. At 1139b27, he alludes to the *Posterior Analytics*, which could mean that he had already written this treatise, or at least that he already had substantial notes on the subject. At any rate, he already has an account of theoretical reason that provides him with a starting point for developing his account of practical reason.

tion, even though it is a specific kind of truth in each case (*EN* VI.2 1139b12, see §2.4.3). Practical reason is sometimes described by means of analogies with theoretical reason: positing the goal of practical reason as the starting point is similar to positing the 'hypothesis' (*hupothesis*) in mathematical inquiry (*EE* II.10 1227a9-10; b28-30; *EN* 1151a16-17). Moreover, Aristotle uses syllogistic terminology to speak of practical reasoning. He sometimes speaks of *sullogismos* (1142b22-23; 1144a31-32), of *practical principles* (*archai tôn praktôn* – *EN* 1140b16-17; *praktikai archai* 1144a34-35) akin to the principles of a theoretical syllogism, of one premise (*tês heteras protaseôs* 1143b3) and of the 'conclusion' of practical reasoning (*sumperanthen EN* VII.3 1147a25-28).

It is true that Aristotle also uses another model to speak of the structure of practical thought, that of deliberation (*bouleusis*). He describes deliberation as a kind of inquiry (*zêtêsis*, *EN* III.3 1112b22). Deliberation as a process of inquiry and demonstration as a logical argument are difficult to put together. Scholars once held that deliberation has a syllogistic structure,[103] but this is highly controversial and has since been convincingly rejected by Nussbaum (1978, Essay 4, esp. p. 205). A more recent approach has attempted to sever Aristotle's account of practical thought from any connection to a syllogistic form of thought (Broadie 1991; Corcilius 2008a).

Notwithstanding, I contend that Aristotle conceives the epistemic conditions for practical knowledge on the model of theoretical rationality. This claim relies on the assumption that reasoning in Aristotle can be described in two distinct ways. First, there is a description of reasoning as an actual process of thought, namely thinking proper conceived in its temporality. But there is also a formal description of reasoning in terms of an argument. In my view, Aristotle has two different accounts of theoretical reason corresponding to this distinction. If it is true that he specifies the conditions of *epistêmê* in terms of *apodeixis*, he also has an account of theoretical knowledge as inquiry, namely as the search for the middle term. I argue that the same holds in the case of practical reason. On the one hand, practical thought is exercised in the form of deliberative thinking and its structure is similar to that of theoretical inquiry. On the other hand, practical reason is actualized in the form of practical knowledge, which is a cognitive state whose structure is modelled on that of theoretical knowledge, that is, of *epistêmê*.[104] Both ways of describing reason are compatible, for they do not have the same purpose. Reasoning as a process is the actual procedure by which one arrives at a definite claim, whereas reason as

[103] Greenwood 1909: 50-51; Joachim 1951: 208-210; Ando 1958: 221; Mele 1981: 282.

[104] For a similar account, see Allen forthcoming: 7, who sees both kinds of reason as inquiries that aim at the discovery of syllogisms.

argument aims at the evaluation of such a claim. In the case of theoretical reason, the claim arrived at can be evaluated epistemically, that is, in terms of whether the subject really knows what he is asserting.[105] In the case of practical reason, however, the claim under consideration is in fact the content of a decision and is primarily evaluated in moral terms, i.e. in terms of the good or the bad.

This chapter will be devoted to showing that reason in Aristotle can be described as a process and as an argument, and that this holds for both theoretical and practical reason. I shall begin by introducing *epistêmê* as a cognitive state and describing its logical structure. Then I shall show that although he says less about it, Aristotle also has an account of theoretical thought as a process of investigation. This will help in distinguishing the relevance of speaking of theoretical thought respectively as a state or as a process. I shall then apply the distinction to practical thought. In my view, practical thought can be described from two distinct points of views. On the one hand, there is practical thought as a process of deliberation, i.e. a search for the means to the end. On the other hand, there is practical thought as an *argument* which is included in the decision to act and which is a logical representation of the agent's practical thought.

Talking of practical reason in syllogistic terms inevitably leads to the mention of the so-called 'practical syllogism'. The practical syllogism is a figure of Aristotelian philosophy which has been elaborated from Aristotle's remarks on practical reason, but which is not explicitly developed by Aristotle himself. The usual account of the practical syllogism draws from material as diverse as the *De Motu Animalium* and the *De Anima*, as well as books VI and VII of the *EN*. In this chapter, I shall restrict my inquiry to *EN* VI. I shall argue that in the context of the account of practical thought and *phronêsis* one may speak of a practical syllogism in a loose sense, that is, in terms much weaker than what has usually been attributed to Aristotle. The practical syllogism is an argument which justifies an agent's decision, but

[105] Now I also should say some words on 'evaluation'. As already said, an evaluative proposition is such that it asserts some value to an object. Such value can consist in being good or bad, right or wrong, success of failure, in short any predicate which provides an extra quality to this object, which exceeds the sum of its parts. In this work, two specific kinds of evaluation are especially significant. First, I shall speak of moral evaluation, that is, a value judgement that asserts an extra quality to an object in terms of good or bad. More specifically in the present context, the subjects of moral evaluation are decisions to act and the actions themselves. Thus, moral evaluation aims at answering the question: Did he make the right decision? Then, I shall introduce the notion of epistemic evaluation. Epistemic evaluation is directed towards cognitions in particular. It amounts to determine whether a subject having a certain cognition of an object has indeed knowledge of this object. The question answered in this case is the following: Does the agent count as knowing what to do?

it has nothing to do with the process of deliberation or with an alternative to deliberation.

This chapter will also focus on questions of structure of thinking and therefore the discussion may seem rather abstract. However, I shall turn to the content of practical thought in the following chapters. In particular, in this chapter, I shall insist that the evaluation of practical knowledge is made in moral terms. In the following chapters, especially chap. 5, I shall also argue that the practical argument which justifies a decision to act also constitutes a tool in order to evaluate a decision *epistemically*.

3.2 The structure of theoretical thought

In this section, I develop a double account of theoretical reason as an argument and as a process. I shall then apply the results of this section to practical reason.

3.2.1 Theoretical thought as *epistêmê*

Epistêmê is defined in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a *hexis apodeiktikê*, *i.e.* a disposition to demonstration (*EN* VI.3 1139b31). Demonstration (*apodeixis*) is introduced in the *Posterior Analytics* as a particular kind of syllogism (*APo* I.2 71b17-18) which is characterized as having especially demanding conditions: its premises have to be "true, first to come, immediate, better known than the conclusion, prior to it and cause of it".[106] Two further conditions are added to this: its premises have to be necessary and universal (*APo* I.4-6).

The cognate verb of *epistêmê*, *epistasthai*, means therefore to entertain or to perform a demonstration. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle presents the following description of what it is to *epistasthai*: "For when someone somehow believes something, and the principles [of this thing] are familiar to him, then he knows demonstratively."[107] To know something demonstratively is to believe, or to be convinced of (*pôs pisteuê*), something and at the same time to be somehow acquainted (*gnôrimos*) with the principles (*archai*) of that thing. A similar account is found in the *Posterior Analytics*: "We think we know something demonstratively (*epistasthai*) [...]

[106] *APo* I.2 71b20-22: ἐξ ἀληθῶν τ' εἶναι καὶ πρώτων καὶ ἀμέσων καὶ γνωριμωτέρων καὶ προτέρων καὶ αἰτίων τοῦ συμπεράσματος.
[107] *EN* VI.3 1139b33-34: ὅταν γάρ πως πιστεύῃ καὶ γνώριμοι αὐτῷ ὦσιν αἱ ἀρχαί, ἐπίσταται.

whenever we think we know (*gignôskein*)[108] both that the cause because of which the thing is [as it is] is the cause of this thing, and that it is not possible for this to be otherwise."[109] The account of the *Posterior Analytics* is similar to that of the *EN* in an important respect (despite other significant differences). To know something demonstratively (*epistasthai*) involves knowing (*gignôskein*) the cause (*aitia*) of the object of knowledge, or being familiar (*gnôrimos*) with the principle (*archê*) of the object.

The *aitia* or *archê* of the object of knowledge stands in an explanatory relation to the object it is the cause of. The principle of the known object explains *why* the latter is as it is. That is, it refers to more fundamental features of reality that account for the way the object is. For instance, the triangle is the *archê* of the rectangle (*EE* 1227b31ff.); the walk is the *aitia* of health (*APo* II.11 94b8-9); the ratio 2 to 1 is the *aitia* of the octave (*Meta.* V.1 1013a25); the *archê* of a man is a man (*EE* 1222b17-18). Thus, 'knowing something demonstratively' does not only involve knowing *that* something is so and so, but also *why* it is so and so. In other words, *epistêmê* involves knowledge of a fact along with its explanation. This way of describing knowledge also differs in an important way from how we usually think of knowledge. Nowadays, we conceive of knowledge as a state that implies certainty about its object. If I know that P, then P is the case. Correspondingly contemporary analyses of knowledge have sought to account for it in terms of true belief which is justified or secured by a further element. They have focused on what *justifies* one's knowledge that P is true, i.e. what makes sure or warrants that our belief about an object is true. By contrast, Aristotle is more interested in what accounts for why the world appears as it is. He is interested in *explanation*, not in justification.[110]

But Aristotle goes further than this general account of *epistêmê* as knowing the cause. Accounting for the principle or cause of something in a state of *epistêmê* involves a specific logical structure – an *argument* –, namely the 'demonstration' (*apodeixis*), in which the cause stands in a specific relation to the *explanandum*. The

[108] Barnes translates *gignôskein* as 'being aware', thus giving a weaker sense to *gignôskein* than to *epistasthai* and avoiding circularity.

[109] *APo* I.2 71b9-12: ἐπίστασθαι δὲ οἰόμεθ᾽ ἕκαστον ... ὅταν τήν τ᾽ αἰτίαν οἰώμεθα γιγνώσκειν δι᾽ ἣν τὸ πρᾶγμά ἐστιν, ὅτι ἐκείνου αἰτία ἐστί, καὶ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι τοῦτ᾽ ἄλλως ἔχειν. The second clause 'and that it is not possible for this to be otherwise' of the *APo* refers to the fact that *epistêmê* is only about necessary states of affairs.

[110] See Burnyeat 1981: 117-119; Frede 1996: 159-160. Barnes (1993) follows Burnyeat's suggestion strictly by translating *epistêmê* 'understanding'. However, a strict distinction cannot be made so easily, for even if Aristotle's account of *epistêmê* is rather directed towards explanation, he nevertheless believes that *epistêmê* is indeed knowledge, and not merely true belief. See Irwin's critique of Burnyeat 1988: 530, n. 24; Patzig 1981: 143, n. 2.

object of one's *epistêmê* has a deductive relationship to its explanatory features. In other words, the *aitiai* or *archai* of what is known are expressed in the premises (*protaseis*) of the demonstration. For instance, Aristotle defines a lunar eclipse as a sort of privation of light due to the interference (the "screening" – *antiphraxis*) of the Earth (*APo* II.2 90a17): the Earth blocks the light that flows from the Sun and normally lights up the Moon. To know demonstratively that there is an eclipse requires the insertion of this proposition into a syllogistic structure that represents the state of affairs 'the Moon is being eclipsed' in a deductive relationship towards its cause, that is, that there is a screening by the Earth. Aristotle offers the following syllogism (reproduced from Barnes 1993 [1975]: 219-220):

> (1) Eclipse holds of screening by the Earth
> (2) Screening by the earth holds of the Moon
> Therefore:
> (3) Eclipse holds of the Moon

That the moon is being eclipsed is explained by a state of affairs that holds as a middle term in the syllogistic demonstration, namely that there is screening by the Earth.[111] Hence, *epistêmê* is a cognitive state in which one holds a proposition about a state of affairs and at the same time one grasps the causes or reasons that explain this state of affairs. These causes are expressed as premises that stand in a deductive relationship to the proposition which is to be explained, and the deduction must be valid.

Why does Aristotle need to introduce such a syllogistic structure in his account of science? It is because he believes in the necessity and universality of science (cf. 1139b19-23). The deductive structure of the *apodeixis* ensures that a scientific proposition is both universal and necessary, and that it is explained by its proper, non-incidental cause.

Now, since an episode of *epistêmê* is explained by principles expressed in the premises of a scientific argument, the *apodeixis*, and since the principles must be better known and prior to the conclusion, there is a need to account for these principles as well. The principles of the latter demonstration must also be the object of a demonstration. Indeed, in order to have a real scientific explanation, the premises must have been themselves deduced from other scientifically established premises. The principles from which the proposition has been deduced must be capable of explaining it and this will be the case only if the principles are objects of science. Obviously, this might lead to a *regressus ad infinitum*. Aristotle avoids this conse-

[111] Another Aristotelian example 'Why do plants lose their leaves?' is given at *APo* II.16-17, see Bolton 1987: 139.

quence by affirming that there are principles of science that are first, i.e. that are fundamental and from which all other propositions of a science are deduced (*APo* I.3 72b18-25). Yet, this implies that the first principles are not deduced by an *apodeixis*. Aristotle's account of *epistêmê* does not, in fact, include knowledge of the first principles. In other words, there is no knowledge of the first principles, at least no demonstrative knowledge.[112] A different kind of knowledge is required in order to come to grasp these principles. Aristotle calls such a grasp 'intellection' (*nous*) (See *EN* VI.6 1141a3-8; *APo* II.19 100b5-17).[113] The logic in play in the intellection of first principles is not deductive, but inductive. A universal notion is obtained by 'induction' (*epagogê*) from a collection of perceptions similar to each other (*APo* II.19 99b32-100b5).[114]

Hence, theoretical rationality does not consist in deductive thinking alone. Getting to know first principles through an inductive process is also part of theoretical reason. Besides, Aristotle identifies the virtue of the theoretical part of the soul with a disposition which includes both *epistêmê* and *nous* and which he calls *sophia* (*EN* VI.7 1141a16-20). *Sophia* is the 'most accurate' (*akribestatê*) of all *epistêmai* and it involves knowledge of the principles.[115] Thus, a satisfactory picture of theoretical rationality consists in asserting true propositions by supporting them adequately with first principles, and these principles are known by *nous* and have been established by induction.[116]

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[112] It is true that at *APo* I.3 72b19-20 Aristotle speaks of *epistêmê* of the immediate principles (*tôn amesôn*) and adds that such a science is indemonstrable (*anapodeikton*). However, one should not take this phrase literally, since *epistêmê* was defined as a demonstrative form of knowledge (*APo* I.2 71b17; *EN* VI.3 1139b31-32). Aristotle probably wants to highlight that the grasp of the first principles must be as accurate and strong as that of *epistêmê*.

[113] *Nous* as a state which grasps the first principles of a science is distinct from the more general sense of *nous* as the faculty of thinking. See note 18.

[114] How we come to have an intellection of first principles is a vexed issue. I shall say more about this in the next section §3.2.2, although a satisfactory account of how this process works is not part of my agenda. For a complete account, see Bronstein 2012, who reviews the literature on the subject.

[115] However, it is not clear whether *sophia* is a kind of overall knowledge that includes all other special sciences or rather an architectonic kind of knowledge that possesses the principles of other sciences.

[116] At this point, it might seem misleading to take *epistêmê* as the privileged term of comparison in order to understand *phronêsis*. Instead, *phronêsis* as the virtue of the practical part of the soul ought to be put on a par with *sophia*, that is, theoretical wisdom. However, what I wish to compare is not *phronêsis* as virtue in general, but the cognitive state that issues from *phronêsis*. I assume that the primary function of theoretical rationality is to assert truths obtained deductively, not propositions obtained by the intuition of *nous*, although the latter might seem more fundamental and intriguing. That its primary function is to obtain *epistêmê*

Now, this description of *epistêmê* gives rise to an ambiguity similar to that seen in the case of *phronêsis*, when I distinguished between *phronêsis* as a disposition towards practical knowledge and as ethical inquiry (p. 67). Indeed, *epistêmê* can be understood either as a cognitive state entertained by an individual, or as a discipline, i.e. an organized body of knowledge, like the special sciences of biology, physics, and meteorology. This ambiguity is reflected in the difficulty of finding a suitable translation for *epistêmê*. As a cognitive state, *epistêmê* is better translated as 'knowledge', but the latter understanding of *epistêmê* is not related to the psychology of an individual and corresponds more closely to our notion of 'science'. So far, I have considered *epistêmê* as a cognitive state of an individual. When listing *epistêmê* alongside other intellectual states in the *Ethics*, Aristotle characterizes these as states by which the soul speaks the truth by asserting or denying (1139b15-16). Later, he also calls *epistêmê* a kind of *hupolêpsis* (1140b31; see also *Top.* V.2 130b16; 3 131a23; 4 133b29). In this way, *epistêmê* looks very much like a cognitive state of the soul. However, the deductive structure of *epistêmê* and its description in syllogistic terms point at a construal of *epistêmê* as *science*, i.e. as a structured body of knowledge.

Aristotle is aware of the ambiguity of *epistêmê*. He mentions it in the *Physics*: "*epistêmê* being on the one hand a species of belief (*hupolêpsis*) and on the other hand a genus for the various sciences (*tôn epistêmôn*)".[117] Curiously, he makes the distinction neither in the epistemological context of the *APo* nor in *EN* VI. He seems to slip from considerations about cognitive states towards epistemological issues which are independent of the individual who has such cognitive states. *Apodeixis* as a kind of deduction holds independently of whether an actual subject is considering it or not. On the other hand, when one conceives an *epistêmê* as a state of the soul, it is not related to the *apodeixis* in the same way. Indeed, it seems bizarre to imagine that whenever someone is said to *epistatai* that P, he at the same time performs a deduction. Nevertheless, both meanings can be accommodated. *Epistêmê* as a cognitive state can indeed be conceived of as the state in which an individual entertains a given proposition which belongs to a special science and which is explained by the appropriate principles. *Epistêmê* as science is then the body of knowledge in which a subject picks a definite proposition when he *epistatai*. Thus, the ambivalence of '*epistêmê*' is not problematic. The word may refer both to the organized body of

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is shown by the fact that Aristotle calls *sophia* a kind of *epistêmê*. As I take the primary function of practical rationality to be decision-making, it makes more sense to compare *phronêsis* with *epistêmê*. In this sense, as I shall show below, *phronêsis* as the disposition for correct decisions has more in common with *epistêmê* than with *sophia* or with theoretical *nous*.

[117] *Phys*. V.4 227b13-14: εἰ ἡ ἐπιστήμη εἶδος μὲν ὑπολήψεως, γένος δὲ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν.

knowledge proper to a special science as well as to the cognitive state of a subject when he is entertaining one item of this body of knowledge.

3.2.2 Theoretical thought as a process of investigation

However, this picture points at a more disturbing consequence. *Epistêmê* as science appears somewhat static. According to this account, a special science such as zoology is a fully formed body of knowledge ready to be used. As such, it contains many propositions that can be picked out by different individuals when they are cognizing states of affairs proper to this science. In this sense, Aristotle's conception of science is very different from ours. He does not insist on science as a process of investigation that develops hypotheses about the world that ought to be confirmed or disproved by experience. Aristotle does not speak of science as a collection of theories which are progressively and slowly built, step by step. An Aristotelian science is a true theory about the world that is fully formed from the start. There is no story about how this body of knowledge was developed, how it was discovered little by little by one or many individuals who devoted their time to the explanation of the world. In short, there is no history of its production. In Aristotle's 'official' account of *epistêmê* in the *Posterior Analytics*, which is also the account of the *Ethics*, we are left with a picture of science that does not portray it as a method of research or discovery.

Similarly, the *apodeixis* is a figure expressing the content of an episode of *epistêmê*. It does not describe the actual structure of theoretical thought. Rather, it is a way of displaying knowledge which guarantees the scientific accuracy of such knowledge.[118] Moreover, as the *apodeixis* is a syllogism with stringent conditions of validity, it also provides a way of evaluating the epistemic status of a proposition. A proposition will be an object of science if it can stand as the conclusion of an *apodeixis*.

This picture of *epistêmê* is disturbing in the context of the *Ethics*, too. There, theoretical rationality is put on a par with practical rationality and both are depicted as aspects of the intellectual life of a person. Moreover, in *EN* X.7 Aristotle

[118] Weil 1975: 99-100; Barnes 1993. That *epistêmê* does not represent a process of discovery has been convincingly argued by Barnes 1993. However, Barnes' further thesis that *epistêmê* is a method of imparting knowledge has been criticized. To think that a teacher could impart new contents of knowledge to a pupil by starting with fundamental principles of a science would be "poor pedagogy", see Burnyeat 1981: 116-119. Rather, *epistêmê* expresses a way of laying out of scientific contents together with their explanation. In this sense, the *apodeixis* is a tool that states what the formal conditions are in order to grant scientific knowledge to someone. In other words, the *apodeixis* is a tool for the justification of *epistêmê*.

claims that *theôria*, the activity of the theoretical part of the soul, is the most excellent activity for human beings and constitutes happiness (1177a12-18). If *theôria* consists only in actual *epistêmê*, and if *epistêmê* is best understood as a body of knowledge organized deductively, such a description of happiness is puzzling. It would also be hard to apply straightforwardly this understanding of *epistêmê* to *phronêsis* in an attempt to outline the epistemic conditions of the latter. Since *phronêsis* is best described as a disposition to make virtuous decision, and decision is the outcome of deliberation, the structure of practical thought in Aristotle is best understood as deliberative, as we shall see below. And since deliberation is a process of investigation, it is hard to see how the conditions for knowledge of *epistêmê* could be adapted to *phronêsis*.

However, the notion of investigation in theoretical subject matters, though absent from the concept of *epistêmê*, is not alien to Aristotle. In the Aristotelian corpus, one finds methodological remarks on how to engage in this kind of inquiry. For instance, one finds a succinct description of a method of inquiry in the *Historia Animalium*:

> 17) "Afterwards, we shall inquire <into these matters with respect to animals> in order to grasp first of all the actual differences and the accidental properties (*sumbebêkota*) in every case. After that, we must attempt to discover the causes (*aitias*) of these. For, this is the natural method of procedure (*methodos*) – to do this only when the investigation (*historia*) of each case is complete. For from these steps it will become clear about which things and from which things the demonstration (*apodeixis*) must be built up." *HA* I.6 491a9-14; see also *PA* I.1 639b8
>
> δι' ἀκριβείας δ' ὕστερον ἐροῦμεν, ἵνα πρῶτον τὰς ὑπαρχούσας (10) διαφορὰς καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα πᾶσι λαμβάνωμεν. Μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο τὰς αἰτίας τούτων πειρατέον εὑρεῖν. Οὕτω γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν ἐστὶ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν μέθοδον, ὑπαρχούσης τῆς ἱστορίας τῆς περὶ ἕκαστον· περὶ ὧν τε γὰρ καὶ ἐξ ὧν εἶναι δεῖ τὴν ἀπόδειξιν, ἐκ τούτων γίνεται φανερόν.

Aristotle's method of inquiry (*historia*) is based on the observation of the accidental properties (*sumbebêkota*) of the objects being studied and of the differences among these objects. Then, after these properties have been carefully described, the next step is to look for (*eurein*) the causes that explain such variance. Doing so, Aristotle also distinguishes the moment of demonstration (*apodeixis*) from the moment of inquiry. In other words, once inquiry has been carried out, the components of the demonstration (namely the area of inquiry and the causes) appear clearly and the

researcher can build up the appropriate demonstration of the fact he wants to establish.[119]

If one grants that *apodeixis* is a means of exposition of scientific knowledge, Aristotle seems to distinguish at least three steps in this description of scientific inquiry. First the inquirer establishes the 'data' at his disposal. These can be empirical observations, but also common beliefs or reputable opinions (Anagnostopoulos 2009: 111-112). He sets out the data by comparing these observations and beliefs and by showing the distinctive features or differences among them. Then, he grasps the cause which explains why the facts observed are as they are. Finally, he builds up a demonstration which establishes *epistêmê*. The *apodeixis* therefore comes at the end of a process of inquiry.

Scientific inquiry is often thought together with the method of dialectic as presented in the *Topics*.[120] Aristotle does in fact introduce dialectic as a method of systematically examining a claim. At *Top.* I.2, Aristotle provides a list of the situations in which dialectic is useful. The first two uses of dialectic are directly bound up with the art of debating (*Top*. I.2 101a28-34).[121] Finally, Aristotle presents dialectic as being useful for science, and this in two respects. There are two distinct moments in science where dialectic is useful. One moment requires that one goes through the different puzzles (*aporiai*)[122] related to a particular subject matter (*Top.* I.2 101a34-37). It is supposed to take place at the beginning of the process of scientific inquiry (*Meta.* III.1 995a24-28). The other moment is concerned with the first principles of a science (*Top.* I.2 101a37-b3).[123] The use which is especially relevant

[119] See also Barnes 1975: 83: "Secondly, in *APo* II.1-2 Aristotle plainly implies that our searches must precede demonstration."

[120] Le Blond 1939: 46-47; Weil 1975: 90-92. See Bolton 1987: 121, n. 4 for further references.

[121] First, dialectic is useful in the context of *gumnasia*, which is a specific kind of discussion with an agonistic spirit (See Slomkowski 1997: 12ff.). Then it is useful in a less formal context where one is nonetheless brought to discussion with others (what Aristotle calls an *enteuxis*, which is sometimes translated as 'casual encounter' and which is understood as the kind of discussion the members of a school might have outside of the school, see Smith 1997: 51).

[122] An *aporia* in the technical sense used by Aristotle means a puzzle that arises when two contradictory positions have been derived from a set of common beliefs (Top. 145b16, 162a17).

[123] Aristotle does indeed hold that the truth of the first principles of a special science cannot be justified within this science but need to be confirmed from outside. Moreover, as we have already seen, Aristotle's foundationalism requires that first principles cannot be deduced from further principles. Hence, the role of dialectic is to establish the truth of first principles by showing that they cannot be wrong. A famous instance of the use of this method within Aristotle's own work is his treatment of the principle of non-contradiction (*Meta.* IV 4-8).

for scientific inquiry is the first one. The role of dialectical discussion consists in examining the reputable opinions on a given subject (*ta endoxa*).[124] Scientific inquiry therefore makes use of dialectical tools and depends essentially on the dialectical discussions of the *endoxa*. Dialectic is useful in 'grasping the existing differences and incidental properties' of the subject matter (*HA* I.6 491a9-10).[125]

Concerning the second stage which consists in grasping the cause, Aristotle does not have any systematic account. Most of the time, the process by which the cause is grasped is understood as one of induction (*epagôgê*). *Epagôgê* is introduced at *APo* II.19, where Aristotle describes how a universal notion is inferred from a collection of similar perceptions. Perception leaves an imprint in the soul which constitutes a memory, and from many memories of the same object experience (*empeiria*) arises (100a3-6). Then, Aristotle succinctly describes how the subject gains a universal account from an evidential basis that is particular and perceptual:

> 18) And from experience, or from the whole universal that has come to rest in the soul (the one apart from the many, whatever it is which is one and the same in all those things), there comes a principle of craft and of science – of craft if it deals with how things come about, of science if it deals with what is the case. *APo*. II.19 100a6-9

Another example is the discussion of the relation between definition and demonstration in Book II of the *APo* (see Detel 2010: 259).

[124] Aristotle gives the most complete definition of *endoxa* at *Top.* I.1 100b21-23: "On the other hand, those opinions are reputable which are accepted by everyone or by the majority or by the wise – i.e. by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them." (ἔνδοξα δὲ τὰ δοκοῦντα πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς σοφοῖς, καὶ τούτοις ἢ πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς μάλιστα γνωρίμοις καὶ ἐνδόξοις.)

[125] However, nothing prompts us to think that these two methods are identical. The overall area of application of dialectic as a method is broader than that of scientific inquiry, which is limited to a single science (zoology, meteorology and the like). Moreover, dialectic is not primarily concerned with the discovery of principles and definitions, even though it constitutes an indispensable preparatory work for such a discovery. Dialectic as such is not a heuristic tool for finding the causes of something. It aims at testing scientific accounts rather than at developing such accounts. Besides, dialectic relies on the syllogism and is therefore not very different from apodeictic science regarding its method. In spite of these differences, nothing prevents dialectic from being useful in scientific inquiry when it comes to ordering the facts. Indeed, clearing out *aporiai* can be understood as a valuable way of ordering the data of a science. Furthermore, one could suppose that the evidential basis of dialectic is in fact the same as that of scientific inquiry. The former starts from considerations about *ta endoxa*, whereas the latter is concerned with the observation of facts; and in Aristotelian science, the evidential basis contains reputable opinions as well as empirical observations (Owen 1961: 85-86).

> ἐκ δ' ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἠρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἑνὸς παρὰ τὰ πολλά, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἓν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτό, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης, ἐὰν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, τέχνης, ἐὰν δὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπιστήμης.

Again, what the exact transition between *empeiria* and *epistêmê* or *technê* is has been much debated and it is not part of my agenda to discuss this problem (see n. 114). It is significant, however, that Aristotle does not describe induction as a method of inquiry but rather as a cognitive process of inferring universal concepts from particular observations. It is not clear whether the process of induction is a part of scientific inquiry or if it is rather the *result* of this inquiry, which occurs automatically if the inquiry has been well conducted. Commentators tend to agree with the latter view. Anagnostopoulos argues that scientific inquiry is distinct from the method of induction. The former is more complex, since induction seems to obtain merely from a collection of perceptions when a universal is formed in the soul, whereas scientific inquiry examines the complexity of facts in the world and looks for the causes (Anagnostopoulos 2009: 111). Le Blond notes that intuition, i.e. the state which grasps first principles as a result of induction, does not involve a continuous effort by the subject (Le Blond 1939: 271ff.). That Aristotle's account of induction is not a part of the scientific method seems to be confirmed by his remarks on 'acumen' (*agchinoia*) which is "a sort of talent for hitting upon the middle term in an imperceptible time".[126] Finding the cause or middle term appears as a moment in the process of inquiry which one cannot describe in terms of rules or procedures. It occurs, or does not occur, depending on the inquirer's own talent or experience with the subject matter.

Whatever relation one grants between scientific inquiry and induction, one has to acknowledge that Aristotle did have a conception of a process of searching for explanations in the sciences. This process of discovery of causes is distinct from *epistêmê* as an organized body of knowledge and from the related cognitive state of *epistasthai*. I want to insist on this distinction between a process of investigation, which is temporally extended, and the formal structure of displaying a proof. Theoretical rationality can be described from two different points of view. *Epistêmê* as a cognitive state, i.e. as theoretical knowledge, consists in holding a proposition for the correct reasons, i.e. holding it together with the principles from which it is inferred, having in mind the logical connection between the proposition and the principles. Hence, theoretical reason is exemplified as an argument with propositions as its content, and its structure is deductive. However, the notion of *epistêmê* also pre-

[126] *APo* I.34 89b10-11: Ἡ δ' ἀγχίνοιά ἐστιν εὐστοχία τις ἐν ἀσκέπτῳ χρόνῳ τοῦ μέσου.

supposes scientific inquiry. More precisely, *epistêmê* as a cognitive state is the result of a process of *zêtêsis* through which the inquirer discovers the middle term that explains the relevant claim (See Allen forthcoming: 5). In this way, theoretical reason is actualized as a piece of reasoning with propositional attitudes as its content. Scientific inquiry stands within the boundaries of theoretical rationality. The objects of inquiry are the regularities in the world and the universal features of perceptual reality. Rationality in the theoretical domain therefore has a double structure: a structure of inquiry as well as a structure of exposition.[127]

Aristotle's preferred vocabulary for speaking of the actual process of inquiry includes terms such as *heuresis* (*heurein*; *HA* I.6 491a11), *historia* (*HA* I.6 491a12), *skepsis* (e.g. *GA* 788b10-11; *Meta.* I.5 986b13; *PA* 653b13-15; *skopein GC* I.2 316a11), or *zêtêsis* (e.g. *DA* 411a11ff.; *Cael.* 293a25ff.; *GA* 742b17-32; *GC* 321a1-2). The latter is especially expressive since Aristotle uses it in the *APo* when he speaks of the four objects of inquiry, namely the fact itself, the reason why, whether or not something is, and what something is (what Aristotle calls *ta zêtoumena*; *APo* II.1 89b23-25). In *APo* II.2, he even equates these four kinds of inquiry with the search for the middle term (*to meson*). Indeed, each of these are *either* a search for whether or not there is a middle term *or* a search for what the middle term is (II.2 89b36-90a1). *Zêtêsis* is also the term Aristotle uses when he compares deliberation with mathematical inquiry (*EN* III.3 1112b20). But the most significant use of *zêtêsis* as investigation in theoretical science is found in the *Metaphysics*. There on many occasions, Aristotle speaks of the search for the cause as a *zêtêsis* (See i.a. 988b18-19; 992a24-25; 1003a26-27; 1025b3; 1041a27-28; 1042a4-6).[128] Hence, I shall call Aristotle's method of scientific inquiry the method of *zêtêsis*.

One has to admit nevertheless that Aristotle's conception of theoretical rationality is dominated by scientific exposition. When looking for the intellectual virtue of the theoretical part of the soul in the *Ethics*, Aristotle focuses on the deductive structure of *epistêmê* and *sophia*. Aristotle is not very interested in the actual process of theoretical thinking. He is more interested in the result itself, i.e. the content of scientific discoveries and the way it is secured epistemologically. In other

[127] This contrast has been expressed in different ways by scholars: logic of discovery vs. logic of proof (Schiller 1917: 235); *logica inventionis vs. logica demonstratio* (Weil 1975: 91).

[128] See in particular 1063b36-1064a1: "Every science seeks certain principles and causes for each of its objects – e.g. medicine and gymnastics and each of the other sciences, whether productive or mathematical." (Πᾶσα δ' ἐπιστήμη ζητεῖ τινὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ αἰτίας περὶ ἕκαστον τῶν ὑφ' αὑτὴν ἐπιστητῶν, οἷον ἰατρικὴ καὶ γυμναστικὴ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἑκάστη τῶν ποιητικῶν καὶ μαθηματικῶν.) Trans. Ross.

words, he is more interested in questions such as 'What are the conditions for *epistêmê* to be true?'[129]

Now, my claim is that the double structure of rationality is found in the practical part of the soul as well. There is both a processual structure of practical thought on the one hand and a formal description of it. Consequently, the description of practical knowledge in formal terms will be analogical to the role of *epistêmê* in theoretical reason. Since *epistêmê* as a cognitive state is obtained from a process of *zêtêsis* and consists in holding a proposition along with its reasons or explanation, we can similarly understand practical knowledge as a cognitive state obtained through a process of *practical* inquiry, viz. deliberation, and which consists in a ('practical') proposition backed up by reasons or explanations. As I have shown in chapter 2, the state which actualizes the function of practical reason is *decision* (*proairesis*), as *proairesis* is the bearer of practical truth. Thus, *proairesis* is the actual state whose function in practical reason is analogous to *epistêmê* as a cognitive state in theoretical reason.

3.3 The structure of practical thought

3.3.1 Practical rationality as a process of inquiry: deliberation

In §2.4.3, I argued that a correct or practically true decision is the *ergon* of practical reason. Now, according to Aristotle, decision is the typical outcome of a process of deliberation.[130] Of course, there might be particular episodes of deliberation that do not issue in decision. For instance, it might be that something prevents one's practical project from being realized, in which case deliberation stops without issuing a decision to act (1112b24-26). Still, a well-executed deliberation on the appropriate subject will normally deliver a decision. Since the function of practical reason is decision and decision is the result of deliberative thinking, deliberative thinking is the proper way of reasoning in order to realize the function of the practical part of the soul. Thus, the typical structure of practical reason is deliberative thinking. Aristotle does indeed call the practical part of the soul 'calculative' (*logistikon*) and identifies calculation (*logizesthai*) with deliberation (*bouleuesthai* – 1139a11-13). Besides, whenever Aristotle wants to inquire into *phronêsis*, which is the virtue of the practical part of the soul, he links it closely with deliberation by

[129] Of course this raises the question of how the epistemic strength of scientific principles is secured if their justification ultimately rely on the dialectical method. On this see Bolton 1990.

[130] *EN* III.3 1112a9-12. See also *EE* 1226b9: διὸ ἐκ δόξης βουλευτικῆς ἐστιν ἡ προαίρεσις.

affirming that a characteristic feature of the *phronimos* is to be a good deliberator (1140a25-31; 1141b8-14; 1142b31-33). There are manifestly other forms that practical reason can take such as technical reasoning or reflexion on the practical concerns of other people (see Richardson Lear 2004: 102). However, deliberation can be understood as the form of practical thinking *par excellence*.[131] Another way to put it is that practical reason is best actualized in a deliberative form.

So, how is deliberation similar to theoretical rationality? In order to answer this question, one needs first to understand how Aristotle describes the structure of deliberation. In the corpus, the most detailed description of how deliberation proceeds is at *EN* III.3. In the following passage Aristotle famously claims that deliberation is a form of reasoning about the way to achieve a given end:

> 19) "But we deliberate not about ends but about what promotes those ends. For a doctor does not deliberate about whether he'll make his patients healthy, nor a public speaker about whether he'll persuade his audience, nor a political expert about whether he'll bring about good government – and neither do any of the others deliberate about the end, but rather they posit the end and examine how and by what means it will come about; and if it appears as coming about by more than one means, they look to see through which of them it will happen most easily and best, whereas if it is brought to completion by one means only, they look to see how it will come about through this, and through what means that will come about, until they arrive at the first cause, which comes last in the process of discovery." *EN* III.3 1112b11-20
>
> βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη. οὔτε γὰρ ἰατρὸς βουλεύεται εἰ ὑγιάσει, οὔτε ῥήτωρ εἰ πείσει, οὔτε πολιτικὸς εἰ εὐνομίαν ποιήσει, οὐδὲ τῶν λοιπῶν οὐδεὶς (15) περὶ τοῦ τέλους· ἀλλὰ θέμενοι τὸ τέλος τὸ πῶς καὶ διὰ τίνων ἔσται σκοποῦσι· καὶ διὰ πλειόνων μὲν φαινομένου γίνεσθαι διὰ τίνος ῥᾷστα καὶ κάλλιστα ἐπισκοποῦσι, δι' ἑνὸς δ' ἐπιτελουμένου πῶς διὰ τούτου ἔσται κἀκεῖνο διὰ τίνος, ἕως ἂν ἔλθωσιν ἐπὶ τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον, ὃ ἐν τῇ εὑρέσει ἔσχατόν (20) ἐστιν.

A given end having been posited (*themenoi to telos*), the deliberating person looks for the means of achieving this end. To illustrate his point, Aristotle borrows examples from the domain of *technê*. The end of the activity of the doctor is producing health; that of the rhetorician is persuading his listeners; that of the statesman is *eunomia*, i.e. good political order in the *polis*. Each expert looks for ways to bring

[131] Broadie 1991: 211–2 accounts for why Aristotle uses deliberation as a paradigm of practical reason. She considers that not all practical *logoi* should be connected with deliberation, but that deliberation is a 'surrogate' form for all practical *logoi*.

about his respective end. Aristotle calls this 'what promotes the end' (*ta pros to telos*), which is often translated by 'means'.[132] These examples are quite convenient for Aristotle in order to show that one does not deliberate about the end itself.[133] The search for the means can be of two sorts. In one case, the deliberating person considers various ways to achieve one and the same end. He should find out which of the means under consideration is best suited for the realization of the end. In the other case, only one way of achieving the end is considered. The job of deliberation will be to implement the end in a concrete situation. Indeed, an action that has been discovered as a possible means might not be immediately achievable, but might require a further means instead. If I believe that in order to be happy I should become an architect, becoming an architect is not something that I can do directly. There will be a need for a further step, e.g. enrolling in a school of architecture, in order to realize the primary end. Of course, a means that is a condition for another means might not itself be immediately implementable. I would then need a further means in order to bring it about, and so on.

Aristotle does not make much of the distinction between the two different functions of deliberation. Rather, the discussion on deliberation and decision in the rest of *EN* III.3 focuses on the second case, that is, on how to implement a means which corresponds to an action that one cannot immediately carry out. It seems reasonable though to assume that Aristotle distinguishes between two aspects of deliberation that can occur together in the process, with neither having priority over the other. When trying to achieve a certain end, I can first assess the relevance of various ways of achieving that end, and then, once I have opted for a particular way, I can start wondering how I shall best go about implementing this means. But conversely, assessing the relevance of each end might also involve deliberating on the feasibility of every option before I can decide for one of them. In this case, comparison comes first. Hence, I assume that for Aristotle deliberation involves both aspects combined. Deliberation is neither simply picking the right option out of many, nor a piece of reasoning from ends to means, but a mixture of both.

[132] This translation can be misleading, though, for it does not imply a distinction between 'what promotes the end' as instrumental means and as *constituent* of the end. See Greenwood 1909; Wiggins 1975-1976. I shall come back to this distinction at §4.3.3.

[133] Aristotle's claim that we do not deliberate about the end has been subject of thorough discussion among commentators. For it seems that it prevents the agent from determining whether such or such an end is really what he aims for or not. I shall tackle this important issue at §4.3.2-4.3.3.

In order to make his description of deliberation clearer, Aristotle then compares deliberation with a mathematical inquiry that aims at finding a way to construct a geometrical figure:

> 20) "For the person who deliberates seems to inquire and analyse in the way described as though he were dealing with a <geometrical> figure (it seems that not all inquiry is deliberation – mathematics, for example – but that all deliberation is inquiry), and the last step in the analysis seems to be the first that comes to be." *EN* III.5 1112b20-24
>
> (20) ὁ γὰρ βουλευόμενος ἔοικε ζητεῖν καὶ ἀναλύειν τὸν εἰρημένον τρόπον ὥσπερ διάγραμμα (φαίνεται δ' ἡ μὲν ζήτησις οὐ πᾶσα εἶναι βούλευσις, οἷον αἱ μαθηματικαί, ἡ δὲ βούλευσις πᾶσα ζήτησις), καὶ τὸ ἔσχατον ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει πρῶτον εἶναι ἐν τῇ γενέσει.

The analogy works in the following way: in the mathematical case, the end in view is the construction of a certain figure. First, the mathematician has to analyse the figure into its constitutive parts until he has found a way to start the construction of the figure, in other words the starting points.[134] Thus, the last step in the investigation is at the same time the first step in the construction of the figure. Similarly, the process of deliberation aims at finding out the most immediate thing one can do in order to achieve an end given beforehand. The deliberator presupposes the end to achieve and figures out how or by what means he can achieve such an end. Then, the first thing to do in order to achieve that end is to make use of the means that was found out at the end of the analysis.

In this passage, deliberation is characterized as a kind of investigation (*zêtêsis EN* 1112b23; see also *EN* VI.9 1142a31–32, 15; it is also called a *skepsis EE* 1226b8; 1227a12), that is, a rational process of seeking out (*zêtein kai analuein*

[134] This interpretation was first proposed by Burnet 1900: xxxiv-xxxv and 324-325. There are two variants of interpreting the geometrical construction. Some commentators consider the figure to be built to be a complex figure (e.g. an irregular polygon). One first needs to analyse it into its most basic components (triangles) in order to build such a figure (Cooper 1975: 20, Irwin 1985, Broadie and Rowe 2002). Others consider the figure to have certain properties: e.g. an isosceles triangle which has two equal sides. If one aims at constructing a triangle with two equal angles, the method of construction would be the following: one presupposes that such a triangle is the isosceles triangle (with two equal sides). Then, one should demonstrate that a triangle with two equal angles is the isosceles triangle. Once one has demonstrated this, it is easy to construct an isosceles triangle (Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 212, referring to Heath, *Mathematics in Aristotle*, Oxford, 1949, p. 270-272). But it seems that the method is the same: the initial figure is presupposed, and analysed into a further figure that one knows how to construct. Once one has found such a basic figure, one can start the construction of the more complex figure.

1112b20) a means to an end. This *zêtêsis* works recursively, by first supposing the end and then working out the means by which it is to be achieved. Aristotle uses the same terminology in order to speak of the search for the means in this context as when he considers the search for the cause (i.e. the middle term) in a theoretical context, as we saw in the previous section. Moreover, in order to elaborate on the recursive character of deliberation, he makes a comparison with a kind of investigation used in mathematics (*analusis*).

We have observed that so far Aristotle insists that the end considered by the person deliberating is given beforehand. It is not a part of the deliberation. This is another aspect which is underlined by the comparison with mathematics. It is perhaps not directly obvious in passages (19) and (20), but it is shown better in other passages in which Aristotle makes a similar point.

> 21) "It follows that no one deliberates about the end; this is rather the starting point and postulate, just like postulates in the theoretical sciences (we discussed these briefly at the beginning, and in detail in the *Analytics*)." *EE* II.10 1227a8-11
>
> περὶ μὲν τοῦ τέλους οὐθεὶς βουλεύεται, ἀλλὰ τοῦτ' ἐστιν ἀρχὴ καὶ ὑπόθεσις, ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς θεωρητικαῖς ἐπιστήμαις ὑποθέσεις (10) (εἴρηται δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἐν ἀρχῇ βραχέως, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀναλυτικοῖς δι' ἀκριβείας).

The recursive character of *zêtêsis* in both theoretical and practical thinking also implies that the starting point of the inquiry is presupposed. In order to ensure that the practical end is not considered in deliberation, Aristotle likens it to the 'postulates' (*hupotheseis*) of theoretical sciences. Practical ends are assumed in deliberation, as are the *hupotheseis* of a theoretical investigation (see also: *EN* 1151a15-19; *EE* 1227b28-30). Passage (21) also shows that speaking of *zêtêsis* and *hupothesis* in the theoretical case is not restricted to mathematics, but concerns other theoretical sciences as well (*en tais theôretikais epistêmais*).

Thus, deliberation has a structure similar to that of theoretical inquiry. In other words, the typical cognitive process of practical reason is modelled on the structure of theoretical inquiry. The latter works by supposing that a hypothesis is true and attempts to construct the demonstration that leads to it. Practical reason, on the other hand, supposes a practical end, a project that one wants to achieve, and then looks for the means that will realize this project. Of course, there are also differences between practical and theoretical *zêtêsis*. The most obvious is that they do not relate to the same kind of object. I shall tackle these differences in §3.4 of the present chapter. Before turning to these contrasts, I shall first extend the analogy

between theoretical and practical reason by examining the formal structure of the latter.

3.3.2 Practical thinking as an argument

I have just shown that the structure of deliberation in practical reason is modelled on the basis of theoretical inquiry. Now, if the analogy between both kinds of reason is expanded, it follows that practical thinking can also be described as having something like a deductive structure. Theoretical reason works on the basis of the *apodeixis*, which is a specific kind of deductive inference (*sullogismos*). Similarly, there are hints in the corpus that Aristotle's account of practical thinking somehow reproduces the deductive structure of *epistêmê*. The work of practical reason is sometimes related to a sort of 'syllogism' (*sullogismos*) (1142b22-23; 1144a31-32). Furthermore, practical reason relies on practical principles (*hai archai tôn praktôn* – *EN* 1140b16-17; *praktikai archai* 1144a34-35). And sometimes, Aristotle speaks of the premises (*tês heteras protaseôs* 1143b3) and 'conclusion' of practical reasoning (*sumperanthen EN* VII.3 1147a25-28). As *epistêmê* consists in a cognitive state stating a proposition deduced from premises, practical knowledge would in the same vein consist in a cognitive state issuing from a piece of deliberation and stating a proposition deduced from premises in its own '*practical*' way.

Scholars have sometimes interpreted Aristotle's use of syllogistic terminology in a practical context as evidence that he had the concept of a syllogism proper to practical reason. They claim that practical thinking itself has a deductive form, or even make the stronger claim that deliberation is of a deductive form (Greenwood 1909: 50-51; Joachim 1951: 208-210; Ando 1958: 221; Mele 1981: 282). In the middle of the 20th century, logicians attempted to develop a deontic logic on the basis of the putative doctrine of the practical syllogism of Aristotle (Von Wright 1963; Kalinowski 1972). However, we ought to be careful regarding the interpretation of practical reason as a 'practical syllogism'. The practical syllogism is a logical device which has been construed out of various sources by commentators (especially *EN* VII.3 and *MA* 7) even though there is no clear doctrine of a practical syllogism in Aristotle. Recently, it has been shown that the diverse passages which accordingly exemplified instances of the practical syllogism were in fact treating distinct subjects.[135]

[135] In particular, Corcilius 2008a holds that the practical argument of *EN* VI has nothing to do with the practical syllogism of *MA* 7. I agree with Corcilius on the general observation, but I do not follow him concerning the more specific analysis he makes concerning the function of the practical argument at *EN* VI and at *MA* 7. See §6.4.1.

In my view, if there is something like a practical syllogism in *EN* VI, it rather stands as a formal expression or representation of practical reasoning that can be represented as an *argument*. It is not the form of practical reasoning itself, even less the form of deliberation.[136] Moreover, nothing compels us to accept that this formal representation of practical thinking in *EN* VI is the same thing or has the same function than instances of a syllogistic-like structure in other passages of the Aristotelian corpus (in particular in the *De Motu Animalium*). I do not consider that there is one unified doctrine of the practical syllogism to be reconstructed from the Aristotelian corpus. Rather, I contend that Aristotle has used syllogistic terminology in a practical context on different occasions in order to point at various features of practical reasoning.[137]

In the rest of this chapter, I shall show how Aristotle introduces a description of practical reason as an argument. I shall also argue that this formalized expression of reasoning is not inconsistent with practical thinking as deliberation. The description of practical thinking as argument has a different purpose than the description of practical thinking as deliberation. These 'syllogistic' passages point at another feature of practical reason, namely the moral *evaluation* of decision. In other words, an episode of decision can be *justified* by reasons that are expressed in an argument. This decision can be said to be good or bad, right or wrong, according to the practical argument which backs up the decision.[138] Thus, the analogy between theoretical and practical reason is complete. For both modalities of rationality, Aristotle has an account of reason as an argument and as a process of thought. For the time being I shall restrict this account of the practical argument to *EN* VI only, without deriving this account from any material external to this book. I shall look for a confirmation of this view elsewhere in the corpus in chap. 6.

3.3.2.1 EN VI.9 1142b17-26

The first passage I want to look at deals with the correctness of practical reasoning. At *EN* VI.9, Aristotle is looking for a definition of good deliberation (*euboulia*). *Euboulia* is an essential component of *phronêsis*. Indeed, Aristotle claims that

[136] See Cooper (1975: 46-47) for the interpretation of the practical syllogism as the 'formal representation' of practical thinking; compare with Natali 2001: 67.

[137] More on this in chap. 6.

[138] I have argued above that Aristotle is more interested in explanation than in justification when it comes to *epistêmê*. However, here the purpose of the practical argument is indeed justification, more specifically *moral* justification. Moral justification differs from epistemic justification in that its aim is to account for the goodness or appropriateness of an action whereas the latter aims at providing conditions for knowledge to obtain. More on this below, §3.4.

the *ergon* of people who are *phronimoi* is to deliberate well (1140a25-26; 1141b9-10). Good deliberation is therefore defined as technically correct deliberation that results, moreover, in a morally good outcome (1142b32-33). The following passage makes a significant step in the argument leading to this definition:

> 22) "Since there are various kinds of correctness, it is clear that <good deliberation> is not every kind of correctness. For the unself-controlled, that is, the bad person will achieve by calculation what he proposes as required[139], so that, while he will have deliberated correctly, he will have gained a great evil. Having deliberated well, however, seems to be something good, since good deliberation is the kind of correctness in deliberation (*orthotês boulês*) which achieves something good. But it is also possible to achieve this [i.e. something good] through false reasoning (*sullogismos*), that is, to achieve what one should do, but not through the steps one should, the middle term (*meson horon*) being false. So this [i.e. this kind of correctness] is not yet good deliberation, when we achieve what one should do, but not through the steps one should." *EN* VI.9 1142b17-26
>
> ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ ὀρθότης πλεοναχῶς, δῆλον ὅτι οὐ πᾶσα· ὁ γὰρ ἀκρατὴς καὶ ὁ φαῦλος ὃ προτίθεται δεῖν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ τεύξεται, ὥστε ὀρθῶς ἔσται (20) βεβουλευμένος, κακὸν δὲ μέγα εἰληφώς. δοκεῖ δ' ἀγαθόν τι τὸ εὖ βεβουλεῦσθαι· ἡ γὰρ τοιαύτη ὀρθότης βουλῆς εὐβουλία, ἡ ἀγαθοῦ τευκτική. ἀλλ' ἔστι καὶ τούτου ψευδεῖ συλλογισμῷ τυχεῖν, καὶ ὃ μὲν δεῖ ποιῆσαι τυχεῖν, δι' οὗ δ' οὔ, ἀλλὰ ψευδῆ τὸν μέσον ὅρον εἶναι· ὥστ' οὐδ' (25)

[139] Reading "ὃ προτίθεται **δεῖν** ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ". I follow Jackson, Burnet and Gauthier by reading *dein*, and so do Crisp and Broadie & Rowe. This version is attested in some manuscripts. Bodéüs criticizes this kind of solution because it involves saying that the *akratês* would achieve what he intends to do. This goes precisely against Aristotle's characterization of the *akratês* as someone that does *not* manage to achieve what he intends to do but ends up following his desire instead (see e.g. *EN* VII.4 1148a4-11). However, as I argue in the following footnote (n. 140) I do not think that one ought to presuppose Aristotle's technical conception of the *akratês* in this passage. Some manuscripts have "ὃ προτίθεται **ἰδεῖν** ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ", which renders "For the *akratês* or/and the *phaulos* will achieve by calculation what he intends to see" But this solution is puzzling because of its meaning. Bodéüs retains the main version, but connects '*idein*' with '*teuxetai*' instead of '*protithetai*', thus rendering: "they manage to see what they intend" (Bodéüs 2004: 325, n. 1). This reading seems grammatically correct, but its meaning for the argument is of no help. How would *euboulia* not be achieved if the agent manages to *see* what he intends to do? Kenny and Inwood & Woolf, following Ross' emendation, have '*ei deinos*', thus translating 'For he will, *if he is clever*, attain his objective on the basis of reasoning'. However, I contend that Burnet and Gauthier's solution is better. It is attested in some manuscripts; it is more economical; it does not introduce the concept of *deinotês*, which is introduced in chapter 12 only; and, as Gauthier notes, it insists on the normativity of the moral claims the agents are attending to (Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 516).

> αὕτη πω εὐβουλία, καθ' ἣν οὗ δεῖ μὲν τυγχάνει, οὐ μέντοι δι' οὗ ἔδει.

In this passage, Aristotle notes that *euboulia* is not identical with every kind of correctness in deliberating (*orthotês boulês*). In order to make his point, he makes a first distinction between *euboulia* and a case of correct deliberation by invoking the case of the man lacking self-control (*akratês*), or rather with the bad or vicious man (*phaulos*).[140] This kind of person is said to deliberate correctly, for he achieves what he intends to do. However, his case does not count as a case of *euboulia*, because *euboulia* is conceived not only as technically good, but also as morally good. The correct deliberation of the *phaulos* however results in a great evil (*kakon de mega*). Aristotle does not elaborate further the kind of mistake that this individual commits. A plausible assumption is that he considers the wrong starting points, in particular, the wrong universal starting points about what is good or beneficial to do. More on this below.

Aristotle then draws a second distinction. He points at occasions when someone ends up doing a good action, although he has not reasoned correctly. In

[140] Here I believe that Aristotle is referring to one person only. The mention of the *akratês* should not be understood as a reference to Aristotle's technical treatment of *akrasia* of *EN* VII. Rather, Aristotle is probably being loose when speaking of the '*akratês kai phaulos*' character. At this point of the *EN*, Aristotle has not yet given an in-depth account of flawed characters such as the *akratês* or the *akolastos*. He will do so only in book VII. In the *EN*, there is no occurrence of *akrasia* before book VII where Aristotle is specific enough with his language to show that he means *akrasia* in a technical sense. Here, Aristotle tends rather to assimilate *akrasia* to other flaws without distinguishing them thoroughly. Even at the beginning of *EN* VII, Aristotle seems to be unsure about the nature of *akrasia*. He speaks of it as 'belonging to things base and blameworthy' (*tôn phaulôn kai psektôn* 1145b9). Only in the course of book VII will Aristotle provide an account of *akrasia* specific enough in order to show that the agent is doing what he does *in a reluctant way*, although he wishes he had done something else and regrets his deed afterwards. At 1151a24-25, concluding the chapters on *akrasia*, Aristotle concludes at last that the *akratês* character is not the same as the self-indulgent person (*akolastos*) by asserting that the former is better than the latter and 'not base unqualifiedly' (*oude phaulos haplôs*). That *akrasia* is not meant in a technical sense, apart from in book VII of the *EN*, holds of the *EE* as well. At *EE* 1223a37, in a passage where Aristotle discusses whether acting out of *epithumia* is voluntary or not, *akrasia* is simply assimilated to a kind of wickedness (*mochthêria*), while the *akratês* is described as someone who acts against his reason (*logismos*), following his desire (*epithumia*). Such a characterization does not involve specifying whether or not the *akratês* is acting according to his intention. At 1145b15-17 Aristotle mentions a current opinion that *akrasia* is nothing beyond *akolasia*, even though he also notes that this opinion is not shared by everyone. Thus, at 1142b18-19, one ought to understand the phrase 'ὁ γὰρ ἀκρατὴς καὶ ὁ φαῦλος' with an epexegetical *kai*, as meaning 'the *akratês*, or rather the bad person'. Aristotle seems merely to be using these terms loosely, in order to refer to non-virtuous people deprived of *euboulia*.

such cases, the agent has not reasoned 'through the steps one should' (*di'ou d'ou*). Aristotle refers to such a situation as 'achieving a good thing through wrong *sullogismos*' (*pseudei sullogismô*). Let us call this the 'simple deliberator' case, because it seems that we are dealing with someone who has failed in his deliberation. Compared to the case of the *phaulos*, this is, so to speak, the opposite situation. The simple deliberator achieves something good, whereas the *phaulos* does not, but the latter has deliberated correctly, in contrast to the former. Aristotle elaborates on the case of the simple deliberator by explaining that the 'middle term' is wrong (*pseudê ton meson horon einai*). That such a deliberation does not constitute *euboulia* is clear enough. Although it results in a morally good outcome, there was a mistake in the deliberation process itself (see also *EE* 1247b34ff.).

The simple deliberator does something good, but makes a mistake. What does this mistake consist in? Whether he began from a good starting point or not is irrelevant here. The action in question was apparently done incidentally (*tuchein*) and does thereby not reveal the character of the agent. If the agent was wicked and intended to cause harm, his deliberation was mistaken and he opted for an action that eventually turned out to be something good. If, on the contrary, the agent was a good person, he considered a good moral end as a starting point in his deliberation and intended to do something good as well. What might happen in both cases is that because of mistaken deliberation, the agent ends up performing an action which promotes a result which does not match with what he had in mind, but which is nevertheless a good thing. Alternatively, the agent might end up doing what he intended but through mistaken reasoning, that is, through an inconsistent piece of reasoning. The agent would then justify his good action invoking reasons that do in fact not promote the end intended.[141] I think all these scenarios are possible and the textual material at our disposal does not favour one interpretation over the other. What matters is that the mistaken element in the agent's deliberation does not concern either the starting point, or the actual result but what comes in-between, the 'middle term' (*meson horon*).

The terminology employed here reminds one very much of logical terminology. The simple deliberator carries out a false 'syllogism' (*sullogismos*). Moreover, '*meson horon*' is the term Aristotle uses in order to refer to the middle term of a syllogism (*APr* 25b35). This has incited commentators to see a hint at the practical syllogism (i.a. Allan 1955: 336). On this view, Aristotle means to say that the delib-

[141] For a similar interpretation, see Allen (forthcoming: 17), who speaks of 'a true conclusion from false premises'.

erating person would be mistaken about the middle term to use in his deliberation, thereby confirming that the kind of deliberation at stake here is syllogistic in form.

There has been a debate as to what the *meson horon* refers to. Scholars who wanted to deflate the bearing of the practical syllogism have attempted to show that the *meson horon* refers not to a step in the reasoning process, but to the actual *means* to the end, i.e. what the agent *actually* does in order to bring about the intended end.[142] Indeed, *meson horon* basically means 'middle term' without implying any further specific reference to the middle term of a syllogism. However, this interpretation does not consider the context adequately. The purpose of the passage is to state the conditions of correctness of good deliberation. If the *meson horon* is the means to the end, it is also the outcome of deliberation. But if the means that result from deliberation is 'false', as the text states, then the process of deliberation is altogether wrong and the text does not add any specific feature in stating the conditions of correctness of deliberation (see also Allen forthcoming: 16). Moreover, if *meson horon* here stands for the means to an end, the means being 'false' would mean either (1) that the chosen means is not conducive to the intended end, or (2) that the means is morally wrong. Yet if this is the case, then (1) implies that the end is eventually not achieved and thus that deliberation cannot be called 'correct' in any sense, which goes against the hypothesis (Hardie 1968: 242-242). The second case (2) implies that *meson* refers only to instrumental means, i.e. means whose actualization is external to the end intended, and that constitutive means are excluded. Otherwise, if *meson* also referred to constitutive means, the case would be inconsistent with the hypothesis. However, many performed actions that are *means* to a further end are in fact constitutive means, whose actualization is at the same time the actualization of the end in view. For instance, if the end I pursue is 'being just with my friends' and I am in a situation of sharing food with my friends, there is no way I can perform a wrong action in order to achieve a virtuous end. Sharing the food in equal parts is constitutive of my being just and this end cannot but be actualized by a virtuous means.[143]

On the other hand, the *meson horon* could refer to a step in the reasoning process. In this respect it has been interpreted as referring to the middle term of a practical syllogism. However, this reading is not compelling. The fact that Aristotle

[142] Corcilius 2008a: 257, who groups other accounts with him: Allan 1955: 336; Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 516; Broadie 1991: 225-232.

[143] More generally, a virtuous action must be chosen for its own sake (*EN* II.4 1105a31-32), which tends to show that most of our significant decided actions are in fact constitutive means rather than instrumental ones. More on the constitutive/instrumental distinction at §4.3.3.

is using a term borrowed from the technical vocabulary of syllogistic reasoning does not commit him to importing the whole structure of something like a practical syllogism. The *meson horon* could also very well refer to a step in the deliberative inquiry.[144] Nor does the occurrence of '*sullogismos*' commit us to a strong reading in terms of practical syllogism. '*Sullogismos*' can mean 'reasoning' in general without referring specifically to the syllogistic structure as developed in the *Prior Analytics* (See e.g. Hardie 1968, 243; Corcilius 2008a: 261)

For the time being, I shall leave it open as to how strictly one should understand Aristotle's use of syllogistic terminology in text (22).[145] The point I wish to make is rather that Aristotle seems to allude to something like a practical syllogism in a context where he is providing ways of *evaluating* practical reasoning. Once the action is accomplished, the agent can justify why he has done such and such a thing. Thus we can understand if there was something wrong in his action and what it was. In the case of the deliberation of a *phaulos* man, we shall understand that what the agent intends (*protithetai*), i.e. the end this person considers bringing about, is not something good. We could for instance confront a Callicles-like person who believes that happiness consists in being the strongest. If we ask him: 'why did you humiliate Socrates?', he would perhaps answer something like: 'because happiness consists in dominating others'. This proposition is the mistaken starting point which explains the wickedness of the person's action and the flaw in his deliberation. In the case of a simple deliberator, by contrast, the error consists in that a step in his deliberation towards the achievement of a good action is incorrect. Consider a case where I want to be good to dogs, but some people have told me that dogs love beating, so that I believe this, albeit mistakenly. When I beat my dog, it happens that I am quite weak and that consequently my dog feels petted rather than beaten. Thus, I actually realize the end I intended by the correct means. However, my deliberation was wrong, because one of its premises is wrong.

I believe that, along these lines, Aristotle is developing a structure of evaluation of practical reason, and in particular of practical knowledge. He spots the elements in practical reason that enable us to determine the virtuous or flawed character of the agent. These elements are in fact pieces of practical reasoning that might be construed as an *argument* in order to justify the agent's decision or action. This

[144] This seems to be Inwood & Woolfe's reading of the passage; see also Allen forthcoming: 15-16.

[145] More precisely, I believe that Aristotle only makes an allusive reference to something like the practical syllogism, because he has not thought all the way through the problem of what this structure should look like, and most importantly, whether it is the same logical structure as that of *MA* 7. I shall propose a definitive answer to this matter at §6.4.

argument might be assimilated to a sort of 'practical syllogism' and Aristotle does in fact call this structure '*sullogismos*'. However, this does not commit him to projecting the more elaborate logical structure of the syllogism of the *Analytics* onto the ethical case. Aristotle could be making a mere analogy between the logical syllogism and the practical argument, insisting only on some features, without transposing the whole structure.

Now if this interpretation is correct, there is an interesting parallel between the structure of theoretical and practical reason. I want to anticipate a little bit the final results of this chapter. We have seen that theoretical reason is best exemplified in states of *epistêmê*, i.e. in states of knowledge containing a proposition along with its explanatory principles. However, I have also shown that such states obtain at the end of a heuristic process of inquiry, *zêtêsis* or *skepsis*. *Epistêmê* is not the method by which one discovers scientific claims. It is rather a way to uncover and structure scientific knowledge in an organized way, which accounts for the truth and necessity of the relevant claims. Similarly, we find both ways of describing practical reason. Practical thinking consists in a process of inquiry which Aristotle calls deliberation (*bouleusis*) and which is an inquiry into the right means to a given end. Now, my reading of text (22) shows that practical thinking can be described in another way. Practical thinking can be *evaluated* in the form of a practical argument. One can account for the outcome of one's practical thinking by referring to the reasons why one has done such and such an action. Practical reason can therefore be construed as an argument, which enables one to evaluate the correctness of one's decision.

Before I can argue properly for this result, I would like to elaborate the notion of 'practical argument' a little bit. There are two other passages in *EN* VI that help completing my interpretation and thereby confirm it.

3.3.2.2 EN VI.12 1144a31-b1

The other passage of the *EN* where the term '*sullogismos*' is found is in *EN* VI.12. This passage occurs in a context where Aristotle wants to show that one cannot be *phronimos* unless one is at the same time virtuous in character (and he will argue for the converse as well in *EN* VI.13).[146] In order to make his point, Aristotle imagines a faculty akin to *phronêsis*, which he calls *deinotês*. The person gifted with *deinotês*, the *deinos*, is similar to the *phronimos* in the sense that he is able to achieve

[146] I offer an extensive reading of the whole argument at §4.4.2.

whatever goal he has set for himself.[147] However, the *deinos* agent differs from the *phronimos* in that the nature of the goal is indifferent to him. He can follow whatever goal he likes. This makes the *phronimos* look like a *deinos* person who aims at the good. There is also a vile counterpart of the *phronimos*, whom Aristotle calls *panourgos* (villainous, unscrupulous) and who is a *deinos* person following evil purposes. Aristotle's subsequent argument for the necessity of virtue for the *phronimos* runs as follows:

> 23) "And the proper condition of this eye of the soul [i.e. *phronêsis*] does not obtain without virtue, as has been said and as is clear. For syllogisms concerned with practical things have a principle (*archê*): 'Since the end or what is best is such-and-such', whatever it is (let it be anything you like (*to tuchon*) for the sake of argument). And this is not apparent, except to the good person, since wickedness distorts a person and causes him to be deceived about the principles of actions. Manifestly, then, it is impossible to be *phronimos* without being good." *EN* VI.12 1144a29-b1
>
> ἡ δ' ἕξις τῷ (30) ὄμματι τούτῳ γίνεται τῆς ψυχῆς οὐκ ἄνευ ἀρετῆς, ὡς εἴρηταί τε καὶ ἔστι δῆλον· οἱ γὰρ συλλογισμοὶ τῶν πρακτῶν ἀρχὴν ἔχοντές εἰσιν, ἐπειδὴ τοιόνδε τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, ὁτιδήποτε ὄν (ἔστω γὰρ λόγου χάριν τὸ τυχόν)· τοῦτο δ' εἰ μὴ τῷ ἀγαθῷ, οὐ φαίνεται· διαστρέφει γὰρ ἡ (35) μοχθηρία καὶ διαψεύδεσθαι ποιεῖ περὶ τὰς πρακτικὰς ἀρχάς. ὥστε φανερὸν ὅτι ἀδύνατον φρόνιμον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα (1144b) ἀγαθόν.

The 'proper condition' (*hexis*) of *phronêsis* involves performing good actions non-incidentally, as stated in the definition of *phronêsis* (1140b4-6, text 12), which implies taking good decisions. Thus, *phronêsis* aims at good ends (unlike *deinotês*), since an action that has been decided on depends on a certain end. However, good ends are apparent to the good person (*ho agathos*) alone, i.e. to the one with character virtue. Hence *phronêsis* involves character virtue.[148] While developing his argument, Aristotle is careful to use a syllogistic terminology in order to describe the end in play in practical reasoning. He refers to the end of practical reason as the *archê* of "syllogisms concerned with practical things" (*hoi sullogismoi tôn praktôn*). He elaborates on what this *archê* consists in by providing an example: "since the end or what is best is such-and-such". The pronoun *toionde* stands for a qualitative proper-

[147] 1144a24-25: τὰ πρὸς τὸν ὑποτεθέντα σκοπὸν συντείνοντα δύνασθαι ταῦτα πράττειν καὶ τυγχάνειν αὐτοῦ.

[148] This is a crucial implication of Aristotle's moral psychology. What enables the good person to see the correct end is not his intellectual abilities but his moral character (see *EN* III.4; VI.5 1140b16-21). Of course, there is much to say about this assertion (I shall come back to it at §4.3.2), but for the time being I want to point out another feature of the text.

ty. It is usually taken to refer to an action type expressed propositionally.[149] The kind of proposition supplying the *archê* would then be 'since the end/what is best is 'being nice to my friends', or 'sharing equally', etc.' In other words, in order to express what the goal of the person is, Aristotle invokes logical terminology and even provides an exemplification of the end in a propositional form.

Now, I contend that this passage is very much like the case of the *phaulos* deliberator we have seen in passage (22). It is obvious that by the '*archê*' of such pieces of reasoning Aristotle is referring to the same thing as when he spoke of "what [the agent] proposes as appropriate" (*ho protithetai dein*). In passage (22), the *phronimos* differs from the *phaulos* by the fact that he aims only at morally right principles, whereas the latter tends towards things that are morally wrong. And in passage (23), the *phronimos* differs from the *deinos* and the *panourgos* because he has access to the correct starting points, whereas the others have distorted moral insights. Aristotle is making the same point but for a different purpose. In passage (22), he uses the difference between the *phronimos* and the *phaulos* in order to show the specificity of *euboulia*, whereas in passage (23), he wants to show that the virtue of the practical, rational part of the soul depends on the virtue of the desiderative, non-rational, part of the soul. This passage confirms therefore that when referring to occurrences of moral ends as part of a kind of *sullogismos* Aristotle is in fact assuming a framework for the evaluation of practical thinking. The agent uses as starting point a proposition of the form 'since the end, i.e. what is best is such-and-such'. When applied to the *panourgos* of *EN* VI.12, this reveals the moral nature of his action. The *panourgos* holds a proposition of the form: 'If the end, i.e. what is best is making as much money as possible', and uses it as a starting point. In his deliberation, he probably goes on with something like 'I ought to steal from people'.

Again, the occurrence of syllogistic vocabulary in passage (23) has caused a great deal of puzzlement, especially because the *sullogismoi tôn praktôn* is the phrase of the whole Aristotelian corpus that most closely resembles 'practical syllogism'. Greenwood identifies the phrase without hesitation as referring to the practical syllogism (Greenwood 1909: 9-10). However, as in the case of the previous occurrence of *sullogismos*, there is not enough material in order to infer that Aristotle has in mind a precise concept such as that of the practical syllogism.

The interpretation of texts (22) and (23) as providing conditions for the evaluation of practical thought is also confirmed in *EN* VI.7-8. In my view, these chapters in fact contain Aristotle's central account of the conditions for the good exercise

[149] See e.g. Natali 2001: 69; Broadie & Rowe 2002: 382; Moss 2012: 195; 224, n. 41. Moreover, *toionde* stands for a specific end, not for a general one (*pace* Kenny 1979: 150). I shall comment more on this at §4.3.3.

of practical thought. In other words, Aristotle develops a framework for the evaluation of practical reason.

3.3.2.3 EN VI.7-8 (Bekker EN *VI.8-9)*

At the end of *EN* VI.7, after he has introduced *sophia* as the theoretical virtue of the rational soul, Aristotle comes back to his account of *phronêsis* by contrasting it with *sophia* (1141b8 onwards). The first lines of this section are a restatement of points made earlier about a common approximation of *phronêsis*, namely that *phronêsis* involves good deliberation and that it is concerned by contingent things only (1141b8-14). Then, Aristotle carries on with an in-depth account of *phronêsis*.

> 24) " Nor is *phronêsis* about universals only; one should also know the particulars. For *phronêsis* is practical (*praktikê*) and action (*praxis*) is about particulars. That is why some people who do not have <universal> knowledge are more effective (*praktikôteroi*) than others who have knowledge – something that holds especially of experienced people. If someone knows that light meats are easily digestible and so healthy, but not what sorts of meat are light, then he will not produce health, but the one who knows that meat from birds is light[150] and so healthy will produce health more. And since *phronêsis* is practical, one needs both <kinds of knowledge>, but especially this one" *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23
>
> οὐδ' ἐστὶν ἡ φρόνησις τῶν (15) καθόλου μόνον, ἀλλὰ δεῖ καὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα γνωρίζειν· πρακτικὴ γάρ, ἡ δὲ πρᾶξις περὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα. διὸ καὶ ἔνιοι οὐκ εἰδότες ἑτέρων εἰδότων πρακτικώτεροι, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις οἱ ἔμπειροι· εἰ γὰρ εἰδείη ὅτι τὰ κοῦφα εὔπεπτα κρέα καὶ ὑγιεινά, ποῖα δὲ κοῦφα ἀγνοοῖ, οὐ ποιήσει ὑγί(20) ειαν, ἀλλ' ὁ εἰδὼς ὅτι τὰ ὀρνίθεια [κοῦφα καὶ] ὑγιεινὰ ποιήσει μᾶλλον. ἡ δὲ φρόνησις πρακτική· ὥστε δεῖ ἄμφω ἔχειν, ἢ ταύτην μᾶλλον.

This passage occurs at the end of chapter 7 of book VI, at least if one follows Zell's division into chapters. But according to Bekker's way of dividing the books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it constitutes the beginning of chapter 8. I tend to prefer this division here, because of the thematic unity it provides with Bekker's chapter 9 (although in itself the division into chapters, being a late addition to the text, is not

[150] Bywater in the OCT has emended κοῦφα καὶ following Trendelenburg and Rassow because they thought that Aristotle is here giving an example of the practical syllogism (For a complete explanation, see Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 497). This reading is not accepted nowadays and I follow the mainstream reading, seeing no reason to emend the text.

significant).[151] This assumption about the organization of the text provides a key to understanding its argumentative structure. Essential parts of Bekker's chapters 8 and 9 concern points of contrast between *sophia* and *phronêsis*. More specifically, an opposition is drawn between *phronêsis* and both components of *sophia*, namely *epistêmê* and *nous* (see 1141a18-20). First, Aristotle tackles the contrast between *phronêsis* and *epistêmê* (1141b14-1142a25)[152], and then he turns to that of *phronêsis* and *nous* (1142a25-30) (See Engberg Pedersen 1983: 204).[153]

The features contrasting *phronêsis* and *epistêmê* are all based on the special connection of *phronêsis* with the particulars. First, contrary to *epistêmê*, *phronêsis* involves not only knowledge of universals, but also a sort of knowledge of particulars (1141b14-16). Aristotle then elaborates on the concept of experience (*empeiria*) (1142a11-20 Zell's chap. 8/Bekker's chap. 9). *Phronêsis* depends on experience when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge of the particulars mentioned at 1141b18. Theoretical science is not concerned with particulars, or at least not in the same way.[154] Next, Aristotle shows that *phronêsis* also differs from *epistêmê* in that it can be wrong in a further aspect than its theoretical counterpart. Error might consist either in the universal or in the particular (1142a20-23). Finally, Aristotle concludes the confrontation between *phronêsis* and *epistêmê*:

> 25) "Thus, that *phronêsis* is not the same as *epistêmê* is obvious. For *phronêsis* is concerned with what comes last (*to eschaton*), as has been said.[155] For the object of action is such [i.e. something that comes last]" *EN* VI.8 1142a23-25
>
> ὅτι δ' ἡ φρόνησις οὐκ ἐπιστήμη, φανερόν· τοῦ γὰρ ἐσχάτου ἐστίν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται· (25) τὸ γὰρ πρακτὸν τοιοῦτον.

[151] On the two ways to divide the books of the *EN* into chapters, see my introductory note, p. 14.

[152] There is an extra bit of text that cuts in the progression between 1141b22 and 1142a11; see text (16). Aristotle seems to reorient the discussion on a political level. However commentators generally agree that 1142a11 follows thematically 1141b22 (see Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 502).

[153] I shall come back to the contrast between *phronêsis* and *nous* at §5.2.2.

[154] There is a difference between sciences whose objects are accessible through abstraction (*di'aphaireseôs* a18), like mathematics, and sciences whose objects are known through experience, like physics. Yet, this feature of empirical theoretical science is different from the relation of *phronêsis* to the particulars. What physics acquire through experience are the starting points (*archai*), not the particular. Roughly speaking, *phronêsis* is not engaged with experience the way theoretical sciences are, when they are. For a more detailed discussion of this passage, see §5.3.1.

[155] 'What comes last' (*to eschaton*) in this context is identical with the particular (*kath'hekaston*) *pace* Cooper 1975: 37. Aristotle's clarification that *phronêsis* is concerned with *to eschaton*, as has been said, refers to 1141b14-16, where he was speaking of the particular.

Thus, in my view, *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23 (text 24), which, according to Bekker, constitutes the beginning of chapter 8, introduces a fundamental difference between theoretical and practical thought, namely the connection of the latter with particulars. According to Bekker's division into chapters, the rest of *EN* VI.8-9 is a list of comments on this crucial distinction.

I shall come back to a more careful reading of text (24) in chap. 4, especially as regards the assertion that knowledge of particulars makes one 'more practical' (§4.4.2). The relation between *phronêsis* and experience will occupy a good deal of chapter 5. The point I am interested in here is that, according to Aristotle, practical thought can be evaluated in terms of an *argument*. On this reading of chapters 8-9 (following Bekker's division), the point of contrast between *phronêsis* and *epistêmê* relevant for my concern is the third one, namely the specification of the conditions of error with respect to deliberation:

> 26) "Also, error in deliberation can be either about the universal or about the particular; for example, in holding either that all samples of heavy water are bad, or that this [i.e. this sample of water] is heavy." 1142a20-23
>
> (20) ἔτι ἡ ἁμαρτία ἢ περὶ τὸ καθόλου ἐν τῷ βουλεύσασθαι ἢ περὶ τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον· ἢ γὰρ ὅτι πάντα τὰ βαρύσταθμα ὕδατα φαῦλα, ἢ ὅτι τοδὶ βαρύσταθμον.

It seems clear that Aristotle is referring here to the kinds of knowledge of universals and particulars he identified at 1141b14-16.[156] From the latter passage, we know that displaying *phronimos* behaviour implies to be endowed with two distinct types of knowledge. One is about something universal and the other about something particular. Now, passage (26) tells us that one may be mistaken according to either of these kinds of knowledge. Even more, Aristotle bothers to signal that these are conditions of error *in deliberation* (*en tô bouleusasthai*) when he is referring to kinds of knowledge that are required for *phronêsis*. This seems to confirm that practical thought can be described in two distinct ways: as deliberation or in a formal way. *Phronêsis* depends on both kinds of knowledge and mistakes about these might occur within a process of deliberation.

It is also hard to resist the temptation to connect this passage with *EN* VI.9 1142b17-26 (text 22), on the kind of correctness of *euboulia*. As we have already seen, correctness in good deliberation depends on two components which seem to refer

[156] It is so obvious that Ramsauer and Susemihl thought that text (26) makes the same point than 1141b14-16; See Gauthier 1970: 503. Natali implicitly agrees that the terms universal and particular refer to the same thing in both passages (Natali 2001: 84).

to kinds of knowledge bearing on universals and particulars. On the one hand, one ought to pursue a morally good end; on the other hand, one also go through the correct steps when deliberating. These two components would then be equivalent to a universal and a particular content of practical reasoning respectively. This reading has been accepted by scholars who suppose that practical thinking, or even deliberation, has a syllogistic form.[157] It allegedly shows that deliberation is composed of a universal premise and of a particular one. However, once again, nothing justifies this strong association with the practical syllogism. By contrast, my reading dissociates deliberation as the main form of practical thinking from the practical argument as a formal representation of practical thought, the purpose of which is precisely to evaluate the correctness of deliberation. In the rest of this section, I shall sketch out how knowledge or ignorance of each component of practical thought matters for the evaluation of decision. In chap. 4 and 5, I shall argue in more detail for these points.

In the case of knowledge of universals, the equivalence between texts (22) and (26) seems to be pretty straightforward. The deliberator of text (22) considers a moral end he ought to achieve. This moral end can be wrong, for instance in the case of the villain (*phaulos*), who pursues bad purposes. This end is described as a universal evaluative proposition 'since the end, i.e. what is best is such and such' (text 23). I assume that in text (26) Aristotle refers to the same kind of proposition, namely universal evaluative proposition that expresses the moral end which the agent is pursuing. Thus, text (26) tells us that this kind of universal normative principle can be 'false', i.e. morally wrong. What the *phaulos* proposes as appropriate corresponds to a false proposition exemplifying a universal content. I shall come back to the correspondence between one's knowledge of moral ends and universal propositions at §4.3.

In the case of knowledge about particulars, we need to elaborate the equivalence a little bit. Being mistaken about the particular would mean the same as 'having the false middle term' (text 22). Considering Aristotle's own examples might help in making sense of such an equivalence. At 1141b14-23, when he argues that *phronêsis* involves both knowledge of universals and particulars, he considers as an example of a universal proposition 'light meats are easily digestible and so healthy', and as an example of a particular proposition 'meat from birds is light'.[158] Aristotle

[157] Greenwood 1909: 50-51; Joachim 1951: 208-210; Ando 1958: 221; Mele 1981: 282.

[158] Note that the 'particular' proposition is not even particular in form. Aristotle seems to correct this problem in the next example 'this is heavy' at 1142a22-23. However this shows that the meaning of *kath'hekaston* is not clear in this context. My position is that what counts as a 'particular' is a proposition that is connected with the particular situation of the agent.

does not offer any instance of practical reasoning in this context. However one can construct the following case. Suppose that I am feeling weak, and I am working out a way to strengthen my body. Among other considerations in my deliberation, I come to the conclusion that I should eat chicken. Thus, I can reformulate my deliberation in the following way:

> Light meat is healthy
> Poultry is light meat
> I should eat poultry

The conclusion of my deliberation is a decision (*proairesis*), and on the basis of it I can engage in the action described, namely eating poultry. Note that strictly speaking the argument is invalid. The conclusion that follows logically from the premises is 'poultry is healthy', not 'I should eat poultry'. In order to have the wished for conclusion, one ought to supply further premises, and moreover premises that at some point import a prescriptive element (e.g. 'I should eat something healthy'). Furthermore, even if one grants the wished for conclusion, it still does not amount to a particular decision such as 'I should do this here and now'. The wished for conclusion is rather a general prompting towards a type of action. However, I contend that these formal aspects are not relevant for the point Aristotle is making here. He is not concerned with developing a consistent account of practical reasoning that ought to explain practical logic and the causation of action. Rather, what matters here is merely the evaluation of practical thought in cognitive terms. The argument constructed here, although invalid, is relevant because it provides sufficient justification for a decision. If someone were to ask me why I have eaten, say, chicken, or why I have decided to eat chicken, answering '*because* poultry is light meat', or '*because* light meat is healthy' would be a perfectly sound justification.[159]

Now suppose that someone provides me with further information by telling me that deep fried turkey is poultry. I shall then be able to pursue my deliberation. The argument will thus go:

> Poultry is healthy
> Deep fried turkey is poultry
> I should eat deep fried turkey

Yet this *kath'hekaston* can be either universal or particular in form. I defend this position at §4.4.2.

[159] The question of the validity of a practical argument will be raised in chap. 6 concerning the case of *akrasia*. There I shall argue that an akratic agent has a valid argument justifying what he thinks he should do, yet this argument is not strong enough, because it lacks supporting premises between the major premise and the conclusion.

Even in the loose logical framework I am considering here, it seems obvious that the above argument is invalid in a different way than the previous one. The argument is not valid because the term 'poultry' in each premise does not refer to the same set of items. In the universal premise, 'poultry' refers to general poultry meat, whereas in the particular premise, 'poultry' refers to a more specific set of items, that of poultry meat cooked in a specific way. Thus, the conclusion does not follow because the middle term 'poultry' in each premise does not have the same reference. Another way to look at it is to consider the major premise as a general rule. However this rule holds only *for the most part*. Poultry is in general healthy. The minor constitutes in fact an exception to the rule. A whole turkey that has been deep-fried is not healthy.

This is how I understand Aristotle when he speaks of being mistaken about the middle term. Being mistaken about the middle term is expressed as the mistaken proposition that attributes 'healthy' to 'fried turkey'. What matters here is that the particular proposition is false, because what is meant in the universal premise is not the same as in the particular one. The agent was not able to apply the middle term correctly.

In order to make this point better, let us consider a moral example. Think of Socrates in the *Gorgias* who enjoins Polus to punish himself or his friends if he or they have committed an unjust deed (*Gorgias* 480c). Common sense would rather have it that one should treat one's friends justly. Plato's reasoning could then be formulated as follows:

> One should be just with one's friends
> Punishing is being just
> I should punish my friends

If Polus accepts this argument, he will commit a mistake in identifying 'punishing' as an instance of being just. It might be the case that in some circumstances the conclusion is true. However, most of the time, the meaning of 'just' in the major and in the minor are not the same. In this situation, Polus was not able to identify the relevant particular correctly. In other words, his grasp of the particular is wrong.

Thus, practical reason depends on two main conditions for its correctness. First the universal principle followed must be 'true', i.e. must be morally good. The *phaulos*, on the contrary, does not deliberate well because he is not attending a morally good principle. Second, the particulars considered in the course of deliberation must be true. The simple deliberator achieves a good end, but does not do so by considering relevant features of the situation.

To sum up, in book VI, Aristotle describes the conditions for correct practical thinking. Practical thinking consists in a deliberative process that aims at finding out the means towards a given end. Practical thinking results in a decision to act, the content of which represents the action to be performed (the means), as well as the end for the sake of which the action is done. Once a decision has been reached, it is also possible to evaluate it morally. The content of a decision can be formalized as an argument (for a similar interpretation, see Natali 2001: 66-67). Aristotle shows this by using logical terminology and by calling this argument a '*sullogismos*' twice. This confirms that there is a parallel structure between theoretical and practical reason. Theoretical knowledge, that is – in this case – *epistêmê*, is a cognitive state which presupposes a deductive argument. Coming to the assertion of knowledge in this form requires a process of inquiry which searches for the missing link, the *cause*, that explains the belief asserted in the episode of *epistêmê*. Similarly, practical knowledge consists in a cognitive state whose content is a virtuous decision that has been reached through a process of deliberation. Such a state presupposes that the person deciding is connecting it with *reasons*, i.e. that he has formed a kind of *argument* that justifies the decision taken.

If my claim about *EN* VI.8-9 (following Bekker's division) is right, namely that these chapters contain a theory on the evaluation of practical reason, it should then provide a framework which is pretty much complete, i.e. able to account for a variety of flaws in practical reason.[160] This framework seems to account in a satis-

[160] That this account is complete seems to be confirmed by a text from the *Politics*:

> "There are two things in which all well-being consists: one of them is in positing correctly the goal and end of actions, and the other in discovering the actions which are conducive of the end; for these things may agree or disagree with one another. For sometimes the goal is finely set up, but in acting they fail to achieve it; in other cases they succeed in all the things conducive to the end, but the end they have posited was bad; and sometimes they fail in both." *Pol.* 1331b26-34
>
> ἐπεὶ δὲ δύ' ἐστὶν ἐν οἷς γίγνεται τὸ εὖ πᾶσι, τούτοιν δ' ἐστὶν ἓν μὲν ἐν τῷ τὸν σκοπὸν κεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ τέλος τῶν πράξεων ὀρθῶς, ἓν δὲ τὰς πρὸς τὸ τέλος φερούσας πράξεις εὑρίσκειν· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ ταῦτα καὶ διαφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις καὶ συμφωνεῖν· ἐνίοτε γὰρ ὁ μὲν σκοπὸς ἔκκειται καλῶς, ἐν δὲ τῷ πράττειν τοῦ τυχεῖν αὐτοῦ διαμαρτάνουσιν, ὁτὲ δὲ τῶν μὲν πρὸς τὸ τέλος πάντων ἐπιτυγχάνουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ τέλος ἔθεντο φαῦλον, ὁτὲ δὲ ἑκατέρου διαμαρτάνουσιν.

factory way for defaults such as moral wickedness (*mochthêria*) and simple-mindedness.[161]

A further appeal of this reading of *EN* VI.8-9 (following Bekker's division) is that it provides a coherent structure to the second part of book VI of the Common Books. The second part of *EN* VI often gives the impression of being a collection of remarks that have been randomly put together.[162] On the contrary, the hypothesis that practical knowledge is an argument that accompanies *proairesis* provides a backbone for the rest of the book, until *EN* VI.12-13 where Aristotle tackles other issues.

3.4 Structural differences between practical and theoretical thought

So far, I have insisted a lot on the similarities between the two kinds of thought, especially concerning their respective structures. I have characterized the relationship between *phronêsis* and deliberation as analogical to the relationship between *epistêmê* and scientific inquiry. In both kinds of thought, we can distinguish two ways of describing their activity. Either one focuses on reasoning as an actual process in the soul, which is typically scientific inquiry in the case of theoretical thinking, and deliberation in the practical case, or one focuses on the outcome of each kind of thinking. In the theoretical case, the outcome of theoretical thinking is *epistêmê*, i.e. the exposition of a scientific claim explained by its proper cause, while in the practical case, the outcome is a decision to act in a certain way, which is backed up by reasons.

In doing so, I have presupposed the most obvious differences between theoretical and practical thought. First, there is a difference of object. As has been mentioned at § 2.4.2, theoretical investigation has universal regularities as its proper object, whereas practical deliberation has contingent, particular states of affairs as its object. There is of course a difference in function: theoretical reason aims at *theôria*, whereas practical reason aims at action, i.e. at changing the way the world is. There also is obviously a difference in psychological basis, as was implied when the notion of practical truth was introduced. Theoretical thought is evaluated in terms of being true or false in a simple sense, namely when what is asserted is confirmed or informed by what is the case. By contrast, practical thought is evaluated

[161] What is missing in this account is a more complete explanation on the relationship between universal and the particular premise. I shall tackle this question in my account of *akrasia* and *enkrateia* in chap. 6.

[162] Allan 1952: 182-183; Hardie 1968: 212; according to Natali 2014: 184, the apparent lack of structure in book VI is especially perceptible at the end of *EN* VI.8.

along two axes. First, practical thought can be true or false in the same, cognitive, sense as theoretical knowledge, but it is also correct or incorrect in terms of desires. While these differences are significant and deserve an in-depth treatment, I shall leave them aside in order to discuss a further contrast.

This contrast consists in a difference in structure between practical and theoretical thought. Although both scientific inquiry and deliberation are kinds of *zêtêsis*, their structure is different. In deliberation, the agent seeks a way to implement the end in the present situation. He starts his inquiry from the starting point (i.e. the practical goal he aims at) and by confronting it to an actual situation, he comes to a conclusion which takes the form of a decision to act. To put it in the logical terms of the practical argument, the premises are already known and what is looked for is the conclusion. Thus, the agent is looking for *how* to achieve the end. What is presupposed in this case, i.e. the *hypothesis*, is the end. By contrast, theoretical inquiry aims at answering the question 'why?' The theoretical thinker starts with a definite state of affairs he wishes to explain and then looks for its cause. The *hupothesis* here is the conclusion, whereas the inquirer searches for the middle term and thus attempts to spell out the premises of a demonstration (See Broadie 1991: 228). That both structures are different is also clear when one tries to apply scientific inquiry to a practical case, as is shown by Natali: "analysis in the theoretical case would consist in positing a given good and looking for showing that this good is indeed good by invoking a starting points or a superior good whose goodness is already known (mathematical analysis by Pappus)" (Natali 2001: 82). By contrast, deliberation posits a good as an end and then looks for a specification of it which is immediately achievable (the *how*). Take the statement 'I ought to honour my parents' as a starting points. The deliberator is looking for something which will enable him to honour his parents. This can take various forms. He can go buy them flowers or give a speech in their honour. What he does not look for in his deliberation is an explanation of why he ought to honour his parents.

Thus the theoretical thinker starts with the proposition he wants to explain, i.e. the *hupothesis* is the conclusion. He presupposes the result and arrives at an explanation of this state of affairs. The cause enters into a deductive relationship with the *explanandum*. The deliberator starts with his own *hupothesis* of an end he wants to achieve. The end is presupposed and he discovers means by which this end is to be achieved.

This difference in structure has led some scholars to think that deliberation has nothing to do with the practical syllogism. Broadie claims that her version of the practical argument, which is non-deductive, sums up deliberation:

> "[seeing a choice] concludes the deliberation by installing that action (the concept of it) into position in the first premiss of a causal argument whose conclusion represents the once problematic starting points. For the practical inquirer is now in possession of this: 'Since (because) I will do A (or: by doing A), I shall realise Q in E, and therefore P in D, and therefore O in C. [...] the practical argument premises a cause in the sense of the 'How?' of a state of affairs not yet in existence." (Broadie 1991: 229)

Corcilius has a similar account. According to him, the structure of deliberative thinking is hypothetical. He founds his claim on the fact that Aristotle's examples of practical thinking have the form of a hypothetical necessity (Corcilius 2008a: 252-255). Hence, my claim that decision contains a moral justification of an action in terms of reasons to act would be mistaken. Deliberation would be directed at finding out the correct decision, but not at providing reasons to act.

I think that this opposition to an interpretation of the practical argument as the moral justification of decision is actually directed against the deductive form of practical thinking. Opponents of a deductive argument want to deny any relevance of the practical syllogism in this area of Aristotle's moral psychology. They certainly fear an assimilation of deliberation to a deductive process of thinking. Consequently, they hold that the practical syllogism is rather associated with the question of the causation of action (Corcilius 2008a). Aristotle's description of deliberation at *EN* III.3 seems to support their claim. I agree with them to the extent that the structure of deliberation as a *process* of thinking is not deductive in form. Natali argues convincingly that the logical structure of deliberation is not the same as that of the justification of an action (Natali 2001: 46-48). Moral justification takes the form of a teleological explanation by invoking the final cause: 'Why did you do ϕ?' – 'In order to realize end E.' What the agent is looking for is a middle term (nevertheless, this kind of investigation is still not scientific inquiry, because it does not account for the action in terms of a non-accidental higher cause). By contrast, deliberation is a search for the how.

However, one should not infer from this point that the practical argument as a justification of decision has nothing to do with practical thought. Here the comparison with theoretical reason is useful again. Even though *epistêmê* depends on a deductive argument, this does not mean that theoretical thought is deductive in form. The distinction between a process of inquiry and a form of exposition is clear. The *zêtêsis* which is a search for the cause has no definite logical form. It is rather an inquiry that operates on the basis of trial and error, making hypotheses and looking for a way to confirm or deny them. Once the correct answer has been found, the process of *zêtêsis* also provides the reasons why the fact to explain is so and so. The

investigation uncovers the causes, which then enter into the deductive structure of the *apodeixis*. I believe that the same must be true in the practical case. Even though deliberation is not deductive in form and need not be identified with the practical syllogism, it reveals the reasons why the agent ends up deciding to do such and such an action. Once the correct decision has been reached, the agent is able to account for it in an appropriate way (if his deliberation was a good one, of course).

I believe that using an argument akin to a deduction makes sense in the context of practical knowledge, because of the framework it provides for the moral evaluation of decision. My view is that the subject matter of *EN* VI.7-9 is not the same as deliberation in *EN* III.3. What interests Aristotle in *EN* VI is not the process of finding out *how*, but the question of the correctness of decision, that is, of determining when a piece of practical reasoning is right or wrong, and thus virtuous or not. Aristotle is interested in the question *why* because he states the conditions of correctness of practical reason. He is interested in *phronêsis* because it is the virtue which enables one to make the morally right decision. And the *phronimos* knows that what he is doing is the best thing to do, *because* he has reasons that justify his decision. He knows *how,* but he also knows *why*. Acting virtuously requires us not only to perform an action with virtuous consequences, it also requires us to do it with the right disposition, i.e. it requires us to understand why the action is virtuous and to do it for its own sake (see *EN* II.4 1105a26-33). Furthermore, as I shall show in the next chapter, the content of decision includes a description of the end (*EE* II.10 1226a7-13). The outcome of deliberation is not merely the description of a particular action which states *how* the agent is going to achieve a given end. The decision involves a description of the end, and this means that the agent has a notion of *why* he plans to perform such and such an action.

If practical thought were to consist solely in deliberation, which has a non-deductive form, and presumably a hypothetical form, and if its function were only a search for the *how*, then it would not be able to fulfil the requirements of practical reason. The structure of deliberation as hypothetical reasoning is as follows: 'if I intend to bring about A, I ought to do ϕ'. E.g. If I want to protect the city, I should hold my ground in battle. The latter part of the hypothetical proposition expresses the how. How am I to realize the intended end (protecting the city)? By holding my ground. However, such an argument is not directly related to virtuous behaviour. Rather such a question would be addressed to a craftsman, if he were to be asked how he performs his art. One can overlook this and suppose that the hypothetical argument provides a justification for action. Why did you hold your ground? Because I wanted to protect the city. But then it seems that this way of using the hypothetical argument collapses into the practical argument as I have described it in the

previous section.

Again, it is true that practical thought as a process brings about a state that provides an answer the question 'how': 'How can I bring about the end in view, i.e. the good?'; 'How can I implement the end 'honouring one's parents' in this situation?' But practical thought as an *argument* provides simultaneously a *justification* of my decision or action, i.e. an answer to the question 'why?'. In other words, the elements of justification of an action are discovered during the process of deliberation. 'I visited my mother at the hospital *because* one ought to honour one's parents, and my mother broke her leg. The right thing to do is to visit *her* at the hospital, tonight, with a bunch of flowers'. After having deliberated, I come to the decision that I ought to visit her, and my decision is backed up by reasons for doing so. In answering the question *how*, i.e. 'what should I do?', I come up with reasons why I should do so and so. The voluntary agent who acts for the sake of his decision has arrived at this decision through deliberation and is thereby in a position to justify it. Nothing other than his deliberation is required for him to justify his action. If a search for justification were additionally to be required, then the agent would not have acted for the sake of his decision since he would be looking for an excuse for what he has done.

3.5 Conclusion

From this study of theoretical and practical reason, an important distinction comes to be made between *reason* as a structure of thinking and *reasoning* as a *process*. With respect to theoretical thought, there is theoretical *reason*, which is formalized in a syllogistic form and which finds its most adequate expression in the *apodeixis*, but there is also theoretical *inquiry* (*zêtêsis*), which is a process of looking for causes and principles. Thus, an episode of theoretical knowledge (*epistêmê*) obtains from an inquiry, when the correct cause of the claim under scrutiny has been found. This *epistêmê* consists in a deduction from premises which are universal and prior to the conclusion and which are non-incidentally the cause of the conclusion. The *apodeixis* provides the conditions for the appropriate explanation of a scientific claim.

Similarly, in the case of practical thought, there is *deliberation*, which is the practical counterpart of theoretical *zêtêsis*, on the one hand, and there is practical reason, which can be formalized as an *argument* and which represents the content of a decision (*proairesis*). Practical reason is also similar to theoretical reason in that the rational state that issues from deliberation can be accounted for by supporting reasons. In the case of theoretical reason, an episode of *epistêmê* is backed up by a middle term, whereas in the case of practical reason, an episode of *proairesis* is supported by reasons for acting.

On this interpretation, there is a parallel structure between theoretical and practical reason. Both are exercised according to a structure of inquiry and both can be formalized as an argument when the solution to their respective problem has been reached. When I *epistamai* that P, I know that P together with the cause of P. Similarly, when I *proairoumai* that I should do ϕ, I entertain my decision together with the appropriate reasons for ϕ-ing.

However, the fact that practical reason can be formalized as an argument does not yet provide sufficient conditions for practical *knowledge*. The way in which I have formalized the content of decision does indeed account for how a decision is justified, and whether this decision is a virtuous one. Yet, it does not say anything about whether the agent *knows* that his decision is the virtuous one, or whether the agent is justified in believing that his decision is the virtuous one. Actually, the same thing can be seen in the case of theoretical knowledge. The fact that an *apodeixis* explains why P is the case is logically distinct from the fact that it *justifies* that P is true. I can have an explanation of why there is thunder. The explanation is that thunder comes from the extinction of fire in the clouds (*APo* II.8 93b8-9). However, this explanation is not necessarily true. This explanation must also be justified. Aristotle identifies the epistemic conditions for scientific knowledge when he develops the nature of the appropriate premises in an *apodeixis* as well as their relationship to each other (the explanation must be non-incidental, *kath'auto*). Eventually, the truth of the immediate premises must rely on the truth of first principles of a science, which are indemonstrable. In the same way, I want to inquire into the epistemic justification of *proairesis*. My view is that a sufficient account of *phronêsis* depends on these epistemic conditions as well. I shall then argue for a further claim in the next chapters of this work, namely that in *EN* VI-VII Aristotle explores the relationship between the premises of a practical argument not only in order to justify a decision morally, but also to justify it *epistemically*.

CHAPTER 4

4 The content of decision

4.1 Introduction

So far practical knowledge has been described as the cognitive state which accompanies an episode of decision. The content of decision is expressed in the form of a practical argument similar to a theoretical deduction (*apodeixis*), but with significant differences. The *apodeixis* consists of two premises, which are both universal in form and which are causes of the conclusion, and of a conclusion which is inferred non-incidentally from the premises. By contrast, the practical argument is composed of a universal major premise and of a particular minor one. The conclusion inferred from both premises is a decision which in turn leads to an action. If one agrees that the *apodeixis* serves the explanation of a scientific claim by providing its cause, one can make up a similar function for the practical argument. The function of the practical argument is to provide a moral justification of the rightness of one's decision.

Still, a justified decision does not amount to practical *knowledge*. I may decide, on the basis of an apparently appropriate deliberation, that I ought to ϕ, but why wouldn't it be better to ψ instead? How do I know that the best thing to do in the current circumstances is ϕ-ing instead of ψ-ing? As already seen (p. 79), Aristotle explains at *EN* VI.7 1141b14-16 that the *phronimos* requires two kinds of knowledge. He makes an explicit distinction between knowledge at the level of the universal and knowledge at the level of the particular, insisting on the importance of the particular kind.

> 27) " Nor is *phronêsis* about universals only; one should also know the particulars. For *phronêsis* is practical (*praktikê*) and action (*praxis*) is about particulars. *EN* VI.7 1141b14-16
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> οὐδ' ἐστὶν ἡ φρόνησις τῶν (15) καθόλου μόνον, ἀλλὰ δεῖ καὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα γνωρίζειν· πρακτικὴ γάρ, ἡ δὲ πρᾶξις περὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα.

The content of decision must then be determined by both knowledge of universals and knowledge of the particulars. It is true that here Aristotle insists on the

importance of knowledge of particulars. It is the first passage in book VI when Aristotle mentions knowledge of particulars. In doing so, Aristotle presupposes nonetheless knowledge of universals. In chapter 5, I shall inquire into the content of the practical argument in order to show what in one's moral justification ensures that a given episode of decision is the best thing to do, and thus corresponds to an instance of practical knowledge. An important result of this work will be that the practical argument also provides a structure for the *epistemic* evaluation of one's decision. However, in order to understand how epistemic evaluation works, I first need to introduce the components of the practical argument. The present chapter consists in a discussion about these components.

In chap. 3, I have presupposed the content of practical knowledge according to Aristotle's examples in *EN* VI. The universals in practical knowledge were illustrated by evaluative propositions such as 'since the end, i.e. what is best, is such and such' (1144a32-33) or by prescriptive ones 'what the agent proposes as required' (1142b18-19). Concrete examples of knowledge of universals were 'light meats are easily digestible and so healthy' (1141b18-19) and 'all samples of heavy water are bad' (1142a22-23), although these examples are not moral examples. Thus, I have presupposed that the content of knowledge of universals is of the form of a universal proposition which is prescriptive or evaluative. Concerning knowledge of particulars, there are no generic descriptions of the corresponding content. Aristotle's examples are 'meat from birds is light' (1141b20) and 'this (sample of water) is heavy' (1142a22-23). In the sketch I have offered of the justification of moral action, I have overlooked the status of the particular premise, considering propositions such as 'meat from birds is light'.

However, the exact form of the content of decision is not obvious. The examples above already show the ambiguity of the kind of proposition entering in moral justification. Concerning knowledge of universals, there is an ambiguity whether it is evaluative or prescriptive. Concerning knowledge of particulars (*kath'hekaston*), Aristotle seems at times to consider that the *kath'hekaston* does not refer to individuals, but to subtypes.

First, I shall elaborate Aristotle's conception of the content of decision. In my view, a generic description of this content can be reconstructed from the various definitions of the particular virtues of books III and IV of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Second, I shall turn to the universal component of the practical argument. I argue that the content of knowledge of universals in a practical context essentially depends on the agent's moral character. The moral principle which the agent holds is merely a specification of a non-rational impulse given by the agent's character. Thus, practical knowledge depends on one's acquaintance with moral principles

and therefore on how one has come to know them. Finally, I shall focus on the particular component of practical knowledge. In my view, the content of this component consists in the salient features of a particular situation.

4.2 The content of decision: the *orthos logos*

The epistemic evaluation of decision depends on knowledge of universals and knowledge of particulars. Yet, the content of each component is not clear. A useful starting point is the content of decision.

In chap. 2 we have seen that practical knowledge is a necessary condition for virtuous action (see in particular §2.4.3). Practical knowledge is an actualization of the intellectual virtue of *phronêsis* (practical wisdom). The agent gifted with *phronêsis* displays practical knowledge when he deliberates about what to do and makes decisions. The practical knowledge of the agent occurs then in an episode of virtuous decision, and virtuous decision typically causes virtuous action (not always, though; a virtuous decision can be a decision not to act). The content of a virtuous action consists in an intermediacy (*mesotês*, or *meson*) between excess and deficiency, and this intermediacy is spelled out by what Aristotle calls the 'correct reason' or 'correct *ratio*' (*ho orthos logos*): "The mean (*meson*) is as the correct *ratio* spells out".[163] Virtuous action is thus determined by a *logos* which states what one should do (see §2.4.1 and text 8). Yet, such a description of virtuous action consisting in the *orthos logos* is pretty abstract and does not say much about the content of practical knowledge.

Nonetheless, Aristotle has a detailed description of what the *orthos logos* prescribes. In the chapters of the *EN* discussing the particular virtues of character one by one (i.a. courage, temperance, magnanimity, mildness, etc.), Aristotle recurrently gives definitions of such virtues mentioning the kinds of action they dispose us to carry out. Generically, these kinds of action can be summed up as "doing the right thing as one should". See for instance courage (*andreia*):

> 28) "So the person who withstands and fears the things one should and for the end one should, and in the way and when one should, and is bold in a similar way, is courageous; for the courageous person feels and acts as the occasion merits, and according to the <correct> reason." *EN* III.7 1115b17-20
>
> ὁ μὲν οὖν ἃ δεῖ καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα ὑπομένων καὶ φοβούμενος, καὶ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὅτε, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ θαρρῶν, ἀνδρεῖος· κατ' ἀξίαν γάρ, καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ λόγος, (20) πάσχει καὶ πράττει ὁ ἀνδρεῖος.

[163] *EN* VI.1 1138b18-34: τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὀρθὸς λέγει.

The other particular virtues follow the same definitional pattern. Temperance is proper to people who have appetite for the things one should, in the way one should, and when one should (*EN* 1119b15-18); open-handedness or generosity (*eleutheriotês*) concerns those who give to the people one should, as much as one should, and when one should (*EN* 1120a24-27); munificence, or magnificence (*megaloprepeia*) is a virtue to spend large amounts of money relative to the person concerned, to the context and the object of the expense (*pros auton, kai en hô kai peri ho* 1122a25-26); the anonymous virtue concerned with small honours characterizes someone whose character trait is to have desire for honour that is neither more nor less than one should, from the sources one should and in the way one should (1125b6-8); mildness is proper to someone who gets angry or stays mild in the circumstances one should, at the people one should, in the way one should, when one should, and how long one should (1125b31-33); the minor social virtues of amiability and wit also conform to the pattern (1126b16-20 and 1127b33-1128a1).[164]

Moreover, the pattern clearly shows the role of *logos*, most of all in the case of courage and temperance. In both cases, to act – or react, or feel – as one should, towards the object one should etc. corresponds to what the *orthos logos* commands (see 1115b20 above, but also 1119b17; 1119a20). More precisely, as the example of courage shows, the courageous man fears and resists the things one should, for the end one should, in the way and when *because* (*gar*) he feels and acts how *logos* prescribes. This way of describing virtuous action is summed up especially clearly in the *EE* passage on liberality:

> 29) "By 'as one should', in this case as in the others, I mean 'as the correct *ratio* says'" *EE* III.4 1231b32-34
>
> τοῦτο δὲ λέγω τὸ ὡς δεῖ, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, τὸ ὡς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὀρθός

[164] For an overview, see the Annex: Types of circumstance in *EN* III.6-12 and *EN* IV. This pattern is not always clearly observed. The definition of magnanimity, that is greatness of soul, (*megalopsuchia*) does not follow it. Nor does the minor virtue of truthfulness. This certainly reveals that Aristotle had no intention of a systematic pattern of virtuous action. Shame does not follow the pattern at all. This is not surprising though, as Aristotle does not treat it as a *hexis*. Shame depends more on the age of the subject who feels it than on the context.
Let us note moreover that the definition of virtues using adverbial phrases is less present in the *Eudemian Ethics*. The only clear use of adverbial phrases is the definition of *praotês* (*EE* 1231b21-24). (This could be taken as evidence that in the *EE* Aristotle has not fully cleared out the structure of the *orthos logos*, and thus, possibly, that the *EE* is earlier than the *EN*.)

Thus, the *orthos logos* prescribes an action which can be described generically as follows:

> I should do ϕ to object O, at time t, in the way X, etc.

The various parameters of the description may vary. The object can be a person, and other features can be added or removed.

My claim is that this generic description is the content of an episode of *proairesis*. Correspondingly, the content of decision must be genuinely particular as well as normative. It must essentially consist in an enumeration of relevant circumstances of the situation, and of a normative aspect of what should be done. Passages *EN* II.9 1109a20-30 (text 5) and *EN* V.9 1137a9-17 (text 6), commented at §2.3, confirm that the content of decision is particular. In text (5), the person who wants to find the mean in his response to a situation needs to know such things as what he should do, to which person he should do it, at what time, in what way, and so forth. Then, text (6) exhibits a contrast between abstract knowledge of universals and practical knowledge of particulars. The kind of knowledge in play in the exercise of virtue is not a general knowledge about, say, what the laws prescribe. That is, it is not a universal prescription that could be more or less adequately applied to various situations. Rather, the kind of knowledge at stake is a specific state whose content is determined by the situation itself. I do not mean that universal normative propositions are not related to the kind of practical knowledge I wish to describe here. The content of practical knowledge is certainly determined partly by these universal considerations, too. What I mean is that when Aristotle is talking about *knowing* in a situation of action, he means a particular piece of knowledge that has a specific content.

An additional point to keep in mind is that the content of decision does not include only one description of a particular state of affairs. On the contrary, it includes a multiplicity of such descriptions. The agent when making his decision is aware of various circumstances such as the object of his action, the manner or the instrument he uses in order to implement his goal, the person to whom he does it, etc. This aspect will be of great importance when it comes to the epistemic evaluation of decision. Finally, a last feature of the content of decision is its normativity. In an episode of decision, the agent knows or believes that he *ought to perform* such and such an action.

I shall start with an inquiry into the universal component of the practical argument.

4.3 Knowledge of universals in the *Ethics*

What is knowledge of universals, then? 'Knowledge of universals' translates the phrase *gnôsis tôn katholou* ('knowledge of things universal'). Aristotle never fully spells out what it consists in and what its function in his moral epistemology is. A first point to clarify is that by 'universals' I do not mean universals in a metaphysical sense, that is, a kind of being by reference to which we name perceptual, concrete beings. For the time being, I consider universals to be what constitute the content of some kind of knowledge. Also, in spite of the term 'universal', one should keep in mind that in the practical realm, universal rules do not hold absolutely, but only 'for the most part' (*hôs epi to polu*). Aristotle is aware that general statements in the practical realm might sometimes be infirmed: good things, e.g. wealth, can sometimes be damaging (*EN* I.3 1094b14-22) Thus, concerning ethics, what is said universally lacks in precision (*EN* II.2 1103b34-1104a7).

In chapter 2 and 3, I have assumed that universals in ethics are moral principles that are propositional in form (see for instance p. 102). Universals involve 'what the agent should do' (*ho dein* 1142b23), the starting point (*archê*) of deliberation, i.e. the end, or what is best (1144a32-33). However, Aristotle in his ethical writings insists on the importance of one's moral ends in life. He regards moral agents as possessing a view of what is good for the most part. On the basis of this view, they can ground their choices and actions. Aristotle even clearly states that having such a view is a necessary condition for rational behaviour.

> 30) Focusing our attention on these matters, everyone capable of living by their own decision ought to lay down[165] some aim for living finely, be it honour or reputation or wealth or education, which they will look to in the performance of all their actions (since not organizing one's life in relation to some goal is a mark of great foolishness). *EE* I.2 1214b6-11
>
> περὶ δὴ τούτων ἐπιστήσαντας, ἅπαντα τὸν δυνάμενον ζῆν κατὰ τὴν αὑτοῦ προαίρεσιν δεῖ θέσθαι τινὰ σκοπὸν τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν, ἤτοι τιμὴν ἢ δόξαν ἢ πλοῦτον ἢ παιδείαν, πρὸς ὃν ἀποβλέπων ποιήσεται πάσας τὰς πράξεις (ὡς τό γε (10) μὴ συντετάχθαι τὸν βίον πρός τι τέλος ἀφροσύνης πολλῆς σημεῖον ἐστίν)

A rational action requires some purpose. The aim might take several forms. Here Aristotle mentions honour, reputation, wealth or education, whereas a few lines earlier he was considering values such as wisdom (*phronêsis*, not necessarily in the technical sense of *EN* VI, see Décarie 1978:62, n.20), virtue (*aretê*) or pleasure (*EE*

[165] Reading *dei thesthai* instead of *thesthai* along with Décarie and Inwood & Woolf.

I.1 1214b2-4). This is also spelled out in *EE* II.10 1226a7-13 (text 33), where Aristotle gives 'being happy' as an example of what the end of deliberation is. According to these passages, the end seems to be general considerations about goodness or happiness. Aristotle makes similar remarks at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: Aristotle seems to hold – in conformity with his doctrine of *eudaimonia* in the first book of the *EN* – that doing well (*eupraxia*) is the general end of all human actions.[166] The kind of end the agent has in view is 'doing well', 'being happy', or 'the good' in general.[167]

It is not obvious whether the 'universals' Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of *gnôrizein tôn katholou* are moral principles or moral ends. There are at least two reasons why one might not identify moral principles with moral ends. The main problem is that Aristotle repeatedly asserts that the end is not given by reason (*EN* VI.12 1144a6-9; VI.13 1145a4-6; VII.8 1151a15-19; *EE* II.11 1227b22-25). Indeed, that my deliberation involves considerations about the pleasure related to food does not depend on anything rational but can simply be determined by my desire to taste delightful food. By contrast, the way I have introduced knowledge of moral principles suggests that an agent has a rational, or intellectual, conception of the end. But even if one comes to an agreement on this point, there remains the second problem, namely what form knowledge of universals has. I have assumed that the kind of universal relevant in moral matters has the form of a universal normative proposition, whereas the intuitive form of a moral end is rather expressed as a value such as the good, riches, honours, pleasure, etc. I shall first tackle the issue of the form of the universal and come back to the question of its rationality in the next section.

4.3.1 The form of knowledge of universals

Aristotle's notion of *katholou* is a contraction of '*kath'holou*' and can be translated literally as 'according to every part'. The origin of this phrase seems therefore to come from a predicative use of the term. Something can be predicated *kath'holou* of something else. For instance 'animal' can be predicated universally of 'man', thus meaning that every man is an animal (*DI* 7 17a38-b3). Thus, having knowledge of universals (*gnôrizein tôn katholou*) means knowing a certain kind of *proposition*, namely universal ones.

[166] Aristotle indeed identifies 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*) with 'doing well' (*eupraxia*) and even with 'living well' (*euzein*); *EN* I.4 1095a19-20; I.8 1098b20-21.
[167] *EN* 1095a17ff. (See Price 2011: 201-202). See also 1104b29ff., where Aristotle considers three values which lead to decision: the good, the useful and the pleasant.

In the ethical corpus, we find at least two different kinds of proposition which are universal in form and which concern the explanation of moral facts. (1) First, there are propositions that have the form of moral rules or norms. For instance, "A son never ought to disown his father"; "In general, one ought to reimburse one's debt"; "We think he shouldn't do anything that incurs shame in the first place".[168] (2) Apart from this kind of belief, there are general propositions of ethical *science*. Ethical science, i.e. Aristotle's *epistêmê praktikê*, concerns general truths about moral matters (see §2.6). An instance of universal proposition of this kind is "the object of desire and wish is either the good or the apparent good". Another instance is "[virtue] is a mean between two bad states, one involving excess and the other deficiency".[169]

The first kind differs from the other in being explicitly *prescriptive*. Indeed, my belief that 'I ought to honour my parents' does matter in my life on a different level than my belief that 'virtue is a state consisting in an mean between excess and deficiency', because only the former provides me with immediate guidance of what I should do or not do. On the other hand, the latter seems to be limited to a description of a moral notion. Propositions of ethical science are more akin to general propositions taken from the special theoretical sciences like psychology or metaphysics.[170] At first sight, one could then consider universals in ethics as moral rules. They seem to fulfil a moral role more properly. However, if one is to match universals with moral ends, it seems that they cannot have the form of moral principles. Aristotle's conception of the ultimate end pertains rather to kind (2) than kind (1). The definition of *eudaimonia*, which is supposedly the proposition that explicate one's notion of the ultimate end, goes as follows: "the human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with excellence (and if there are more excellences

[168] 1163b19: οὐκ ἐξεῖναι υἱῷ πατέρα ἀπείπασθαι; 1165a2-3: καθόλου μὲν τὸ ὀφείλημα ἀποδοτέον; 1128b20-21: οὐδὲν γὰρ οἰόμεθα δεῖν αὐτὸν πράττειν ἐφ' οἷς ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη; see also Sharples 2005: 286, n. 21 for other examples of such moral principles. Note again that these rules hold only for the most part.

[169] *EE* 1235b25-26: λαβοῦσιν ἀρχὴν τήνδε. τὸ γὰρ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ βουλη τὸν ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν; 1107a2-3: μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ' ἔλλειψιν; see also *i.a.* 1220b25 and 1227b5.

[170] Such propositions can also be useful in the elaboration of an ethical theory. Aristotle holds for instance that in order to understand moral matters, the political expert must know how things concerned with the soul are disposed (*EN* I.13 1102a19). This kind of knowledge may even be useful in deliberation, even though we do not deliberate on it as such. For instance, it might matter a great deal to know that the kind of food one eats has an influence on character (*Pol*. I.8 1256a19–30) in order to decide whether or not I should administer chicken meat to my patient. Yet, this kind of proposition will not tell me what kind of action I ought to do.

than one, in accordance with the best and the most complete)".[171] Obviously, the definition of *eudaimonia* belongs to the second kind of universal proposition, for it does not state any rule and has not a prescriptive form. Yet, it would be hard to deny that it bears heavily on our lives.

So we need to settle the questions of the determination of the end as well as that of the form of the universals. I contend that general moral rules are expressions or specifications of general moral ends. If I hold that respect is a very important value to me and that I do everything I do with regard to respecting others, I shall have such beliefs as 'I should honour my parents', or 'I should repay my debts'. These general rules are expressions or specifications of a more general end, namely, in this very case, 'respect' (McDowell 1998: 110). In fact, as will become clear, this interpretation answers both difficulties of the form and of the rationality of knowledge of universals. Its form is not fixed once and for all, but can either be a general moral end or a rational specification of that end in the form of a moral principle. Also, a moral principle is specified by deliberation and is therefore the rational expression of the end, although the end itself is given by character (*êthos*), which is non-rational for Aristotle.

In order to have a better glimpse of the end of practical reasoning, I need to make a small excursus into the structure of deliberation. From this, a solution of the problem of the rationality of the end will appear and will also provide an argument for my claim that moral principles are rational specifications of one's grasp of moral ends.

4.3.2 Virtue gives the end

As seen at §3.3.1, a crucial implication of the notion of deliberation is that it is not about the ends of action, but about that which leads to the ends (*peri tôn pros ta telê*). Aristotle gives various examples which illustrate this: the doctor does not deliberate whether he should cure or not, the rhetorician whether he should persuade or not, the politician whether he should work for the well being of the state (See 1112b12-15; text 19).

These examples have often struck scholars as inappropriate. All are technical examples in which the result pursued is clear and uncontroversial. Deliberation in these cases consists merely in figuring out the best way to realize something which has not been discussed beforehand and which does probably not need to be discussed at all. This conception of decision as being the result of a prior delibera-

[171] 1098a16-18: τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ' ἀρετήν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην.

tion seems irrelevant in the case of moral actions. It seems that what is chosen primarily in the case of morality is not the best means to achieve some ends, but the moral ends themselves, that one sets out to achieve or not. One would therefore expect rather the reverse model: first the agent deliberates about what is the best thing to do; once he has made his mind up about it (i.e. he has decided what to do), he works out the best means to realize it.[172]

In spite of this, Aristotle offers an alternative conception of moral choice, motivated by a different intuition. According to him, what determines the end is virtue, or more generally, character (*êthos*). See for instance *EE* II.11:

> 31) "Which one does virtue make <correct>[173], the goal, or the things toward the goal? We affirm it is the goal, because there is no reasoning or *logos* about it. Rather let us suppose the goal as a starting point". *EE* II.11 1227b22-25
>
> πότερον δ' ἡ ἀρετὴ ποιεῖ τὸν σκοπὸν ἢ τὰ πρὸς τὸν σκοπόν; τιθέμεθα δὴ ὅτι τὸν σκοπόν, διότι τούτου οὐκ ἔστι συλλογισμὸς οὐδὲ (25) λόγος. ἀλλὰ δὴ ὥσπερ ἀρχὴ τοῦτο ὑποκείσθω.

One should bear in mind that by 'virtue gives the end' Aristotle does not mean that only the virtuous man has access to the end thanks to his virtue, whereas non-virtuous agents have access to their own end in a different way. Aristotle has on one occasion a more general formula that states more generally that we tend to certain ends according to our character.

> 32) "For virtue and vice respectively preserves the starting point and corrupt it. And in the case of actions, the starting point is that for the sake of which, just as in mathematics it is the hypotheses. Neither in that case [i.e. in mathematics] it is reason that teaches the starting points, nor it is here [i.e. in the case of actions]. Rather, it is virtue, either natural or habituated, which is responsible for correct belief about the starting point. *EN* VII.8 1151a15-19
>
> (15) ἡ γὰρ ἀρετὴ καὶ μοχθηρία τὴν ἀρχὴν ἡ μὲν φθείρει ἡ δὲ σώζει, ἐν δὲ ταῖς πράξεσι τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα ἀρχή, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς αἱ ὑποθέσεις· οὔτε δὴ ἐκεῖ ὁ λόγος διδασκαλικὸς τῶν ἀρχῶν οὔτε ἐνταῦθα, ἀλλ' ἀρετὴ ἢ φυσικὴ ἢ ἐθιστὴ τοῦ ὀρθοδοξεῖν περὶ τὴν ἀρχήν.

Here Aristotle calls the end 'starting point' (*archê*), because it is from considerations about the end that practical reasoning proceeds. Virtue preserves the cor-

[172] Anscombe 1965: 146 seems to construe this model from her interpretation of *EN* VI. For a convincing objection of Anscombe's interpretation, see Hardie 1968: 1968.

[173] At the beginning of *EE* II.11, Aristotle states explicitly that *aretê* might make the end *correct*. I therefore supply it here, following Woods and Inwood and Woolf.

rect *archê* of action, whereas badness corrupts the *archê* (See *EN* VI.5 1140b4-21; text 14). Not only virtuous people have their moral ends determined by a non-rational disposition, but also non-virtuous people pursue certain ends in virtue of dispositions of the non-rational part of the soul – in this case, badness (*mochthêria*). Aristotle seems therefore to hold that it is *character* (*êthos*), as a general tendency to respond to one's environment (*EE* II.1 1220a39-b6), that directs the agent towards a certain end. Someone with an excellent character is a virtuous person and the moral ends he aims at are 'healthy', i.e. morally good, whereas someone with a perverted character will pursue corrupted moral ends. Aristotle affirms moreover in a strong way that reason does not take part in determining the end.[174]

Aristotle wants to stress that the things we yearn for are not simply determined by a rational calculus, but are the result of the affective impulses of the desiderative part of the soul. Things I conceive as desirable or good seem to me to be this way because of my character, that is, because of the kind of person I am. It is in virtue of our moral character that we tend to value certain things more than others. Someone having the tendency to be easily frightened – a coward (*deilos*) – will be prone to value such things as security or absence of anguish as good, or at least as desirable; the intemperate person will tend to value sensual pleasures of drinking, eating and sex. In general, people tend to be attracted towards the kinds of thing they have become accustomed to enjoy.

This way of conceiving of deliberation and the determination of the end sounds legitimate. Still, this model has to face other issues. A traditional concern about this conception of deliberation is that it could fall in the opposite extreme: that moral ends are determined by our impulses alone, reason being a mere instrumental disposition working out the means to realize our non-rational desires.[175] This consequence of Aristotle's conception of deliberation has often struck commentators as unbearable (for a review of some reactions of the commentators, see Moss 2012: 157). According to them, reason must take part in the determination of the end. This position has given rise to one of the most famous controversy about Aristotle's ethics in the 20th century known as the mean-end controversy.[176]

But scholars (i.a. Wiggins 1975-1976: 30-31) have also pointed out that Aristotle's restriction of the scope of deliberation to the means was problematic for a

[174] See also VI.12 1144a6-9 as well as VI.13 1145a4-6 for a contrast between virtue and the intellectual virtue of the practical part of the rational soul, *phronêsis*.

[175] The so-called Humeanism of Aristotle, emphasized by Sorabji 1980 1973-1974: 118; see also Allan 1953: 122, who gives a doxography of Aristotle's Humeanism since Walter 1874.

[176] See Allan 1953 for a review of older scholars and Moss 2012: 155-158 concerning the recent literature; see Price 2011: 209-230 for a discussion of the latest contributions.

further reason. For Aristotle, a crucial claim is that the moral character of a person is revealed by his decisions to perform such or such an action (1111b6-7; *EE* II.11 1227b38-1228a4). The action alone is not a reliable way to tell whether someone is a good person or not. Someone might carry out an apparently virtuous action for ill-intended motives. Or an action without further intention at first might turn out to be extremely beneficial for someone else. On the contrary, the agent's decision reveals the intention or reasons to act of the agent. However, since deliberation is only about the means and what is decided on is the object of deliberation, then the object of decision is also restricted to the means. But it seems that choosing the best means to some given end is insufficient to be a mark of virtuous character. In the terms of the medicine example, the doctor will not deliberate whether curing this patient is the right thing to do or not. He will not question this end, but take it for granted and work out the best means to cure the patient. If one maintains the analogy then, one should hold that the agent's decision expresses his character, while the agent chooses a means to an end given beforehand and which is not discussed. Yet, how could the agent's character possibly be expressed according to such a model? It seems that what expresses one's character is rather one's moral purposes, i.e. the end one is after.[177]

However, Aristotle states explicitly that the content of decision includes a mention of the end. The Eudemian text that *proairesis* is neither wish nor *doxa* is similar to its Nicomachean counterpart, but for one important detail. At *EE* II.10, when invoking the argument of the object of each state, Aristotle specifies that the object of decision is not the means alone, but the means for the sake of the pursued end.

> 33) "For no one decides on an end, but rather on what promotes the end. I mean, for instance, that no one decides to be healthy; what one decides is to take a walk, or to sit down, for the sake of being healthy. Again, no one decides to be happy; one decides to go into business, or to run a risk, for the sake of happiness. *In general, someone who decides something manifests what he decides to do, and that for the sake of which he decides to do it*. The latter is something for the sake of which one decides to do another thing, while the former is

[177] Relying on this issue Aubenque has inferred that Aristotle has two distinct notions of *proairesis*. One would be in play in book III of the *EN* and amounts to implementing a given end, whereas the other would be in play in book VI and mean rather 'preference' when referring to one's way of life. From this he infers that Aristotle has changed his notion of decision from book III to book VI of the *EN* (Aubenque 1963: 119-120). See also Ross 2005: 209-210. However, as Wiggins has argued, the tension about the notion of *proairesis* is already internal to book III and cannot therefore be imputed to a change in the conception of *proairesis* from one book to another (Wiggins 1975-1976: 30-32).

> what one decides to do for the sake of another thing." *EE* II.10 1226a7-13; my emphasis.
>
> οὐθεὶς γὰρ τέλος οὐδὲν προαιρεῖται, ἀλλὰ τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος· λέγω δ' οἷον οὐθεὶς ὑγιαίνειν προαιρεῖται, ἀλλὰ περιπατεῖν ἢ καθῆσθαι τοῦ ὑγιαίνειν ἕνεκεν, οὐδ' εὐδαι(10) μονεῖν, ἀλλὰ χρηματίζεσθαι ἢ κινδυνεύειν τοῦ εὐδαιμονεῖν ἕνεκα· καὶ ὅλως δηλοῖ ἀεὶ προαιρούμενος <τις> τί τε καὶ τίνος ἕνεκα προαιρεῖται, ἔστι δὲ τὸ μὲν τίνος, οὗ ἕνεκα προαιρεῖται ἄλλο, τὸ δὲ τί, ὃ προαιρεῖται ἕνεκα ἄλλου.

Aristotle seems to say here that the object of decision is not the means alone, i.e. what is towards the end, but the means insofar as it is directed at a certain end. The description of the end is included in the content of decision. Decision is not about the end in the sense that its proper function is to determine the end as a general action-type or a general value. Rather, decision is about the means insofar as its function is to choose to perform a certain action for the sake of a further end. In doing so, the agent expresses the end he has in view. In this sense, decision is what shows the character of the agent.[178] This description of the object of decision solves the problem pointed out by Wiggins. Decision is a privileged mark of virtuous character, although it is primarily about the means, because its content includes a description of the end.

Still, this interpretation, if it solves Wiggins' problem, does not lessen concerns about the Humeanism of Aristotle. That a description of the end is included in the content of one's decision does not say anything about the origin of the determination of the end. One could still hold that the overall determination of the end is due to desire. Yet, this interpretation considerably lightens up the Humean picture of Aristotle's moral psychology. Indeed, if decision involves a view on the end, this implies that deliberation, too, must somehow keep an eye on the end. Even though deliberation is not about the end as such, a consideration of the end should also be included while working out the means to the end. This consequence is important, for it shows that Aristotle does not conceive deliberation as a mere instrumental process, in which the only relation between means and ends would be a relation of efficient causality. Rather, if the agent always keeps an eye on the end in his deliberation, this shows that he also has considerations for the nature of the possible means envisaged. In other words, such an agent will not adhere to the claim that

[178] See Natali 2001: 42-43; Lorenz 2009: 184–92. Broadie (1991: 179-180) comes to the same result although she does not rely on the relevant passage of the *EE*. In her interpretation of *proairesis* as a reason for action, she includes a mention of the end. Decision is about X for the sake of Y.

any means can be tolerated as long as the end in view is achieved (in other words, 'the end justifies the means').

Deliberation involves a rational grasp of the end. Again, it is not clear what one should understand by such an 'end'. On the one hand, as mentioned earlier, speaking of the 'end' of practical reasoning seems to refer to the doctrine of *eudaimonia*. In this vein, an influential interpretation has it that the end is a rational conception of the good life, which is a general end that includes a set of detailed descriptions of what the good life is in various circumstances. This interpretation has been dubbed the Grand End view (the phrase is from Cooper 1975: 59). According to the Grand End view an agent has an overall picture of what the good life consists in, which can serve as a 'blueprint' for his next actions. A Grand End would have to be complete enough in order to offer guiding rules to the agent with which the latter would be able to cope with various circumstances. Particular decisions would be inferred from relevant aspects of the Grand End while taking the circumstances into account. The Grand End view is a strong *rationalist* position, for it assumes that the end has been determined due to a rational capacity.

However, when reflecting on particular examples of what the end of such or such action is, it seems that the kind of end at stake is a particular concrete end, such as a particular object of thought or of desire ('I want this drink') or a particular action that the agent has in view (drinking). Especially, if decision involves a description of the end, it seems that this end should be immediately achievable through deliberation. If the content of my decision were to include a general description of the end, then my decision would not express my character and would not be sensible altogether: e.g. in battle, a decision to 'confront the enemy in order to be happy' is not very informative. A sensible rational choice needs a more specific description of the end such as 'confront the enemy in order to save the City', 'saving the city' being an expression of or a means towards happiness. Even if I were to possess a fully articulated conception of happiness, which states that happiness consists in the exercise of virtue and which includes a theory of the particular virtues, taking a particular decision would require the mention of a specific end. Even when Aristotle describes the process of deliberation at *EN* III.3 1112b11-20 (text 19), he uses examples of determined ends to make his point. Technical activities (medicine, rhetoric, politics) have ends which are determined according to their respective area of activity.[179]

[179] Similarly, at *EN* VI.1 Aristotle argues that general prescriptions to act are useless. While he acknowledges the truth of general advice such as to act as the correct prescription (*orthos logos*) prescribes, or to apply oneself neither too much nor too little, he observes that one cannot rely on general indications in order to act correctly. Moreover, in order to make this

Should we understand then that in Aristotle's account of rational action decision is about the means for the sake of a particular, specific end or for the sake of a general, vague one? The mention of a presumed Humeanism of Aristotle also enriches the debate as the end of practical thinking can be either general or specific and can be either determined by reason or by a desiderative faculty.

4.3.3 Deliberation and specification of the end

First of all, the technical examples should not mislead us. These examples give the impression that the end is a unitary and general task which has been fixed once and for all. However, it is far from sure that these kinds of determinate end proper to technical activities also concern moral actions. In a particular situation, the end which the agent is considering seems proper to the situation. It seems to be given through a certain representation or idea of what the present situation requires, but not through a moment or institution that would posit the end.

Also, one ought to be careful when speaking of 'means'. In fact, Aristotle speaks of 'what is in view of the end' (*peri tôn pros ta telê* 1112b12) and this phrase includes more than mere instrumental means. Deliberation is not merely instrumental thinking by which a chosen means leads to an end that is external to it. Production (*poiêsis*), as a matter of fact, works like that. In a production process, the end in view is external to the process itself. In order to cure this patient, I need this medicine, which is external to health. But Aristotle has shown that every human activity has not necessarily an end external to itself. The ends of some activities are the activities themselves.[180] 'What is in view of the end' must therefore include not only instrumental means, but what I shall call 'constitutive means' as well, i.e. an activity whose execution is constitutive of the realization of a more general activi-

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clear, Aristotle invokes the medical example. When I need to choose the correct remedy to cure a specific disease in a particular patient, knowing that the correct remedy is the one which medical science would prescribe does not make me better at choosing the correct remedy (*EN* VI.1 1138b25-34).

[180] *EN* I.1 1094a3-5: "For the end of production is something distinct from the productive process, whereas that of action will not be; here, doing well itself serves as end" (see also 1176b2-10; 1140b6-7). One should not conclude too quickly that *poiêsis* is correlated with instrumental means and *praxis* with constitutive means. If it is true of *poiêsis*, it is not of *praxis*. In a loose sense of *praxis*, an action is not necessarily for the sake of itself. Some actions can be merely instrumental as when a non-virtuous person performs a good action for the sake of a further, non-virtuous, motive.

ty.[181] An example of a constitutive means concerns the highest end of all, namely happiness. Someone might come to believe that being an architect will enable him to live a happy life. In this sense, being an architect is a means to being happy. However, being an architect is not an external means to happiness, but is instead constitutive of it. For this person living a happy life consists precisely in working as an architect (I borrow the example from Annas 1993: 88).

The notion of constitutive means reveals that the end at stake in practical reasoning is not fixed once and for all. Rather, it is *specified* from a general idea of what to do into a specific, directly achievable end.[182] When I find out that becoming an architect will bring about a happy life for me, the end I am considering in my deliberation is no longer happiness in general. Such a general end becomes the more precise determination of the end 'being an architect'. In turn, such an end may be specified through my deliberation in the more specific 'enrolling in an architectural school', and so on. The notion of constitutive means also explains how Aristotle can say on the one hand that every human activity is for the sake of happiness (1094a1-2), and on the other hand that a virtuous act is done for its own sake (1105a31-32). The performance of a virtuous act is constitutive of happiness. By contrast, a mere instrumental means does not constitute a realization of the further end. Taking the bus to the architectural school (for the sake of enrolling in the school) does not *constitute* a realization of being an architect, nor of happiness. At best, it is an external cause which brings about my becoming an architect.

To sum up, the agent begins with an undetermined conception of the end, which is specified gradually while he is deliberating about a means to achieve such an end. An example of the idea of the specification of the end seems to occur in the following passage:

> 34) "The end of every activity is the one which is according to the disposition. And to the courageous man courage is something noble, and such [i.e. noble] is also the end. For each thing is determined by its end. So it is for the sake of the noble that the courageous man resists and does actions according to courage."[183] *EN* III.7 1115b20-24

[181] The first to make the distinction between those two senses of *'to pros to telos*' was Greenwood (1909: 46-47), who speaks of 'component'; the term 'constitutive' comes from Wiggins (1975-1976: 32-33).

[182] Cf. among others Höffe 1971: 135; Wiggins 1975-1976: 38; Engberg Pedersen 1983: 173; Hutchinson 1986: 100; McDowell 1998: 109-110; Natali 2001: 47; Taylor 2008: 212.

[183] At least, the reconstitution of the passage in the OCT suggests the idea of a gradual specification of the end, although the text itself has not been transmitted to us reliably.

> (20) τέλος δὲ πάσης ἐνεργείας ἐστὶ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν. †καὶ τῷ ἀνδρείῳ δὴ ἡ <δ'> ἀνδρεία καλόν† τοιοῦτον δὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος· ὁρίζεται γὰρ ἕκαστον τῷ τέλει. καλοῦ δὴ ἕνεκα ὁ ἀνδρεῖος ὑπομένει καὶ πράττει τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀνδρείαν.

In the present case, the agent aims at the noble (*kalon*), which is specified as courage. The disposition of being courageous specifies which form the noble is to take in this context of, say, battle. But behaving courageously is moreover specified as standing firm (*hupomenei*) as the definition of courage has it (*EN* III.7 1115b17-20 (text 28); *EE* III.1 1230a30).

Thus, the exact content of the end is not fixed once and for all. Depending on the stage of deliberation which the agent has reached, the end considered is more or less specific. This is what Aristotle seems to mean in the following quote: "The end of the action is [set] according to the occasion".[184] The notion of specification of the end allows for both accounts of the end as a general ultimate goal and as a specific principle proper to a situation to be compatible. The content of the end in view does *change* through the process of deliberation. In practical thought, I first consider a general end such as 'courage is something noble', and then in the course of the deliberation I come to hold 'I ought to protect the city' as an expression of courage.

Specification of the end has been offered as a way to answer the threat of a Humean account of the determination of the end. Accordingly, one ought to distinguish between the ultimate end, namely *eudaimonia*, and intermediary ends, which are those useful in actual occurrences of deliberation. That one does not deliberate about the end would hold *stricto sensu* of the ultimate end only, not of intermediary ends. The idea is that since an intermediate end is itself a means to the ultimate end (as generalship is a means to politics), one can deliberate about intermediate ends, insofar as they are considered as means to a further end.[185] Aristotle conceived of a certain hierarchy of activities. Some activities are higher than others in the sense that the ends of lower activities are included in the ends of the higher ones. Lower activities are performed for the sake of higher activities. For instance, bridle-making is for the sake of horsemanship, whereas horsemanship is for the sake of generalship (1094a10ff.). So, while it is true that the bridle maker will not discuss the end he is pursuing, i.e. making bridles, the user of bridles, or more generally, the general will deliberate about what is useful for his cavalry and thereby what the bridle maker is to make. The same reasoning can then be applied to the case of a single

[184] *EN* III.1 1110a13–14: τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς πράξεως κατὰ τὸν καιρόν ἐστιν.

[185] See e.g. Wiggins 1975-1976: 34-35; Cooper 1975: 15f.; Engberg-Pedersen 1983: 212; Reeve 1992: 84.

man's life. Aristotle acknowledges indeed that some activities, while they are done for their own sake are also done for the sake of a higher end, namely happiness: "while as for honour, and pleasure, and intelligence, and every excellence, we do choose them because of themselves (since if nothing resulted from them, we would still choose each of them), but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that we shall be happy through them."[186] Hence, if it is true that in a particular situation one does not deliberate about the end, this does not mean that in another situation the activity which was previously the end appears as a mean to a further end, in which case one is to deliberate about it. In the end, the only end about which there is absolutely no deliberation is the highest of all, namely happiness.

This line of argumentation is disputable. At *EN* III.3, Aristotle does not mention the notion of ultimate end. He rather speaks of ends generally. An end, any end, is not an object of deliberation (Natali 2001: 45). All in all, such a position leaves open the question whether reason takes part in determining the ultimate goal, happiness. If deliberation goes with a process of specification of the end, what is crucial for the decision made at the outcome of the process is the original impulse that came with the ultimate end.

The relation between a general end and a specific end should then be refined. An important feature of specification of the end is that it does not imply an *explicit* conception of the ultimate end. We do not have in every single episode of moral action an explicit conception of what happiness is. Rather, it seems that the end we are pursuing is not consciously present in our mind. It might happen in some cases that the end at stake is a clear representation of what happiness is. For instance, in cases of a life-defining decision such as accepting a job offer or getting married. However, in other situations we consider a single principle or rule to apply or achieve, whose content is not a general conception of happiness. In still other cases, it seems that we do not even have a specific notion of an end. Rather, the end is a blurred view on what is valuable. Confronted to a situation which appeals to an action, we do not necessarily entertain a grand conception of the good, nor a specific principle to apply. On the contrary, the idea of what one should do, or what would be good to do gradually arises in the course of our deliberation.[187]

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[186] *EN* I.7 1097b2-5: τιμὴν δὲ καὶ ἡδονὴν καὶ νοῦν καὶ πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν αἱρούμεθα μὲν καὶ δι' αὐτά (μηθενὸς γὰρ ἀποβαίνοντος ἑλοίμεθ' ἂν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν), αἱρούμεθα δὲ καὶ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας χάριν, διὰ τούτων ὑπολαμβάνοντες εὐδαιμονήσειν

[187] This aspect of the end in deliberation has been noted by Broadie 1991: 195; McDowell 1979: 342-344; see also Price 2011: 216. Broadie argues that at the starting point of a particular deliberation there is already a specified end, a 'guiding end' as she says, and opposes it

Now, I believe that the idea of a specification of the end is compatible with the fact that character determines the end and that it helps in obtaining a satisfying interpretation of Aristotle's Humeanism. When the agent is confronted with a situation which demands a response, the immediate response is a non-rational and implicit feeling of what to do, a vague idea of the kind of response required. Second, this implicit notion of the end is then progressively refined in an explicit determination of the end. This process of making the end explicit is carried through by deliberation. However, specification of the end does not amount to rational deliberation about what general end one is pursuing. Even if deliberation helps in specifying what kind of good one is after in a particular situation so that one can come to a decision to perform a concrete action, this does not mean that deliberation determines the end. The general impulse still depends on some other disposition in the soul, namely character (*êthos*; see §5.2.3). Another way to put it is to say that reason does not determine what ultimately counts as the correct end or not.

More precisely, I think that there are two aspects that do not pertain to reason. First, the overall direction of specification of the end is not determined by deliberation. It is rather suggested by character. By 'overall direction of specification', I mean the overall kind of life the agent values, what his conception of the good life is. One can understand this as how people 'interpret', or makes sense of, what happiness is. Some people have a character such that they tend to value riches; others are inclined to pleasurable activities, others still to virtuous actions, etc. Correspondingly, the ultimate end they see as achieving happiness will be respectively the possession of riches, the experience of pleasure, the performance of virtuous actions, etc. Of course, Aristotle sees happiness as virtuous life as the only true understanding of happiness. Yet, this does not exclude that other people have a different view on what counts as a happy life (*EN* I.4 1095a22-28). This first direction of interpretation of what the good is provides a general content to the end the agent is pursuing. Confronted with a situation which calls for a response, the agent will tend to consider a general end in a specific area of values.

Secondly, character warrants that the specified end is *truly* constitutive of one's idea of the good life. Although deliberation is of the end in the sense that it specifies an implicit notion of the end into an explicit formulation, it is character

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to a 'defining end' which defines an activity or practice, like health defines medicine, persuasion defines rhetoric etc.; see Broadie 1991: 195. Segvic argues in a similar way that the specific end must have been determined rationally. According to her, assuming an end in a process of deliberation is a technical requisite for deliberation. Without positing an end, no deliberation is possible in the same way as in theoretical thinking no research is possible without having posited a *hupothesis* (Segvic 2011: 169-170).

that guides the specification according to the situation. What determines that enrolling in an architectural school is constitutive of my own idea of happiness is warranted by my character.[188] It is the way I feel about life that tells me that being an architect exemplifies being happy. By contrast, another person might understand enrolling in the army as leading to a happy life. Let us consider the example of dangerous situations. If my first impulse in such a situation is to react virtuously, i.e. being courageous, the kind of realization I give to this general impulse still depends on my character. In a situation where the enemy have invaded the city, I could come to the view that acting courageously is confronting the enemy by engaging in combat. Or I could come to the view that the right courageous act to do is to flee and taking my family with me (like Aeneas!). More generally, spelling out the end through a process of deliberation may be compared to a process of association of ideas. While deliberating on what he ought to do, the agent comes to a more specific idea of the kind of action-type he values, and this idea of the end arises from association of ideas. What explains the connection between a general idea of the good and a specific end is not reason but character.

The position I want to argue for is therefore a refined brand of Humeanism. It contrasts cognitivism insofar as it holds that one never deliberates about the end *per se*. The determination of the specific content of the end is not the result of deliberation, but rather a by-product of it. Deliberation can spell out the indeterminate end into a more determinate, achievable end. At some point in the deliberative process, the agent has a rational grasp of the end, which Aristotle calls a *hupothesis*. However, the specific content of this *hupothesis* has not been warranted rationally, but by the desiderative propensities of the agent.[189] My position is not a radical Humeanist position either, according to which reason is a slave of the passions. In my view, an agent actually deliberates about the end, yet not the end *qua* end, but as an intermediate end which is a mean to a more general one. There is a rational manipulation of the end. By contrast other Humeanists hold that one simply cognizes the end in virtue of a non-rational cognitive faculty (Natali 2001: 182; Bodéüs 2004: 116, n. 2; 326-327 n. 4).[190]

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[188] This interpretation of the role of character is close to McDowell's notion of 'supplementation' (McDowell 1979: 344-345). However, McDowell does not accept that what guides the process of specification of the end is character rather than reason. My interpretation is closer to that of Broadie (see for instance Broadie and Rowe 2002: 49-50). For a comparison between McDowell's and Broadie's positions, see Price 2011: 230-235.

[189] I shall argue properly against the intellectualist interpretation of the intellect determining the end at §5.2.

[190] According to Irwin: "to be a complete Humean [one] needs to accept both the nonmotivity of reason alone and also Hume's inference, that reason is irrelevant to the choice of ulti-

Such an interpretation provides a sensible reading of the following quote: "In every situation, the mean relative to us is best, for it is as science and reason (*logos*) command."[191] One should not understand from this that the *orthos logos* itself determines the behavioural response that ought to be exemplified by the desiderative part of the soul. This would amount to a purely rational determination of moral actions and would conflict with Aristotle's claim that what provides the end of moral action is not reason but virtue (*EE* II.11 1227b22-25; *EN* VII.8 1151a15-19). The specification of the action is made at the level of the particular, not at the level of the general orientation of the end. Then, what the *orthos logos* determines is not the overall moral tenor of the action, but the specification of the action which is actually performed.

Another passage in the *Eudemian Ethics* could be taken as undermining my interpretation: "There is no reasoning (*sullogismos*) or reason (*logos*) of the goal (*skopos*). Rather one is to assume it as a principle."[192] In this passage, Aristotle apparently asserts that the end is not the object of reasoning (*sullogismos*), or the end of any rational account (*logos*). One can easily account for *sullogismos*, as it refers to an articulate piece of reasoning. The end of practical reasoning is not inferred or deduced in any way. It seems harder to account for the mention of *logos*. True, *logos* can also mean 'argument', but as it stands in contrast to *sullogismos*, its meaning is probably that of 'proposition'. This would mean that there is no propositional expression of the end in any case. However, Aristotle opposes this with *hupokeisthô*, which seems to involve a *hupothesis*. A *hupothesis* is a propositional statement. It seems therefore that there is some propositional grasp of the end. It might not be rational, but it still can be expressed propositionally.

To conclude with deliberation, the picture now seems to be this: the agent considering a moral end given beforehand by character works out the best means in order to realize such an end. When he has come to an appropriate result, i.e. when he has found an appropriate means to that end, he has reached a *decision* to act in a certain way. His decision contains a specification of what the end is. Deliberation consists partly of specification, however, determining what the end is or should be is not the same as specifying the intended end. Thus, the end, in a specific situation,

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mate ends" (Irwin 1975: 568). I subscribe to the second clause of this description, but not to the first. I do not think that Aristotle believes cognition to be totally inert. Rather, decision, which is the efficient cause of action, is a mix of both reason and desire.

[191] *EE* 1220b27-28: ἐν πᾶσι δὲ τὸ μέσον τὸ πρὸς ἡμᾶς βέλτιστον· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ὡς ἡ ἐπιστήμη κελεύει καὶ ὁ λόγος. See also 1229a1-11.

[192] *EE* II.11 1227b24-25: τούτου οὐκ ἔστι συλλογισμὸς οὐδὲ λόγος. ἀλλὰ δὴ ὥσπερ ἀρχὴ τοῦτο ὑποκείσθω.

takes the form of a moral rule or general proposition on what to do. My interpretation answers the intuition we usually have of the structure of moral action that we work out what end to pursue, as Anscombe points out. Yet, working out the end does not depend on a process of deliberation itself, but is the result of a process of *specification*, which is a by-product of the former and which is warranted by a different, non-rational, disposition, namely character.

Now, back to the issue of knowledge of universals. The content of knowledge of universals involves a moral end, i.e. an end which is valuable for itself, which one seeks for itself. This content can be more or less specific. But at the moment of decision, the end has necessarily been interpreted in a specific way. The content is somehow both desiderative and rational. The ultimate end, since given by character, stems from a non-rational impulse. Then, as it is specified throughout the process of deliberation, it is expressed rationally. Concerning their form, universals may therefore be expressed both as prescriptive propositions stating a moral principle and as general moral values expressing a moral end. Knowledge of universals, as a grasp of a moral end, is knowledge of a moral *value*. However, the end when specified in deliberation takes the form of a prescriptive proposition ('one ought to ϕ').[193] This conception of universals in ethics implies that in a practical context the agent is able, or knows how, to derive moral rules from his idea of what the moral end is. The evaluation of practical knowledge as knowledge should be based on this competency. Knowing in a strong sense that I should ϕ depends on my acquaintance and knowledge of moral values and on how I can formulate them into moral rules. But how do I *know* moral values? What makes me proficient in dealing with them? I shall tackle the epistemic evaluation of moral universals in the next chapter (§5.2). Now, I shall discuss the other component of practical knowledge, namely knowledge of particulars.

4.4 Knowledge of the particulars

As already mentioned, knowledge of universals is not sufficient for *phronêsis*. There is a need for knowledge of particulars (*gnôrizein ta kath'hekasta* 1141b14-16). Why is knowledge of the particulars required? Some answers found directly in Aristotle's work are that, first, knowledge of particulars is necessary for voluntary action (missing knowledge of particulars entails involuntary action – *EN*

[193] It seems that Aristotle has no problem with switching from values to norms. If O is good, then I should do x for the sake of O.

1110b31-33), and, second, it leaves one more able to achieve one's actions, i.e. it makes one 'more practical' (*praktikôteros* 1141b16-18).

Particulars in Aristotle are usually understood as particular instances of some kind, i.e. as individuals.[194] Particular propositions are thus propositions in which a predicate is attributed to a term referring to such an individual (See *DI* 17a38-b3). Moreover, particular propositions are usually taken to involve a very basic predicate e.g. 'Socrates is white', because they are closely associated with sense-perception. Indeed, in the *DA*, Aristotle links perception with particulars as opposed to the association between *epistêmê* and universals (417b22-23) and perception is often described as having fairly simple objects: instances of immediately observable individual properties such as colours, sounds, tangible surfaces, shapes, motions etc. (*DA* II.6 418a7-20).[195] Thus, *ta kath'hekasta* in the ethics would be propositions about concrete individuals with their perceptual property instances, excluding abstract relations and normative properties. This seems to be what Aristotle has in mind at *EN* VI.8 1142a20-23 (text 26) when he says that error about the *kath'hekaston* concerns a proposition such as 'this sample of water is heavy'. The use of the demonstrative pronoun seems to refer to a particular instance of heavy water and the property of 'being heavy' is immediately perceptible, unlike the relational property 'being harmful to *x*'. This way of construing *ta kath'hekasta* focuses on the individuality of the object.

However, according to *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23 (text 27), where knowledge of particulars is introduced, Aristotle seems to consider that *ta kath'hekasta* are not individual instances of some general types, but rather more specific types, i.e. *subtypes* of more general types. Indeed, the example in text (27) of a *kath'hekaston* is that 'bird meat is light and healthy' (1141b20), which looks like a specification of the

[194] See e.g. *Meta.* III.4 999b34-1000a1 "For we mean by "particular" what is numerically one, and by "universal" what holds of these." (οὕτω γὰρ λέγομεν τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον, τὸ ἀριθμῷ ἕν, καθόλου δὲ τὸ ἐπὶ τούτων).

[195] In other words, these are property instances, which we would nowadays call 'tropes'. These are what Aristotle calls 'perceptibles in themselves' (*kath'auton*), i.e. who are essentially perceptibles. Aristotle distinguishes such perceptible qualities into two groups: the proper perceptibles, on the one hand, which are perceptible by one sense only (colours with sight, sounds with ear, etc.), and the common perceptibles, on the other, which are perceptible by two senses or more (shapes, motions, sizes, etc.). One should notice, however, that Aristotle also distinguishes what he calls 'incidental perceptibles'. These denote the substances to which the proper perceptibles belong to. For instance, when perceiving this white, I incidentally perceive the son of Diares (*DA* II.6 418a20-25; III.1 425a24-27). Incidental perceptibles have sometimes been interpreted as the object of practical perception as when at *EN* VI.8 1142a25-30 Aristotle is comparing *phronêsis* with perception of mathematical objects (see e.g. Cashdollar 1973: 172-174). I shall not follow this line of thought here.

more general 'light meats are easily digestible and so healthy' (1141b18-19). According to this example, *ta kath'hekasta* in a practical context are not concrete individuals or particular property instances, but rather subtypes which are *kath'hekaston* insofar as they are less general than the *katholou* statements (See Cooper 1975: 29; Broadie 1991: 243-244; Natali 2001: 208-209, n. 48).[196]

However, this way of accounting for *ta kath'hekasta* loses touch with the meaning of *kath'hekaston* as particular instances. Yet, it is also undeniable that at 1142a20-23 Aristotle refers to a genuine particular rather than to a subtype. One way to make sense of the ambiguity of '*kath'hekaston*' is to take it not in the restrictive sense of 'what cannot be said of many', but rather in a more common sense. Literally, '*kath'hekaston*' means 'according to each' or 'one after the other'. In this sense, *kath'hekaston* can accommodate both meanings as particulars and as subtypes. If one consider a universal type as consisting of all the instances of that type, then considering it *kath'hekaston*, i.e. 'according to each part', amounts to enumerating the instances one by one. However, a universal can also be identified with the sum of all its subtypes. In this sense, then, considering the type *kath'hekaston* amounts to enumerating the subtypes which make up this more general type. However, this distinction does not account for the unitary use of *kath'hekaston*. We need an additional element which explains why we can use *kath'hekaston* indifferently to denote particular instances and subtypes.

One could also suggest that the decisive feature of being 'particular' in a practical context is that knowing this kind of object makes the agent 'more practical' (*praktikôteros*). The main reason why Aristotle insists on knowledge of particulars is precisely that it makes the agent more efficient in action (*EN* VI.7 1141b16-18 – text 27). If you know that bird meat (i.e. poultry) is light and healthy, you will 'produce health more'. One can understand this in the following way. For instance, a doctor would be able to 'produce health in his patient', i.e. to make him healthier, by prescribing him poultry. Accordingly, then, this piece of knowledge would be more effective than a more general one such as 'I know I ought to prescribe light meat' to this person, because in the latter case the agent does not know which specific kind of meat is light. In this case, 'Chicken meat is light' would count as a particular, not in virtue of its form, but because knowing it makes the agent more practical.

[196] Cooper even infers from this that the content of practical perception is always a subtype and that the job of deliberation is not the implementation of an action-type in an actual action, but the specification of the subtype (Cooper 1975: 33-34 and Appendix). However, Cooper has been convincingly refuted by Engberg-Pedersen, who notes that some instances of '*kath'hekaston*' do refer to genuine particulars: 1141b20 and 1143b4 (1983: 199-200, n. 5).

However, this argument is not satisfactory. Does knowing that 'chicken meat is light' really helps in practical situations? If one considers that *kath'hekaston* refers to a genuine particular, the practicality of knowledge of particulars seems to work. If I entertain the belief that 'I should eat light meat', then when I see a piece of chicken meat and I think 'this is light meat', this latter belief certainly helps to decide that I should eat it. However, it seems that one cannot use the same case with *kath'hekasta* as subtypes. In the same situation when believing that 'I should eat light meat', thinking additionally that 'chicken meat is light meat' brings me no nearer to action. Knowing that 'chicken meat is light' is not specific enough and it does not help making a particular decision. This way of reasoning can be extended. If I further consider that 'chicken meat makes digestion easier', which is even a more specific proposition, this still does not help in making a decision. It seems that unless I entertain a genuine particular proposition, i.e. which refers to a concrete individual, I will not be able to make a decision.

This way of thinking presupposes that by *praktikos* Aristotle means 'being able to act' in the sense that I am *praktikos* when I am in a position to act immediately, when nothing else is required. However, it is possible that *praktikos* also has a different meaning. Thus, this section will be devoted to clarifying what Aristotle means by *kath'hekaston*, and a definitive answer to this issue will require that one specifies what being *praktikos* means.

4.4.1 Particulars as the circumstances of the situation

In Book III, chapter 1, Aristotle concludes his discussion on voluntary action by offering a definition of it:

> 35) "The involuntary being done under constraint or because of ignorance, the voluntary would seem to be that of which the origin is in oneself, when one knows the particulars in which the action takes place." *EN* III.1 1111a22-24
>
> Ὄντος δ' ἀκουσίου τοῦ βίᾳ καὶ δι' ἄγνοιαν, τὸ ἑκούσιον δόξειεν ἂν εἶναι οὗ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰδότι τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα ἐν οἷς ἡ πρᾶξις.

The first condition, which concerns the 'origin' (*archê*) of the action, sums up the discussion of *EN* III.1 1110a2-b17 about problematic cases of acting under constraint. The second one solves cases of ignorance, as discussed at 1110b18-1111a21, for ignorance of some particular features of a situation may lead to an action one later regrets. If the agent had known the relevant features, he would not have acted as he actually did. In the actual case, his action counts as involuntary. Aristotle enumerates those circumstances:

36) "Perhaps, then, it is no bad thing to determine what these <particular factors> are, and how many they are. So: there is the matter of who is acting, what he is doing, about what or in what it resides, sometimes also with what (as for example with a tool), what the action is for (e.g. saving someone), and how it is done (e.g. gently or vigorously)." *EN* III.1 1111a3-6

ἴσως οὖν οὐ χεῖρον διορίσαι αὐτά, τίνα καὶ πόσα ἐστί, τίς τε δὴ καὶ τί καὶ περὶ τί ἢ ἐν τίνι πράττει, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ (5) τίνι, οἷον ὀργάνῳ, καὶ ἕνεκα τίνος, οἷον σωτηρίας, καὶ πῶς, οἷον ἠρέμα ἢ σφόδρα.

Aristotle provides us with a list of characteristics that the agent should know if he is to act voluntarily. He does not only mentions that the agent should know *some* particular features in order to act voluntarily, but he specifies those features by giving a classification of them. In order to have a better overview, I have listed these features in the table below:

1.	*tis*	Who is acting	The agent
2.	*ti*	What the agent is doing	The action
3.	*peri ti/en tini*	What the action is about or what its domain is	The object or the situation[197]
4.	*tini*	What the agent is acting with	The instrument
5.	*heneka tinos*	What the action is for	The end (or consequence)[198]
6.	*pôs*	How it is done	The manner

In order to make this list of circumstances more explicit, Aristotle gives examples such as the case of Queen Merope (1111a11), who mistook her own son for an enemy and ordered her soldiers to kill him, as is related in Euripides' lost tragedy *Cresphontes*. If the queen had known who this person really was, she wouldn't

[197] The meaning of this (or these) circumstance(s) is not immediately obvious. Translators often give their own version of *peri ti ê en tini*, without agreeing on its meaning. Gauthier and Jolif note that there are two main tendencies to understanding this group of circumstances: "what thing or who is object of action" *vs.* "object and situation of an action" and they take up the second interpretation (Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 185; see also Taylor 2006: 146). I follow this trend here.

[198] The treating of the *hou heneka*, i.e. the end, of an action as a mere particular circumstance of it is striking. Knowledge of the end is a central feature in decision-making and as such seems to have a more important role to play than to insure voluntariness of the action. Ignorance of the end entails the non-virtuousness of the agent. Moreover, the intended end of an action is accordingly not a particular circumstance but rather a general statement (to provide wealth to one's family). The *hou heneka* here perhaps merely refers to the *outcome* or *consequence* of the action, i.e. an "end" without any moral connotation, and the agent can be mistaken about it. The distinction between intended end and actual end could be placed in this framework.

have given such an order. She would probably have had a party set up in his honour. This example illustrates the 'about what/whom' type of circumstance.[199] Another expressive example features someone giving medicine ("give something to drink" - *pisas*) to a patient and ending up killing him (1111a13). In this case, the presumed doctor did not know that the medicine was not appropriate. Maybe he did not know that the medicine was too strong or he was unaware of some important detail in his patient's physiology. This example is related to the 'for the sake of what' type of circumstance. The chosen medicine is supposed to cure such and such a disease in patients of such and such a physiology. The unskilled doctor was ignorant of its effect. In both examples, the agent is not judged as acting voluntarily, because he is unaware of some aspects of the situation. Consequently, the intended action does not correspond with the action that is actually carried out.

Ever since Anscombe's *Intention*, it is commonly acknowledged that actions can be described in various ways and that it is possible that one knows what one is doing under a certain description but not under another (Anscombe 1957: 23-24, §6). It seems that this way of conceptualizing actions can be applied here.[200] In Euripides' tragedy, the queen's intended action is "ordering the execution of this individual", whereas as soon as one ascribes that "*this* individual is my son" to her description of the action, one cannot expect her to maintain her intention of killing this individual. The above table shows Aristotle's attempt to give a systematic structure in order to specify the content of an action. Of course, the wish for systematization does not carry on throughout. The list is neither exhaustive nor firmly established, as the mention of other such lists of circumstances shows (*EN* V.10 1135a25 *ff.*; *EE* II.9 1225b2-8). Aristotle provides nevertheless a list of *types* of circumstances which are instantiated as particular circumstances in the description of an action.

The content of an action is therefore specified by my knowledge of the particular circumstances that circumscribe the action. That I perform this very action *willingly*, under this specific description, depends on my knowledge of these circumstances particular to the present situation. This is indeed Aristotle second condition for voluntary action. The agent is supposed to know the particular circumstances, otherwise the description of the action he intends to carry out is not identical with the description of the action he actually does carry out.

[199] I follow Bodéüs concerning the distribution of examples to types of circumstances. Examples are in fact somewhat hard to match with the list of the types of circumstances.

[200] Taylor 2006: 132ff. For a similar application of the notion of 'knowing under a description' on Plato, see Santas, who refers explicitly to Anscombe (Santas 1964: 154-155).

It might sound surprising to claim that the voluntary agent knows *all* the particular circumstances that go with the action. True, there is no definite set of circumstances surrounding the acting agent; the amount of circumstances is undetermined. Moreover, not every circumstance is relevant for the agent. Besides, it might seem hard to imagine that the agent is actively considering all these various circumstances at the very moment of action. However, my interpretation does not require such stringent conditions as exhaustiveness of circumstances or active consideration of them. Rather, a more plausible picture is that we do not consciously have all the relevant features of an action in mind while performing it. By knowledge of the particular circumstances, I mean a diffuse awareness of these circumstances at the moment of action that is sufficient in order to have a definite description of the action, i.e. to call the action voluntary. This is an *a posteriori* criterion, according to which the agent has to account for his doing and his reasons to act *after* he has performed the action (*ex post* justification). One has to ask the agent reasons for his behaviour, i.e. a more or less complete explanation of his action in which he will list the relevant circumstances that justify it. In a nutshell, the agent only has a vague awareness of the particular circumstances at the very moment of action, and this awareness is sufficient in order to give an appropriate justification of the action.[201]

Now, it is undeniable that the particular circumstances Aristotle enumerates in his discussion on voluntary action are also found in the various definitions of particular virtues referred to in section 4.2. Aristotle uses the same descriptive tool in order to outline both voluntary and particular virtuous actions. For instance, in the definition of courage, the relevant circumstances which the agent should take into account are the object of his fear, the consequence, the manner and the moment.[202] In the case of mildness, the relevant circumstances are the patient of one's anger; the subject matter; the manner, the moment and the duration (or quantity).[203]

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[201] Of course, such an account of voluntary action might entail the possibility of 'retroactive' voluntary action. First, I act without reason, and then when I am asked to account for my action, I find out the right set of reasons. However, in my view, this account of knowledge of the circumstances as vague awareness is sufficient for voluntary action. The reasons the agent invokes in his justification *ex post* are already included in his awareness of the circumstances while performing the action. When the time comes to justify his deed, the agent simply expresses what he already knew implicitly. Of course, this case describes an ideal agent. By contrast, social psychology nowadays is interested in the discrepancy there is between the way actual agents accounts for their decisions and the actual reasons why they made these decisions. I thank Patrice Soom for drawing my attention to this point.

[202] ἁ δεῖ; οὐ ἕνεκα δεῖ; ὡς δεῖ; ὅτε δεῖ. See *EN* III.7 1115b17-20 (text 28).

[203] οἷς δεῖ; ἐφ'οἷς δεῖ; ὡς δεῖ; ὅτε δεῖ; ὅσον δεῖ. See *EN* IV.5 1125b31-33.

Yet, virtuous actions in play in the definition of virtues involve a normative aspect which is not present in the description of voluntary actions. A typical virtuous action is not merely doing ϕ to object *x* at time *t* in the way *w*, etc. as in the case of voluntary action, but doing ϕ *as one should*, to the object *one should*, at the time *one should* in the way *one should*, etc. It seems that Aristotle reuses his description of voluntary action in order to conceptualize virtuous action. Doing so, he adds a normative component in the description.

This implies that the virtuous agent, performing a virtuous action as described by the *orthos logos* also possesses knowledge of (an undetermined amount of) particular circumstances of the action. My view is that, when Aristotle speaks about 'knowledge of particulars' at 1141b14-16 (text 27), this kind of knowledge does not simply amount to a single statement such as 'this is sweet' or 'chicken meat is light', but contains a set of particular circumstances of the situation such as the object of action, the time of action, the manner, etc. Knowledge of particulars is that in virtue of which I have not only a certain knowledge of *what I am doing*, but rather a wider spectrum of associated information relevant to the situation which constitutes a framework describing an intended action. The agent knows what he is doing *as well as* that he is doing it for the sake of someone, with the help of a certain thing, in a certain manner, etc. One can thus describe knowledge of particulars as an awareness of the action directed at multiple features of the situation. The *kath'hekasta* Aristotle speaks about are in fact the various features of a practical situation in which the agent is engaged. This situation is particular in a genuine sense because it occurs only once.[204]

So, what are the *kath'hekasta* that *phronêsis* needs to know? Obviously, the *kath'hekasta* include genuine particular propositions gained from the observation of the situation. In the chicken meat case, it is necessary to know that 'this is chicken' for the agent to make a voluntary decision. However, the examples chosen by Aristotle in the passage on voluntary action show that the *kath'hekasta* are not limited to observational statements. Circumstances such as the effect of some drug, or such as 'this individual is my son' are not knowable by observing the situation. Some additional knowledge must be required for the agent to be in a position to know these circumstances, even though they are necessary for virtuous decision-making. This kind of circumstances denotes *abstract relational properties*. One could even allow normative properties to enter the class of particular circumstances of a situation. Chapters on the particular virtues show that when acting, the virtuous agent is

[204] The idea of grouping a multiplicity of considerations in knowledge of particulars has already been offered by Wiggins 1975-1976: 45 and McDowell 1979: 344.

somehow aware of normative states of affairs. When a better informed Queen Merope acknowledges that the individual in front of her is her son, one could attribute her the belief that 'this individual here is to be petted'. More generally, the agent knows things expressed in propositions like 'this object *x* is such that I ought to ϕ'.

Now, it seems that this extended interpretation of *kath'hekaston* thanks to the notion of circumstance of the action makes it possible to accommodate the use of *kath'hekaston* for subtypes, as in the proposition 'chicken meat is healthy'. In the chicken meat case, the situation is that of a dietician who intends to prescribe healthy food to his patient, say, Socrates. The notion of circumstance of the action entails that when the dietician writes up his prescription he must have in mind multiple data about the present situation. A relevant feature for the doctor to know is Socrates bodily constitution. He might also need to know the previous diet of Socrates, how many times a day he has meals, what kind of food would be appropriate, etc. Following the framework of the particular circumstances, the doctor's prescription would take the form: 'I need to prescribe chicken meat to Socrates who is presently suffering from stomach-ache.' In this case, chicken meat appears to be the *instrument* of the decision.

That Socrates is short is a particular fact in the sense of an individual property. By contrast, knowing that chicken meat is healthy is not a particular fact. However, that such a proposition is *kath'hekaston* or not does not primarily depend on its form, but on its connection to the situation. When asserting such a proposition, the dietician does insert it within a collection of beliefs which are related to a particular situation. 'Being healthy' is a relative property. A type of food is healthy *to* a certain kind of being. For lions, healthy food is raw meat, for mice healthy food is (presumably) cheese, whereas for human beings, healthy food is light meat. Moreover, being healthy relates not only to species, but also to individuals within this species. Chicken meat might be healthy for Socrates. It might also be good to Callias. However, in the case of a strong-built athlete, chicken meat would perhaps not be appropriate. His strong body would rather benefit from red meat. Poultry would cause his organism to weaken instead.[205] That 'chicken meat is healthy' is not

[205] Compare this with Aristotle's remark on the correct mean *relative to us* (*pros hêmas*) at *EN* II.6 1106a36-b7. There Aristotle observes that the mean relative to us should be proportional to the agent. The example he invokes is that of eating the right amount of food. Even if ten minae (about a pound) is a lot to eat and two is few, the dietician ought to prescribe an amount appropriate to the subject. In the case of a strong athlete like the wrestler Milo, who was famous for his appetite, the right amount would not be the arithmetic mean but should be proportional to his size and constitution.

true *simpliciter* but only insofar as it is related to Socrates as a particular individual. Correspondingly, the circumstance considered by the dietician is not merely 'chicken meat is healthy', but the circumstance connected to the actual situation 'chicken meat is healthy to Socrates'. In that sense, that chicken meat is healthy is a particular circumstance when it comes to curing Socrates. One should even go further and add that the property 'being healthy' is relative not only to a particular individual, but to a particular situation. A sick Socrates will not benefit from any kind of food in the same way as a healthy Socrates. For instance, if Socrates suffers from diarrhoea, he should not consume orange juice, although orange juice is usually known as being healthy. From this discussion, it appears that the object of the agent's belief on particulars is not merely a subtype, but a subtype connected to a particular situation. What the dietician knows as a particular circumstance when he prescribes chicken meat to Socrates is not that 'chicken meat is healthy', but the more specific 'chicken meat is healthy for Socrates now'.

A significant consequence of this account of the particular circumstances is that when Aristotle speaks of being *kath'hekaston* in a practical context, what matters is not whether a circumstance is an individual event occurring once or a subtypes specifying a more general type in a particular situation. The term *kath'hekaston* can accommodate both kinds of thing. Rather, that the object of knowledge of particulars is a *circumstance* entails that it can be either an individual event as a part of the situation, or a subtype relevant to the situation. The 'particulars' that the agent needs to know are the relevant features of a particular situation. They are 'particular' (*kath'hekaston*) insofar as they are related to the situation.[206] The proposition 'chicken meat is healthy' is particular in virtue of being part of a particular situation. As already said, the exact particular known by the dietician is 'chicken meat is healthy for Socrates in this present condition'. The more general content 'light meat is healthy' by contrast is not particular because when holding such a belief, we do not have the related information 'light for whom?' or 'healthy for whom?'[207]

As it was the case with knowledge of universals, whose object has been identified as a specification of a moral end, I have interpreted knowledge of the particulars as closely related to the evaluation of decision (see p. 103). According to this reading, knowledge of the particulars are connected to finding out the correct mean (*meson*). Ultimately, the question will be 'what is it to *know* what one should

[206] For a similar interpretation, see Devereux 1986: 489.

[207] It seems that 'light meat is healthy' is true without any reference to particular individuals. By contrast, 'chicken meat is healthy' must refer to a relative subject. The proposition 'chicken meat is healthy' alone is neither true nor false. One must add the relative subject 'for Socrates' for the proposition to take a truth-value.

do?' Correspondingly, I shall ask what it is to *know* the particulars. This will be the object of chap. 5. Yet, concerning the content of decision, there is still a further aspect to inquire into. Aristotle holds that knowing particulars makes one more able to act. What is it in the particulars which enables the agent to be better able to act? In what follows, I shall inquire what it is to be *praktikos* and to be *praktikôteros*. Aristotle offers the longest development on the question at *EN* VI.12-13, when he raises the *aporia* of the usefulness of *phronêsis*, and of *sophia*. Knowing what being *praktikos* means will inform us on the aspect of knowledge of particulars which interests us.

4.4.2 Particular knowledge makes the agent *praktikôteros*

At the end of book VI, Aristotle addresses an objection (*diaporêseie* 1143b18) to himself concerning the practicability of knowledge. He takes notice of a reproach one could make of his own notion of *phronêsis*. Does it really make us *praktikôteroi*, i.e. better able to act? Aristotle deals with this problem at *EN* VI.12-13.

> 37) "Since *phronêsis* is the <disposition>[208] about just and fine and good things for man, and these are the things that the good man typically does, by knowing these things we shall not be more able to do them, since the virtues are dispositions. Similarly, with the things related to health or to physical fitness (those that are said 'healthy' or 'fit' not because of producing, but because they come from the disposition), for we shall not be more able to produce them by having <science or art of> medicine and gymnastics." *EN* VI.12 1143b21-28
>
> εἴπερ ἡ μὲν φρόνησίς ἐστιν ἡ περὶ τὰ δίκαια καὶ καλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ ἀνθρώπῳ, ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶν ἃ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐστὶν ἀνδρὸς πράττειν, οὐδὲν δὲ πρακτικώτεροι τῷ εἰδέναι αὐτά ἐσμεν, εἴπερ ἕξεις (25) αἱ ἀρεταί εἰσιν, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ τὰ ὑγιεινὰ οὐδὲ τὰ εὐεκτικά, ὅσα μὴ τῷ ποιεῖν ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀπὸ τῆς ἕξεως εἶναι λέγεται· οὐθὲν γὰρ πρακτικώτεροι τῷ ἔχειν τὴν ἰατρικὴν καὶ γυμναστικήν ἐσμεν.

The main argument can be paraphrased in the following way: Knowing the things concerning the just, the fine and the good for humans does not make us more 'practical', i.e. able to achieve these things (*praktikôteroi*); *phronêsis* is knowledge of these things – by definition; therefore *phronêsis* does not make us *praktikôteroi* and is thereby not useful. This objection recalls the one he had addressed to Plato concerning the practicability of the form of the Good (*EN* I.6 1096b31-1097a13). How is it that knowing such things as the just, the fine and the

[208] Here I follow the OCT, along with Inwood & Woolf and Irwin. Rowe as well as Crisp omit the *hê* following manuscript Lb.

good does not make us more practical? The reason is that dispositions by themselves can be seen as sufficient in order to implement actions. The idea seems to be that when you have the disposition, then the correct actions result from having the disposition. In order to make his point, Aristotle compares the situation with health and physical fitness. Knowledge on health and physical fitness does not make us healthier or fitter. Rather, it is having the disposition of being healthy or being fit which results in being healthy or fit. Similarly, then, knowing what the just, the fine and the good are is not useful. The agent should already be just, fine or good.[209]

Aristotle answers this *aporia* on the practicability of *phronêsis* at 1144a11 onward, (after having dealt with another issue concerning the usefulness of *sophia*).

> 38) "Concerning the objection that we are not more able to perform (*praktikôterous*) fine and just things thanks to *phronêsis*, we need to start a little bit from above,[210] taking the following starting point." *EN* VI.12 1144a11-13
>
> περὶ δὲ τοῦ μηθὲν εἶναι πρακτικωτέρους διὰ τὴν φρόνησιν τῶν καλῶν καὶ δικαίων, μικρὸν ἄνωθεν ἀρκτέον, λαβόντας ἀρχὴν ταύτην.

Answering that puzzle will entail a long development. The final answer to the *aporia* will be given at the end of *EN* VI.13, at 1145a3ff. At that point, Aristotle will clarify that *phronêsis* is indeed useful. Here is a summary of the steps leading to his solution. First Aristotle introduces the division of labour between virtue of character and *phronêsis* (although he does not name *phronêsis* at once): virtue of character gives the end, while *phronêsis* is in charge of the means to the end (See §4.3.2). Then, he introduces *deinotês* (cleverness, or astuteness) as a faculty special-

[209] A way to avoid the above objection would be to shift slightly the point of the usefulness of *phronêsis*. Aristotle considers the view that even if *phronêsis* is not useful to perform virtuous action, it could be useful in order to become virtuous (1143b28-33). But even in this case, it turns out that being *phronimos* is not useful. Either one is already virtuous and does not need *phronêsis*, or one is not virtuous but does not have to be *phronimos* oneself in order to act virtuously; one can merely follow the *phronimos*' advice. The detail of this argument is not clear; however clearing it out is not necessary because this objection is not answered. Indeed, as Aristotle succeeds in answering the first objection, it becomes useless to cope with this one.

[210] The reference of *mikron anôthen* at 1144a13 is not clear. Burnet (1900: 283) refers back to 1139b14; Gauthier (1970: 548) refers to 1144a6-9; Dirlmeier (1963: 469) to 1134a16-23 and 1135a16-19. Greenwood translates the phrase "we must go a little deeper into the question", thereby avoiding any reference to a previous passage in the text. Younger scholars do not mention the phrase (e.g. Natali 2001; Dahl 1984; Reeve 2013). I contend that here Aristotle is merely referring to lines 1143b18-28, which contain the first statement of the *aporia* on the usefulness of *phronêsis*.

ized in succeeding to achieve any proposed goal, whatever the end at stake is. *Phronêsis* is then introduced as a kind of *deinotês*. In passing, Aristotle establishes the necessity of virtue for *phronêsis*: without virtue, there is no *phronêsis*, only *deinotês*. Then Aristotle introduces a parallel relation: virtue can also occur as a natural trait of character called 'natural virtue' (*phusikê aretê*). This way, he can show why *phronêsis* is useful (and even indispensable): *phronêsis* secures that we are not simply naturally virtuous, but virtuous in its full sense. Then, Aristotle concludes the argument with a famous formula on the reciprocity of *phronêsis* and virtue: virtue is necessary for *phronêsis* and *phronêsis* is necessary for virtue, that is, for virtue in its full sense (1144b14-17). In the rest of chapter 13, Aristotle deals with a couple of extra points which were objects of debate at the time. Whether virtue itself is a form of knowledge, as Socrates held (1144b17-30), or whether it is possible to possess one particular virtue alone, without the others (1144b32-1145a2). While these matters are very interesting as well, I shall not elaborate on them. Let us now come back to the argument on the usefulness of *phronêsis* more carefully.

The 'starting point' (*archê*) mentioned at 1144a13 amounts to distinguishing between performing a good action and performing a good action out of a virtuous disposition.

> 39) "Just as we say that concerning just actions, too, some people who act justly are not themselves just, for instance those who make what is ordered by the laws, or those who act involuntarily, or out of ignorance or for any other reason, but who do not act for the sake of the action itself (even though they perform the things one should do and all the things the *spoudaios* must do), similarly it seems that there is performing each things while being in such a disposition of being actually good. I mean, for instance, when one acts out of decision and for the sake of the things themselves one is doing." *EN* VI.12 1144a13-20
>
> ὥσπερ γὰρ καὶ τὰ δίκαια λέγομεν πράττοντάς τινας οὔπω δικαίους εἶναι, οἷον (15) τοὺς τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν νόμων τεταγμένα ποιοῦντας ἢ ἄκοντας ἢ δι' ἄγνοιαν ἢ δι' ἕτερόν τι καὶ μὴ δι' αὐτά (καίτοι πράττουσί γε ἃ δεῖ καὶ ὅσα χρὴ τὸν σπουδαῖον), οὕτως, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἔστι τὸ πῶς ἔχοντα πράττειν ἕκαστα ὥστ' εἶναι ἀγαθόν, λέγω δ' οἷον διὰ προαίρεσιν καὶ αὐτῶν ἕνεκα τῶν (20) πραττομένων.

Here Aristotle is recalling one kind of possible failure in action. It is possible to perform a good action without being in a virtuous disposition (*pôs echonta hôst'einai agathon*). Cases are when one simply follows the laws or by luck, when acting involuntarily. It is a frequent observation Aristotle makes. Similar cases are

raised at *EN* II.4 1105a17-26; V.9 1137a4-9; *EE* 1247b25.[211] This observation points at the function of virtue of character. Being disposed virtuously is what distinguishes an agent performing a genuinely good action from an agent performing a good action accidentally. This way, Aristotle can restate the contribution of virtue as marking off the genuinely virtuous action.

Yet, doing so, he distinguishes another aspect of moral agency. The discrepancy between genuinely virtuous action and good action by luck also corresponds to what I have called the case of the 'simple deliberator' at *EN* VI.9 1142b17-26 (§ 3.3.2.1, text 22). In this case, the agent ends up performing a good action, although he does not do it for the right reasons. Therefore, successful moral action does not only rely on the correctness of decision but also on the success of its implementation in action.

> 40) "Thus, virtue makes the decision correct. However, doing all what happens to be for the sake of decision does not belong to virtue, but to another faculty. But we must focus on these matters and make a clearer statement." *EN* VI.12 1144a20-22
>
> (20) τὴν μὲν οὖν προαίρεσιν ὀρθὴν ποιεῖ ἡ ἀρετή, τὸ δ' ὅσα ἐκείνης ἕνεκα πέφυκε πράττεσθαι οὐκ ἔστι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀλλ' ἑτέρας δυνάμεως. λεκτέον δ' ἐπιστήσασι σαφέστερον περὶ αὐτῶν.

The division of labour is thus introduced as consisting in that virtue makes the *decision* correct, while something else determines what is for the sake of decision.[212] It will be clear later that the 'other faculty' is in fact *phronêsis*.[213]

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[211] In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle even describes the lucky person whose behaviour is not grounded on rational considerations in the same way as virtuous agents. At *EE* 1247b25, the lucky person is said to "*desire* the thing one should, in the way one should and when one should" (ἐπιθυμοῦσι καὶ τούτου καὶ τότε καὶ οὕτως ὡς δεῖ καὶ οὗ δεῖ καὶ ὅτε). We find an adverbial description of the non-rational state of the lucky person that corresponds to the description of the *orthos logos* in the chapters on particular virtues, although the lucky person does not have any *logos* that goes together with the relevant desire.

[212] Here the job of virtue is not determining the *end* as was previously the case (§4.3.2), but making decision correct. In fact, that virtue makes decision correct does not occur earlier in the *EN*. However, it is to be found in the *EE*, where Aristotle reproduces the definition of virtue as a *hexis proairetikê* (1227b8). Then virtue is said to make the decision error-free: (ἡ ἀρετὴ ἀναμάρτητον ποιεῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν καὶ τὸ τέλος ὀρθόν 1227b12-13), and especially later " Virtue is what causes the end of one's decision to be correct" (τοῦ δὲ τὸ τέλος ὀρθὸν εἶναι τῆς προαιρέσεως [οὗ] ἡ ἀρετὴ αἰτία. 1228a1-2). Concerning the *EN*, decision is present in the definition of virtue: virtue as *hexis proairetikê* can be understood as a disposition that makes the decision correct (see also 1139a22-23). At 1111b5-6, Aristotle associates virtue and decision by saying that decision seems most proper to virtue (οἰκειότατον γὰρ εἶναι

In order to account for the specificity of *phronêsis*, Aristotle first introduces another disposition: *deinotês*. This is a faculty which enables the person gifted with it to achieve any proposed goal. Why does Aristotle not introduce *phronêsis* directly, avoiding the detour through *deinotês*? Introducing *deinotês* first is useful, for Aristotle can then insist on the 'technical' aspect of practical reason, which is the application of moral principles. The function Aristotle is straining to capture is that in virtue of which we are able to implement a given general end into an actual action. However, doing so, Aristotle is careful not to describe *phronêsis* as a mere instrumental disposition. *Deinotês* is a faculty indifferent to the end. If the end is good, then *deinotês* becomes *phronêsis*, but if the end is bad, then *deinotês* is mere unscrupulousness (*panourgia* 1144a23-29). *Phronêsis* is not such a morally neutral disposition. If it were nothing over and above *deinotês*, it would be detached from the end aimed at and would not be different from *technê*, having ends external to its activity. Also, if *phronêsis* were merely instrumental, its usefulness would not exceed the application of a rule of action and Aristotle would not answer the objection at stake, namely that *phronêsis* is not useful. A virtuous person would owe his moral excellence on his character alone. *Phronêsis* would not help to achieve good and just actions better. It would merely help the agent to implement actions with no regard for the intended end. Thus, in order to have *phronêsis*, virtue of character is necessary (1144a29-b1). *Phronêsis* appears as an intellectual virtue which includes a view on the end. The argument is basically that virtue keeps the starting points healthy, i.e. ensures that the agent follows the correct moral principle (See *EN* VI.12 1144a29-b1 – text 23).

This argument is important in the progression, because it shows that there is an aspect of moral agency which does not pertain to character-virtue, but to a rational disposition. It also suggests that this rational disposition cannot be merely instrumental and detached from the exercise of character virtue, but its function must be subtler. Then, Aristotle undertakes outlining what the function of *phronêsis* must be. But instead of introducing this function directly, he uses a counterfactual again.

At the beginning of chap. 13, Aristotle turns back to virtue and observes that there is a distinction to be made within character-virtue similar to the one between *phronêsis* and *deinotês*:

> 41) "We need to inquire virtue again. For virtue is disposed in a similar way: as *phronêsis* stands to *deinotês* – not identical, but similar,

δοκεῖ τῇ ἀρετῇ). Thus, it is reasonable to think that Aristotle is speaking about the same issue as when he is concerned with determining the end.

[213] *Pace* Irwin (1978: 268, n. 17), who claims that the 'other capacity' is in fact *deinotês*.

> so natural virtue stands to virtue in the full sense." *EN* VI.13 1144b1-4
>
> Σκεπτέον δὴ πάλιν καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς· καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἀρετὴ παραπλησίως ἔχει ὡς ἡ φρόνησις πρὸς τὴν δεινότητα – οὐ ταὐτὸ μέν, ὅμοιον δέ – οὕτω καὶ ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετὴ πρὸς τὴν κυρίαν.

One ought to distinguish between 'natural virtue' (*phusikê aretê*) and 'virtue in the full sense' (*kuria aretê*). Natural virtue is a counterpart to *deinotês* concerning virtue of character. As *deinotês* is somehow incomplete compared to *phronêsis*, so is natural virtue. Hence the counterfactual argument: if there would not be *phronêsis*, virtue of character would be mere natural virtue. The incompleteness of natural virtue is the following:

> 42) "For it seems that each of the character traits is somehow present by nature in everyone. For we are just and temperate and courageous directly from birth and have the other virtues. However, we look for something else to be the good in the full sense, and such character traits to be present in a different way. For the natural dispositions are present in children and beasts as well, but without intellect (*nous*) they seem to be harmful. So much seems to be a matter of observation: just as a powerful body when moving without sight will fall with powerful impact because of its sightlessness, so in this case too; but if one acquires intellect, it makes a difference to his actions. And the disposition being similar to this will then be virtue in the full sense." 1144b4-14
>
> πᾶσι γὰρ δοκεῖ ἕκαστα τῶν ἠθῶν ὑπάρχειν (5) φύσει πως· καὶ γὰρ δίκαιοι καὶ σωφρονικοὶ καὶ ἀνδρεῖοι καὶ τἆλλα ἔχομεν εὐθὺς ἐκ γενετῆς· ἀλλ’ ὅμως ζητοῦμεν ἕτερόν τι τὸ κυρίως ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἄλλον τρόπον ὑπάρχειν. καὶ γὰρ παισὶ καὶ θηρίοις αἱ φυσικαὶ ὑπάρχουσιν ἕξεις, ἀλλ’ ἄνευ νοῦ βλαβεραὶ φαίνονται οὖσαι. (10) πλὴν τοσοῦτον ἔοικεν ὁρᾶσθαι, ὅτι ὥσπερ σώματι ἰσχυρῷ ἄνευ ὄψεως κινουμένῳ συμβαίνει σφάλλεσθαι ἰσχυρῶς διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ὄψιν, οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα· ἐὰν δὲ λάβῃ νοῦν, ἐν τῷ πράττειν διαφέρει· ἡ δ’ ἕξις ὁμοία οὖσα τότ’ ἔσται κυρίως ἀρετή.

Aristotle observes that in a way, we all possess virtues naturally.[214] The point is that when we speak of being virtuous in the full sense, we mean something different than these innate virtues. The sign that natural virtues are not virtues in

[214] He says 'we', which is a little surprising, because this would imply that naturally all people are courageous, just and temperate, which is far from being the case... We could understand that by 'we' Aristotle understands his audience and himself, i.e. the social and intellectual elite of Athens at that time.

the full sense is that they might be harmful to us, whereas a genuine virtue cannot be but beneficial for its possessor. In order to make his point clearer, Aristotle makes an analogy with the body. He introduces the figure of someone having a strong body, but who is deprived of sight. Because of his lack of sight, his strong body will lead him to fall even more heavily. Aristotle does not complete the analogy by returning to the case of the virtues, but we can reconstruct the idea. Someone with natural virtue lacking in intellect (*nous*) will tend to react in an excessive way.[215] The naturally courageous might act boldly, the naturally temperate might turn out to react in a way too insensitive (probably), whereas the naturally just, might tend to favour one side unjustly. Here the fault is not due to excess in itself, i.e. to a mistake concerning the end pursued. As the notion of natural virtue implies, the agent has the right disposition. Rather, the mistake resides in the actualization of his disposition. There is a need for a disposition to channel the impulse of the naturally virtuous agent.

I assume that the flaw Aristotle is pointing at is a default in practicality, i.e. a lack of knowledge of the relevant particulars.[216] As the strong but blind person fails to notice some obstacles on his path, which causes his fall, the young person deprived of '*nous*' fails to notice relevant features of the situation. Consequently, he is not able to judge the situation adequately and his response to it is not appropriate. He fails to discover the *mean* (*meson*) between excess and deficiency. In other words, the young person lacks of moral sensibility. Here comes *phronêsis* into play. If virtue of character were deprived of *phronêsis*, it would be mere natural virtue, i.e. a disposition which would aim at the right end, yet unreliably.[217]

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[215] I understand that *nous* here should not be given the technical meaning of the state grasping first principles. It rather means intelligence in general (see n.18). A few lines earlier, another occurrence of *nous* just has the same meaning (*EN* VI.11 1143a27). For a defence of this reading, see §5.2.2.2.

[216] By contrast, Reeve reads this passage assuming a technical meaning of *nous*. According to him, what distinguishes the naturally virtuous person from the fully virtuous one is that the latter has a correct conception of the ultimate end, namely *eudaimonia* (Reeve 1992: 86).

[217] One could object to this interpretation that the *aporia* of *EN* VI.12-13 about the usefulness of *phronêsis* is a new development in Aristotle's account and does not directly draw on material of the earlier chapters, i.e. on the being *praktikôteros* of EN VI.7. True, at *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23, Aristotle has been more specific by arguing that only one aspect of *phronêsis* makes us *praktikôteroi*, namely knowledge of particulars. By contrast, the *aporia* at *EN* VI.12 1143b24 addresses *phronêsis* as a whole, not only on its component of knowledge of particulars. However, the objection against the practicality of *phronêsis* appears as a direct attack on Aristotle's claim of *EN* VI.7 1141b14-16 that knowledge of particulars included in *phronêsis* makes us *praktikôteroi*. In his reply to the objection, Aristotle summons precisely the relevant kind of knowledge of particulars: what is crucial in the contribution of *phronêsis* is the ability of the agent to assess the relevancy of particular features of the situation in order to find his

Phronêsis appears as a disposition thanks to which the agent is better off at finding the mean, because he is better at judging the relevancy of the particular circumstances of the action. Indeed, *phronêsis* involves knowledge of the particular circumstances of the situation. Having such knowledge makes one more 'practical' because it provides a refined notion of what is going on and of what one should do. The agent armed with such knowledge will therefore be better at attaining the mean in his decision. Hence, *phronêsis* is practical in the sense of being efficient because it is a disposition which involves such knowledge of the particulars. It is not simply *deinotês* which applies the end without regard for its appropriateness to the situation, but it is a disposition which is able to reassess the end with regard to the relevant features of the situation.

I shall come back to this feature of the *phronimos* and expand upon the argument on the kind of knowledge required for the *phronimos*. For the time being, I want to summarize what this passage teaches about the particulars in practical thought. It is worth noting that contrary to the man with a strong body, the naturally virtuous person is not literally blind. The naturally virtuous agent possesses some information on his surroundings and this information certainly takes the form of beliefs about particular features about the situation. He might even possess some idea of a moral end to pursue or of general statements helping him in his deliberation. What distinguishes him from the fully virtuous person is that the information he has about the situation is not appropriate. He does not consider the relevant circumstances in order to make a virtuous decision. By contrast, the fully virtuous agent entertains beliefs about the relevant circumstances.

This suggests a distinction to be made between perceived circumstances and relevant circumstances. What first appears as prominent to the agent is not necessarily what is the most relevant for decision-making. Consider a fully virtuous and a naturally virtuous agent confronted to similar situation. Both are followers of the claim introduced at the end of chap. 3 that injustice ought to be punished. They both have a friend who has borrowed money from them. One day, they meet this friend incidentally on the market place. They both require their friend that he pays back his debts, yet the friend does not accede their demand. What are the reactions of both proponents of justice? The view presented at the beginning of *EN* VI.13 argues that they will not react in the same way, and that this difference can be expressed in terms of practicality. The naturally virtuous agent will indeed hold the correct moral starting point, namely that one ought to punish unjust people. He

way out. Moreover, the analogy of the strong blind person uses terminology that has already appeared, in particular in passages where Aristotle compares *phronêsis* with *empeiria* (*EN* VI.8 1142a11-20; VI.11 1143b11-14; see chap. 5).

will also be aware that his friend has not paid him back, which turns out to be an instance of injustice. His decision, therefore, will be an instance of punishing (a blow in the face, having his friend arrested, robbing him, etc.) By contrast, the fully virtuous agent will react differently, because he is more *praktikos*. In other words, he has better knowledge of the particulars. In the present case, he also knows an additional fact, namely that his friend is going through a hard time. Maybe he knows that from an external source, but maybe he also understands it from the look of his friend. This belief that his friend is having a hard time should also go with a further belief that he needs understanding concerning money matters. Consequently, the fully virtuous agent will not mistreat his friend as his naturally virtuous companion does. The outcome of this comparison is that the naturally virtuous agent and the fully virtuous one are not sensitive to the same facts.

I shall argue in chap. 5 that what explains the difference of their behaviour is the lack of experience (*empeiria*) of the naturally virtuous agent. What matters for the time being is the result that the particulars which must be known by the *phronimos* agent are not necessarily identical with perceptible particulars, but are more elaborated facts. The agent needs experience of this kind of facts if he is to cognize them. What Aristotle calls *knowledge* of particulars, then, cannot be mere perception of any particular features of a given situation. Rather, the agent must consider features which are relevant for decision-making.[218]

4.5 Conclusion

In chapter 3, I have argued that practical thought can be formalized as an argument. Such an argument consists of a major premise, of a minor one, and of a conclusion, whose content is a decision to act. Correspondingly, chapter 4 has shown that the content of the decision depends on the respective content of both premises. First, the agent must hold a universal proposition which describes an action-type which should be applied to a situation. Second, he also must hold a particular proposition which states a fact particular to the present situation.

The major premise consists in a prescriptive proposition about an action-type ('I ought to Φ'). However, as I have attempted to show, this proposition is in fact the result of a specification process which started from a non-rational representation of a moral value. From an undetermined feeling of what is valuable, the

[218] In a recent article, Dana Miller illustrates very well how empirical *knowledge* of particulars is different from perceptual awareness of particulars. According to her, experience (*empeiria*) of particulars is not just a collection of particular observations, but an *ordered* set of particulars (Miller 2014: 129-130). I develop these aspects in chap. 5.

agent derives an explicit rational description of what he should do. Concerning the minor premise, my reading of the chapters on the particular virtues has shown that in a particular situation, the knowledge of particulars one attributes to the agent does not consist in a single statement only, but rather on a collection of various beliefs about the situation itself or about related states of affairs. Knowledge of particulars in this context amounts to a general representation of the situation. What matters for the agent to make a virtuous decision is this collection of statements. The minor premise of a practical syllogism is then only one of these propositions, which has been singled out for the purpose of moral justification.

This description of the content of decision provides conditions under which one can affirm that the agent genuinely *knows* what he should do. Knowing what one should do depends on both these kinds of knowledge. The epistemic evaluation of decision will therefore depend on the acquaintance of the agent with moral values and moral principles, i.e. his awareness of what one should do in general, on the on hand, and his acquaintance with particulars, i.e. the specific features that matter in the present situation, on the other. Knowing moral principles enables the agent to direct his intention to act correctly, towards the right action-type, whereas knowing particular features will enable him to implement his intention efficiently and in a non-incidentally virtuous way. On the contrary, if an agent lacks proper knowledge of one of these aspects, one cannot attribute practical knowledge to him. On the side of knowledge of universals, one who is deprived of a correct notion of what kind of actions are right or wrong in general is either brainless or wicked. On the side of particular knowledge, someone with a mistaken perception of what is relevant in a situation will either fail to implement the end he intends to carry out, or he will lack knowledge of the appropriate way to achieve it (he misses the mean). Thus, it is possible to *evaluate* an agent's decision epistemically, i.e. according to his knowledge or acquaintance of what he should do.

Moreover, in my view, analysing each premises of the practical argument is not sufficient in order to account for the epistemic strength of decision. What matters in practical knowledge is how I can relate specific features with my knowledge of universal principle. Practical knowledge depends on my awareness of the particular situation and how I can relate its features to moral principles. The next chapter is devoted to an investigation on the epistemology of each kind of premise, as well as on their relation.

CHAPTER 5

5 The epistemic basis of practical knowledge

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 3, I have argued that the content of decision can be formalized as an argument consisting in a major premise and a minor one. Chapter 4 has cleared up what each kind of premise is about. The major premise consists in a moral rule which is the expression of a moral end. The minor premise, on the other hand, is about a moral fact, which I call a circumstance of the action, and that the agent observes immediately among a multiplicity of other such facts. On the basis of this framework, I now want to offer an account of the epistemic evaluation of practical thought. Under which conditions does an agent fully know what he should do? I assume that the formal structure of practical thought provides a useful guide for that purpose. As the content of decision can be formalized as an argument, its epistemic evaluation depends on the components of the argument. Indeed, we have seen in the previous chapter that *phronêsis* requires knowledge of universals as well as knowledge of particulars (*EN* VI.7 1141b14-23). The epistemic evaluation of practical thought would thus depend on the kind of cognition the agent has of universal moral principles, on the one hand, and of the particular circumstances of the action, on the other.

Concerning cognition of universals, I have argued at § 4.3 that our grasp of moral goals is both desiderative and rational. Moral ends are given by our character insofar as this is the kind of person we are which determines the kind of things we value. This kind of determination is general and is not necessarily explicit. I can merely *feel* that I desire such and such a thing without expressing it in words. Nevertheless, moral ends can also be the objects of a propositional description. In practical reasoning about what things I should do, I might come to express the kind of ends I value in a rational formulation, as a rule or value I follow. I might also come to express such principles in the moral justification of my action, i.e. whether what I have done is right or wrong. This formulation of what I believe as good, or right, is the object of my cognition of universals in practical thought. In the case of a virtuous action, this belief would then amount to knowledge of universals. It would then make sense to evaluate one's practical knowledge in decision upon one's knowledge of universal moral notions such as the good, the just or the virtuous.

Scholars have often considered that the epistemic superiority of the *phronimos* depends on his better grasp of moral notions, i.e. on his knowledge of universals. Some have attempted to found the universal component of practical knowledge on a kind of practical intuition, or intellection, that is always true (the so-called 'practical *nous*').[219] The true intellectual grasp of moral principles would then be a necessary condition for the *phronimos'* decision to be correct, i.e. practically true. However, in the first part of this chapter, I shall argue that this position is not Aristotle's. There is no occurrence of a practical *nous* of ethical principles in a sense similar to *nous* of the first principles of a science. On the contrary, occurrences of *nous* in the crucial pages of *EN* VI show that the focus concerning practical knowledge is not so much about knowledge of universals, but on the moment of decision (*EN* VI.8 1142a25-30; VI.11 1143a35-b5). I shall argue that one's cognitive access to moral principles does not rely on a higher-order capacity like *nous* but on a lower-order one, namely *phantasia*.[220]

Regarding the particulars, it seems that the epistemic evaluation of cognition of the circumstances is not so informative. Indeed, knowledge of particulars amounts to knowledge of basic facts such as 'this is bread' or 'chicken is light'. This might lead one to identify knowledge of particulars with perception. If one conflates knowledge of particulars with perception, the conditions for such knowledge are identical with those of perception. It seems that stating the conditions in which the agent *really* knows the particulars does not really matter, because the conditions for perception to be true are not mysterious for Aristotle. Perceptual knowledge depends on the causal effect of the object of perception on the observer's senses. Aristotle does not worry about some sceptical doubt one could have about perceptual knowledge (Taylor 1990: 116-117). Besides, wondering about the truth or reliability of knowledge of facts would not be proper to practical knowledge, but would be common to a general study of knowledge. However, in the second part of this chapter, I shall argue that what really matters in practical cases is not whether my perception of such and such a fact is true, but whether the circumstances I perceive are those relevant for virtuous decision-making.

Thus, I contend that Aristotle has a way to describe practical knowledge as knowledge in a strong sense, by contrast to an approximate belief of what to do. This way of knowing moral matters is quite different from what we usually call knowledge. The crucial aspect of practical knowledge is not knowing moral values

[219] Kenny 1979: 151–2; Engberg-Pedersen 1983: 211–19; Dahl 1984: 41–5; Reeve 1992: 99; Taylor 2008.

[220] Such a view has been advocated for by Burnet 1900: 64-68, esp. 67; Natali 2002: 182; Achtenberg 2002; Bodéüs 2004: 116, n. 2; Moss 2012 chap. 7.

or principles, but being able to tie such values and principles to a particular situation by recognizing particulars as instances of these. In this respect, the crucial disposition in play in practical reason is not some putative intellection of principles like *nous*, but *experience* of moral matters. Indeed, I argue that according to Aristotle experience (*empeiria*) is this disposition that recognizes particulars as instances of universals.

In what follows, I shall first develop this deflationary account of knowledge of the good and universal moral notions. This will include a discussion and rejection of the intellectualist position that knowledge of the good depends on a higher cognitive capacity such as *nous*. In the second half of this chapter, I shall turn to knowledge of particulars and show how experience matters in the process of decision-making.

5.2 Knowledge of the end

At 1141b14-23 (text 27), it appears that knowing moral universals, along with knowledge of particulars, is a necessary condition for being virtuous, i.e. being disposed to act virtuously. In what sense can someone be said to have knowledge of universals? Is it knowledge in a strong sense as having intellection (*nous*) of theoretical first principles? Is it just knowledge in a weaker sense? One could indeed hold that moral properties such as being good, or being just cannot be known reliably and are only the object of belief. A way to tackle the question is to follow Aristotle's account of how one acquires virtue. In chap. 4, I have argued that we should take Aristotle literally when he says that virtue gives the end, or more generally character (and thus reason, or more specifically *phronêsis*, takes part in positing the end only insofar as it helps in the process of spelling out an explicit moral principle; §4.3). Thus, once one has an account of how to become virtuous, one should have a better idea of the kind of knowledge that goes along with being virtuous.

5.2.1 Habituation and knowing the end

In chapter 2, I have shown Aristotle's conception of moral action as a response to a situation qualified in a certain way. This response can be excessive, deficient, or appropriate. In a given domain of human activity (warfare, justice, trade, etc.), I can respond to a situation either excessively, or too little, or appropriately. Actions which are excessive and deficient responses will be qualified as bad, whereas actions which are appropriate responses will be qualified as good (*EN* II.2 1104a11-27). This is the basis of Aristotle's conception of virtue as a *mean* (*meson*)

between excess and deficiency, and of each particular virtue as a mean in its respective domain of activity (See §2.4).

The fundamental feature of Aristotle's conception of moral education is that character (*ethos*) is forged according to the kind of actions one performs. If I tend to perform excessive actions in the domain of justice, I shall end up being an unjust person, valuing excessive (or deficient) distribution of goods. If on the contrary I have got used to always share equally, this kind of behaviour will become part of myself. I shall become a just person and tend to always share things equally (or at least try to). This is what Aristotle calls habituation (*ethismos*). Habituation is the process that leads to the acquisition of definite character traits, and in particular to virtuous character traits, through the repetition of actions of the same moral tenor.[221]

The most significant feature of character for my current purpose is that it disposes us to respond to situations in a definite way. If performing actions of a certain moral type will confirm my character, in return my character disposes me to perform actions of the same moral type than my character. Aristotle describes this process in the case of virtue. A particular virtue disposes us to perform virtuous actions of the corresponding type.

> 43) "But not only the becoming and growth as well as the destruction <of the virtues> do come from the same things and are due to the same things, but the activities too will consist in the same things. For this also holds in other cases which are more obvious, as for instance with bodily strength. For strength comes about from taking a lot of food and from withstanding repeated exertion, and the one most able to do such things would be the strong man. So it goes with the virtues as well. For from staying away from the pleasures we become temperate, and once we have become so we are most able to stay away from these. And similarly, too, with courage: by getting used to think slightly and to withstand frightful things we become courageous, and once we have become so we shall be most able to withstand frightful things." *EN* II.2 1104a27-b3

[221] Habituation works on the basis of feeling pleasure or pain. Basically, I tend to desire what is pleasant and to avoid what is painful. By performing many times an action of a certain nature, I get to take pleasure in it. Thus, correct habituation brings about that I learn to take pleasure in noble activities and noble things. This account is essential in order to understand the nature of morality in Aristotle. However, I am not directly interested in the process of becoming virtuous, but in the epistemic evaluation of practical reason. I shall then not speak of that issue further. For illuminating accounts on the question, see Burnyeat 1980; Sherman 1989 chap. 5, Moss 2012 chap. 4.

> ἀλλ' οὐ μόνον αἱ γενέσεις καὶ αὐξήσεις καὶ αἱ φθοραὶ ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν γίνονται, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἱ ἐνέργειαι ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἔσονται· καὶ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν (30) ἄλλων τῶν φανερωτέρων οὕτως ἔχει, οἷον ἐπὶ τῆς ἰσχύος· γίνεται γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ πολλὴν τροφὴν λαμβάνειν καὶ πολλοὺς πόνους ὑπομένειν, καὶ μάλιστα ἂν δύναιτ' αὐτὰ ποιεῖν ὁ ἰσχυρός. οὕτω δ' ἔχει καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν· ἔκ τε γὰρ τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἡδονῶν γινόμεθα σώφρονες, καὶ (35) γενόμενοι μάλιστα δυνάμεθα ἀπέχεσθαι αὐτῶν· ὁμοίως δὲ (1104b) καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀνδρείας· ἐθιζόμενοι γὰρ καταφρονεῖν τῶν φοβερῶν καὶ ὑπομένειν αὐτὰ γινόμεθα ἀνδρεῖοι, καὶ γενόμενοι μάλιστα δυνησόμεθα ὑπομένειν τὰ φοβερά.

Virtue is described as a disposition to respond to a given situation in a consistent way, i.e. by performing a virtuous action. The temperate person tends to respond in a temperate way to situations where bodily pleasures are in play; the courageous person tends to respond in a courageous way to dangerous of frightening situations, and so on with the other virtues. This account of virtue can be widened to non-virtuous character traits. Indeed, character traits other than virtues (e.g. vices) are also kinds of *hexis*, i.e. dispositions to respond to a situation which can be evaluated (*EN* II.5 1105b19-28; cf. p. 65). More generally, then, character groups various dispositions to respond to different kinds of situation (situations involving danger, pleasures, contracts, etc.), and these dispositions are character features which dispose the agent to respond to these situations in a consistent way. Thus, character ensures a relative reliability of our moral responses. A given character trait, even if not virtuous, is a reliable disposition to respond to a practical situation. In particular, virtue is a reliable disposition to respond to a moral problem appropriately, or 'correctly'. E.g. in situations of danger, the virtuous agent will tend to react courageously.

In this sense, one can assert that virtue and, more generally, character give the end. Indeed, the kind of end in view in such situations is internalized in the agent's character. That the agent is courageous precisely means that he is disposed to follow courageous behaviour as an end. That the agent is a just person means that he is disposed to do the kind of actions that promotes justice. More generally with virtue, the virtuous agent is of such a character that he tends to act for the sake of the good, or of *eudaimonia*.

Now, accounting for the grasp of the correct end in terms of habituation, virtue, and the appropriateness of the response seems to point at a purely desiderative, mindless process of the soul, devoid of any representational content. In such case, it is hard to speak of 'knowledge' of the end, for the state that grasps the end is not rational. Besides, such an account is at odds with *EN* VI.12-13 where Aristotle

makes clear that a rational element, which he calls *nous*, is necessary for the exercise of virtue in the full sense (1144b9 see text 42). The process I have described so far would rather correspond to the kind of behaviour displayed by someone who is '*naturally* virtuous', i.e. someone who has been properly raised and who spontaneously tends to perform good intended actions. This person would lack a personal representation of what he is doing and of the corresponding end. There would therefore be a need for an additional component in the agent's soul which would be able to provide a cognitive grasp of the end.

Such a portrait of the well-habituated person, however, is excessive and does not include the representational capacities of the agent. Indeed, when distinguishing between parts of the soul at *EN* I.13, Aristotle introduces a part which he calls 'appetitive or desiderative' (*epithumêtikon kai holôs orektikon*) and which has virtue of character as its excellence (1102b13-1103a6). This part is non-rational insofar as it opposes reason. However, Aristotle also calls it 'rational' since it somehow takes part in reason (*logou de kai touto phainetai metechein* 1102b25-26). For instance in the virtuous person this part listens to reason as a child listens to his father, that is, desires are in accordance with reason. This description shows that the desiderative part, which contains character dispositions, desires and emotional responses, also has certain cognitions[222]. Thus, someone who is acting on the basis of his character alone still has cognitions of what he does and what for. This cognition is maybe not a rational one, i.e. not determined by reason, yet it still is cognition of the end (See the distinction between cognitive and rational at §1.4 p. 27).

Aristotle offers a view close to this at *EN* III.4. There he asserts that the virtuous man has a correct representation (*phantasia*) of the good, whereas the vile one has a wrong representation of the good.

> 44) "Therefore, we should say that the good is without qualification and in truth the object of wish, whereas the object of wish for each person is the apparent good. We shall then be saying that for the virtuous person the object of wish is something which is truly good, whereas for the bad person it is any chance thing" 1113a23-26[223]

[222] In the case of the vicious agent, the psychology is the same. The vicious agent also has a certain cognition of the end, even if it is a morally wrong one. The desiderative part of the vicious agent is also liable to listen to reason, although it does not. In fact, as I shall show in §6.2.2 on the difference between the *akratês* and the intemperate person (*akolastos*), the *akolastos* is precisely characterized in that his appetite has a rather sophisticated content. The vicious person does not differ from the virtuous one in that it has *no* articulate cognition of the end, but in that its representation of the end is mistaken.

[223] I shall give a full account of this passage later, see text (47).

> ἆρα φατέον ἁπλῶς μὲν καὶ κατ' ἀλήθειαν βουλητὸν εἶναι τἀγαθόν, ἑκάστῳ δὲ τὸ φαινόμενον; (25) τῷ μὲν οὖν σπουδαίῳ τὸ κατ' ἀλήθειαν εἶναι, τῷ δὲ φαύλῳ τὸ τυχόν

The object of wish for each person, which is also the moral end pursued (1113a15; see also *EN* I.8 1098b18-20), is the apparent good (*phainomenon agathon*). What appears good to the virtuous person is in fact good, whereas what appears good to the vile person is not and could be anything.[224] A few lines later, Aristotle adds: "in every things, what is true *appears* to the virtuous person" (*kai en hekastois talêthes autô phainetai* 1113a30-31). Hence, the virtuous person has a *phantasia* of the good that turns out to match the actual good, whereas the vile person has a wrong *phantasia* of the good. This passage seems to show that a non-rational cognitive access to the good is sufficient for virtuous behaviour, and for rational action more generally.

That habituation is not a mindless process is also due to a second aspect of the agent's moral psychology. In chapter 4, I have shown that although the agent does not deliberate on moral ends for their own sake, moral ends are nevertheless included in his deliberation (cf. p. 132). In the process of decision-making, moral ends even receive a specific content which eventually takes the form of a prescriptive proposition that can in turn stand as the major premise of a practical argument.

One needs thus to make an important distinction between two ways of speaking of moral ends. There are on the one hand general, vague ends, which are not determinate and which do not have a structured content. On the other hand, there are concrete ends, which pertain to a definite situation. Broadie calls them 'defining' and 'deliberative' ends, respectively (Broadie 1991: 195). Defining ends are very general and abstract ends such as 'happiness', 'virtue', or 'justice'. They are not directly applicable to a situation. I contend that these kind of ends is properly given by character and that there is no need for reason to taking part in their de-

[224] This reading implies that one reads *phainomenon* literally as meaning 'being cognized by *phantasia*'. This reading has been contested, though. There is a debate about the nature of the grasp of the end by the virtuous person. Indeed, *phainesthai* can either mean 'to appear' or 'to believe', as in English when I say 'it seems to me that P', I can mean either 'it literally appears to me that P, or 'I believe that P' (see Moss 2012: 70). If one takes the 'appearance' of the good in a representative sense, it means that the good merely appears to the virtuous person. In other words, the agent has a *phantasia* of the good and this cognitive state does not involve reason. On the other hand, if one takes *phainesthai* in its doxastic sense, then that the object of wish *appears* as good to the virtuous man in fact means that the object of wish *seems* to be good to the virtuous man. In this case, the agent *believes* that the good is so and so, and this involves rational discrimination of the object. I shall offer a full defence of the representationalist – or 'phantastic' – interpretation below at §5.2.3.

termination. By contrast, deliberative ends are concrete ends which have a determinate content and which play a role in our deliberation. As such, they are determined rationally. They also are the result of the process of specification that starts from the defining end and goes all the way to an end that is specific to a situation and that is directly applicable to it.

The view I defended in chap. 4 states that by 'virtue (or character) gives the end' Aristotle means that character provides the general orientation of the moral ends we value. It does not prevent that we reflect rationally on concrete moral goals in particular pieces of deliberation. However, it also includes the point that at the moment of giving a more specific content to a moral end, character is prevalent over reason. In difficult cases, in which it is hard to decide how to realize a general goal, what ultimately determines the moral principle I follow is character. For instance, if my goal in life is happiness and I come to a point where I have to choose between accepting a good position abroad or staying with my family, if I have good reasons for both options and none of these is decisive, what will ultimately motivate my choice will be non-rational preferences for a kind of life over the other.

According to this reading, 'knowing universals' amounts to having the correct moral end. The end is provided by character. It also has a rational content, since the end is specified through a process of deliberation, but character is decisive with regard to this specification. This position is obviously not the only one in Aristotelian scholarship. There has also been an influent interpretation according to which reason has an essential share in providing the ends of practical reason. I shall now examine this interpretation and argue against it before giving a full defence of my own view.

5.2.2 Practical *nous*

Commentators have argued against the apparent mindlessness of the grasp of the end by claiming that it is in fact grasped by a higher cognitive capacity than *phantasia*. They hold that reason takes part in the determination of the end. A fundamental intuition that justifies this view is that we want our ends *because* we *think* they are good.[225] Unless an agent has a rational conception of the good, his desires have no object.

The most straightforward way to attribute the determination of moral ends to reason is the position I shall call 'intellectualism'. Proponents of intellectualism suppose that Aristotle conceived of an intuitive component of *phronêsis*, namely

[225] Wiggins 1975-1976: 41, referring back to Allan 1953: 124, himself reformulating a position first presented by Loening 1903.

practical intellect (*nous praktikê*). Practical *nous* would be a counterpart to the theoretical *nous* of the first principle of theoretical sciences. It would come about from a kind of practical induction, which would be a counterpart to the theoretical induction of the first principles of *APo* II.19.[226] However, there is strong evidence at *EN* VI that intellectualism cannot be Aristotle's position. Intellectualism is at odds with many occurrences where Aristotle is clear that reason, in the form either of deliberation or of *phronêsis*, does not set the end (*EN* III.3 1112b11-16; VI.12 1144a6-9; VI.13 1145a5-6; VII.8 1151a15-19). Intellectualists rely on a few passages of *EN* VI in order to argue for the moral role of intellect (1141b12-14; VI.9 1142b31-33; VI.11 1143a35-b5). In these passages, Aristotle mentions *nous* as having a certain role in practical thinking. One could then infer from these that there is something like a 'practical *nous*' which determines moral ends. These passages, in particular 1143a35-b5, are difficult and it is true that one might misunderstand them as promoting *nous* as determining the end. I should then offer my own reading of these passages.

Although intellectualism is not the only option that favours a strong participation of reason in setting the end, I shall focus on this kind of interpretation here. Indeed, it is crucial for my purpose that the phrase 'practical intellect' be clearly examined. Aristotle has something similar to practical intellect, but which has nothing to do with the intellectualist interpretation. Rather, as I shall show in the second part of this chapter, practical intellect is the ability to spot the relevant circumstances in a situation in order to come to the correct decision. It has therefore more to do with knowledge of particulars than with knowledge of the end. For the time being, I want to show that intellectualism is misleading and to give my own interpretation of the cognition of moral ends.

5.2.2.1 EN VI.8 1142a25-30

A first piece of evidence that *nous* does not intervene in the cognition of practical principles lies in the strong opposition Aristotle sees between *nous* and *phronêsis*. In *EN* VI.8, Aristotle opposes *phronêsis* to intellect (*nous*) as it was introduced in *EN* VI.6, that is, in its technical sense of an intellectual grasp of the principles of science:

> 45) "*Phronêsis* is opposed to intellect. For intellect is of the terms of which there is no *logos*, whereas *phronêsis* is of what is last, of which there is no demonstrative knowledge, but perception.

[226] For a sketch of Aristotle's notion of induction (*epagôgê*), see §3.2.2. Proponents of practical induction as the method to a truthful grasp of the end are among others Kenny 1979: 151–2; Engberg-Pedersen 1983: 211–19; Dahl 1984: 41–5; Tuozzo 1991; Reeve 1992; Bostock 2000: 88–96; Taylor 2008.

> However not perception of proper sensibles, but perception thanks to which we perceive that what is last is a triangle. For it will stop here too. But this one [i.e. perception in mathematics] is rather perception than *phronêsis*[227], but of another genus than that one (perception of proper sensibles)." *EN* VI.8 1142a25-30

> (25) ἀντίκειται μὲν δὴ τῷ νῷ· ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς τῶν ὅρων, ὧν οὐκ ἔστι λόγος, ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἐσχάτου, οὗ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη ἀλλ' αἴσθησις, οὐχ ἡ τῶν ἰδίων, ἀλλ' οἵᾳ αἰσθανόμεθα ὅτι τὸ [ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς] ἔσχατον τρίγωνον· στήσεται γὰρ κἀκεῖ. ἀλλ' αὕτη μᾶλλον (30) αἴσθησις ἢ φρόνησις, ἐκείνης δ' ἄλλο εἶδος.

From the context of *EN* VI.7-8 (or more exactly, *EN* VI.8 according to Bekker's division into chapters), Aristotle is contrasting *phronêsis* with the intellectual states proper to the theoretical part of the soul, namely *epistêmê* and *nous* (see §3.3.2.3). While *phronêsis* is opposed to *epistêmê* insofar as it takes its content partly from the particulars (*EN* VI.8 1142a23-25), it is 'antithetical' to *nous*. It is clear that here Aristotle is contrasting *phronêsis* with the technical sense of *nous* of *APo* II.19 and not with a broader use of *nous* as 'thought' in general. The last occurrence of *nous* before this passage had the technical sense (*EN* VI.7 1141b2). Moreover, in this context, Aristotle has associated *nous* with *epistêmê* in order to define theoretical wisdom (*sophia*). Then, after he has introduced *phronêsis* in opposition to *sophia* (1141b8-23), Aristotle has contrasted *phronêsis* with *epistêmê* extensively (*EN* VI.8 1142a11-25). Obviously, the meaning of *nous* he turns to now is *nous* in its technical sense.

How is *phronêsis* 'antithetical' to *nous*? Aristotle shows that the function of *phronêsis* he is pointing at in the practical case is somehow equivalent to that of *nous* in the theoretical case. The objects of *nous* are described as 'the terms of which there is no *logos*'. Aristotle seems to refer to the first principles of a science, which are not deduced from prior principles. By contrast, *phronêsis* is about 'what comes last' (*to eschaton*). Thus, both dispositions are somehow similar concerning their respective object for they each are about the extremes in their respective area. This is confirmed later at *EN* VI.11 when Aristotle speaks of 'the ultimate terms in both direction' (*ta eschata ep'amphotera* 1143a35-36) when he is comparing again *nous* in the theoretical case with the discriminative function of *phronêsis* (which he then calls

[227] Here I follow Rowe and Inwood & Woolf (Ms Kb) rather than the version of Ms Lb, Mb and Γ (ἀλλ' αὕτη μᾶλλον αἴσθησις **ἡ** φρόνησις, ἐκείνης δ' ἄλλο εἶδος: "but *phronêsis* is rather perception, whereas that one is of another genus.") or the correction by Burnet followed by Ross and Gauthier (ἀλλ' αὕτη μᾶλλον αἴσθησις **ἢ ἡ** φρόνησις, ἐκείνης δ' ἄλλο εἶδος. "But this one is perception more than *phronêsis* is, whereas *phronêsis* is of another genus.)

nous as well, but with a different meaning as a *nous* of principles, as I shall argue below, text 46).

Now, the meaning of *to eschaton* could mean two different things. Either *to eschaton* refers to 'what comes last in deliberation' and is therefore a decision or an element of the content of decision (an action-type, or the means to an end, see Cooper 1975: 183), or it refers to a particular (*kath'hekaston*). The context seems clearly to point at the second interpretation. Indeed, a few lines earlier Aristotle sums up his discussion of the contrast between *epistêmê* and *phronêsis* by emphasizing that the latter is 'of what comes last, as has been said' (*tou eschatou hôsper eirêtai* 1142a24). And as I have already argued, the whole contrast between *epistêmê* and *phronêsis* relies on the special connexion *phronêsis* bears with particulars (*ta kath'hekasta*). It would therefore really be astonishing if *to eschaton* at 1142a26 – only two lines below – would refer to something else than the particulars. Thus, even though similar to a certain extent, *nous* and *phronêsis* are also opposed because *nous* has the first principles as its objects, whereas *phronêsis* has particular states of affairs. First principles are universal, necessary and eternal, whereas the particulars cognized by *phronêsis* are contingent and particulars.[228]

The function of the theoretical part of the soul is to find the causes of scientific claims (see §3.2.1). Theoretical thought is therefore directed towards the principles that are prior and 'better known' than the claim one has started with. By contrast, the practical part of the soul is directed towards finding what to do, i.e. performing a given action. It seeks to determine a particular decision to act in a particular case. If one assumes that in the theoretical case '*nous*' is the ultimate cognitive step that achieves the finding of the principles, then the function of *nous* is analogous to the function of *phronêsis* in the practical one, namely finding out the ultimate step. However, both states are opposed in that they deal with radically different kinds of objects.

In this passage, Aristotle compares the activity of *phronêsis* to perception (*aisthêsis*). Commentators have spent a lot of ink on finding out what he means with the comparison with perception of proper sensibles (the kind of objects which are proper to one sense and only one, like colours for sight) and with 'perception in mathematics'. I contend that this way of describing the activity of *phronêsis* is not very informative and that it is not worth lingering on it for too long. Aristotle simply wants to qualify his comparison between *phronêsis* and *aisthêsis*, the former being not identical to the most basic form of perception, but being a more sophisticated

[228] According to the Liddell-Scott-Jones, *antikeisthai* can mean 'to be opposed to' or 'to correspond to, to be a counterpart'. The ambiguity is palpable in the relation between *phronêsis* and *nous*.

kind. Aristotle describes the object of *phronêsis* in different ways on other occasions, which are more informative and foster a better understanding on what he means, as I have shown in chap. 4. The description of particulars relevant in a practical context is best understood as the notion of circumstances of the action (§4.4.1).

In conclusion, whereas Aristotle could have emphasized for the first time that there is such a thing as a *nous* of practical principles, he adopts instead a view radically opposed to that. There is indeed an aspect of *phronêsis* that is analogous to *nous* of first principles in a theoretical case. However this is not an analogy concerning the objects of each state, but rather their respective function. They are analogical in that they both deal with what is ultimate in their respective area. However, what is ultimate in theoretical thought (first principles) has nothing to do with what is ultimate in the practical case (particulars).

The next passage I want to dwell upon is another one infamous for its textual difficulties. In this case, Aristotle seems to assert the exact contrary to what he has just said in text (45). Indeed, Aristotle opposed strongly the perceptual aspect of *phronêsis* and the theoretical *nous* of first principles, in spite of their functional similitude. But in the next passage, Aristotle seems to consider that there is indeed an intellection of first principles in the practical realm. At least this is how intellectualists have understood this passage. I want to show on the contrary that this reading is misleading and that a proper interpretation of it rather confirms the position asserted in the previous passage.

5.2.2.2 EN VI.11 1143a35–b5

The following passage is part of the conclusion of the main discussion of *EN* book VI, namely the inquiry on the virtues of the rational part of the soul. This conclusion starts at 1143a25, that is, after the treatment of discernment (*gnômê*), which is correct judgment of what is equitable (1143a20). Aristotle lists the various intellectual virtues he has mentioned in book VI, in connection with the practical part of the soul: discernment (*gnômê*), comprehension (*sunesis*), *phronêsis* and intellect (*nous*) (*euboulia* is missing, whereas *nous* unexpectedly appears). In this passage Aristotle wants to make sense of a reputable opinion (*endoxon*) about these states: "we attribute these states to the same people" (1143a26).[229] The reason he offers for this *endoxon* is that these states are all concerned with particulars (*ta eschata kai kath'hekasta* 1143a28-29). In the next chunk of the text, Aristotle explains how *gnômê*,

[229] This *endoxon* is in fact a confirmation of the results about the intellectual virtues by way of turning back to a dialectical discussion on the various intellectual dispositions of the practical part of the soul.

sunesis and *phronêsis* are concerned with particulars. Then Aristotle tackles the case of *nous* and shows how it is also concerned with particulars.

Given the way he has treated *nous* in *EN* VI so far (especially *EN* VI.6), it is puzzling that he mentions it now as being concerned with particulars. Why would Aristotle mention the disposition for scientific principles in a context where he is obviously dealing with practical dispositions? Moreover why would he claim that *nous* is concerned with particulars, while he has so far insisted that *nous* is about principles that are universals? Natali rightly suggests that Aristotle wants to make sense of the phrase '*noun echein*', which is a common expression meaning 'to be sensible', or 'to behave sensibly' (Natali 2001: 73-74). In this context, *nous* should thus not be understood in its technical sense of intellectual grasp of first principles, but in its general sense of the faculty of thinking. Given the way Aristotle has treated *nous* so far, the passage at stake here should be taken as the answer to a possible objection that *nous* is *not* concerned with the particular. Aristotle would now be claiming that *nous* is the disposition of first principles, but that in a different sense, it can also be understood as having particulars as its objects.

> 46) "And the intellect is of the ultimate terms in both directions. That is, of the first terms as well as of the last there is intellect (*nous*) but no account (*logos*). And one intellect is at work in the demonstrations and is of the terms that are unchanging and first, while the other is found in practical [thoughts] (*en tais praktikais*) and is of what is ultimate and contingent (*endechomenou*), and is of the other proposition.[230] For these are the starting points (*archai*) of that for the sake of which. For universals are from the particulars. Therefore, one must have perception of these, and this perception is intellect." *EN* VI.11 1143a35-b5
>
> (35) καὶ ὁ νοῦς τῶν ἐσχάτων ἐπ' ἀμφότερα· καὶ γὰρ τῶν πρώτων ὅρων καὶ τῶν ἐσχάτων (1143b) νοῦς ἐστὶ καὶ οὐ λόγος, καὶ ὁ μὲν κατὰ τὰς ἀποδείξεις τῶν ἀκινήτων ὅρων καὶ πρώτων, ὁ δ' ἐν ταῖς πρακτικαῖς τοῦ ἐσχάτου καὶ ἐνδεχομένου καὶ τῆς ἑτέρας προτάσεως· ἀρχαὶ γὰρ τοῦ οὗ ἕνεκα αὗται· ἐκ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα γὰρ (5) τὰ καθόλου· τούτων οὖν ἔχειν δεῖ αἴσθησιν, αὕτη δ' ἐστὶ νοῦς.

The first part of the passage is rather unequivocal. Aristotle makes a distinction between two meanings of *nous*. On the one hand, there is intellect of the 'first

[230] Sometimes, *protasis* is taken as meaning 'premise' in order to insist on the practical syllogism. Yet, nothing compels to this understanding. *Protasis* can merely mean 'proposition' and *protasis* as premise is merely a more specific use of a proposition within a syllogistic context: see Charles 2009 Appendix I. I follow this more neutral translation, although I ultimately admit something like the practical syllogism here.

terms' (*tôn prôtôn*), that is of first principles of a demonstration. This is the usual technical sense of *nous* that Aristotle has manipulated so far in *EN* VI. *Nous* is the state that grasps the first principles (*EN* VI.6 1141a7-8); *apodeixis* is the privileged kind of reasoning of *epistêmê*, and *epistêmê* is about what is unchangeable (1139b19-23). Aristotle calls first principles 'last' because they are the ultimate terms of a theoretical inquiry. It is not possible to find more fundamental principles beyond them. On the other hand, he introduces a different use of the term *nous*: there is a *nous* that concerns what is practical (*en tais praktikais*).[231] That kind of *nous* is about the ultimate terms in the 'other direction'. Apparently, Aristotle means that concerning practical thought, *nous* is concerned with particulars. Indeed, this kind of *nous* is of 'the ultimate and contingent kind of things' (*tou eschatou kai endechomenou*) and is of the 'other proposition' (*tês heteras protaseôs*).

'Last' in this case denotes the particulars, by opposition to the first principles of a science which are 'last' in the other direction. In this context, *eschaton* also denotes the object of theoretical *nous*, namely first principles of a science but the use of the participle *endechomenon* reminds Aristotle's characterization of the object of the practical part of the soul, namely what allows of being otherwise as it is (*to endechomenon* [*allôs echein*] 1139a8, see also *EN* III.3 1112b27). Finally, since the things referred to by these terms are ultimate in the other direction, such things cannot be the first principles of practical science. Then, Aristotle adds that the other kind of intellect is about the 'other proposition'.[232]

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[231] What does *en tais praktikais* refer to? According to Burnet 1900: 280, one should read *en tais praktikais protasesin*. A comparison with *EN* 1147a29 apparently confirms Burnet's opinion (See Natali 2002: 73, n. 44; Dahl 1984). Another possibility suggested by Dahl is '*dunamesin*' (faculties), referring back to '*dunameis*' at 1143a38. Both *protasis* and *dunamis* allow *tais praktikais* to be an inductive form of practical reasoning of the sort suggested at 1143b3-5. However, *protasis* occurs right after this phrase (1143b3) and seems to have a different meaning than in the above phrase. Besides, at 1147a29, the phrase is not *en tais praktikais*, but *en tais poiêtikais*. The referent of *poiêtikais* is implicit and has often been taken to be *protasis*, but this has also been contested (Charles 2009). The phrase *poêtikê protasis* occurs explicitly at *MA* 701a23, where Aristotle seems to mean the same as *praktikê protasis*. Gauthier understands "demonstrations" but the phrase 'practical *apodeixis*' is a contradiction (Dahl 1984). Joachim understands 'opinions' (*en tais praktikais doxais*). I would rather suggest *dianoiai*, following Kenny (1978 : 170-173). All in all, scholars agree that in this context Aristotle speaks of an opposition between theoretical and practical thought. The exact reference of *en tais praktikais* is therefore not needed when the passage is considered on its own. However, the reference becomes crucial in a wider context, because this passage is very close to another one at *EN* VII.3 1147a29 (see note 299).

[232] Here I follow Dahl and take *to eschaton kai endechomenon* as denoting the same thing than *tês heteras protaseôs* (See Dahl 1984: 279-281, n. 14; contra Kenny 1978 and Cooper 1975).

The 'other proposition' stands for the minor premise of a practical argument.[233] My position is that the objects of this practical *nous* are particular in the sense I have developed in my §4.4. Consistently with what I have argued in chap. 4, the class of object of the minor premise can be very broad. The proper objects of the minor premise cover a wide variety of things: states of affairs, general statements (chicken is light). The common characteristic they share is that they are uniquely connected to a particular situation.

What does Aristotle mean with this '*nous* of the particulars'? The mention of *aisthêsis* suggests that the role conferred to the *nous* of particulars in this context is the same as that of *phronêsis* in the previous passage 1142a25-30 (text 45). The role of *phronêsis* in that passage was compared to a kind of perception, namely the perception of what one should do. I contend that in this passage Aristotle uses the term '*nous*' in order to denote the same disposition (See Natali 2001: 74).

However, the last lines in the passage seem to allude to a different function of *nous*. "For these (*hautai*) are the starting points (*archai*) of that for the sake of which. For universals are from the particulars." (1143b4-5). The pronoun *hautai* stands for the aforementioned object of the practical *nous*, namely what is 'last, contingent, and of the other proposition' (*tou eschatou kai endechomenou kai tês heteras protaseôs*)[234]. Apparently, then, particulars are called "*archai* of that for the sake of which", in other words they are the starting points of the end. And then Aristotle writes that 'universals are from the particulars'. This phrase has sometimes been so understood that Aristotle is here referring to a piece of inductive inference of universals from the particulars. This is indeed the way Ross understands it. In his translation, the 'other premise' which is about particular facts is the starting point for the "apprehension" of the end. Thus, Aristotle here would compare the work of the practical intellect to that of the theoretical one. Intellectualist commentators often agree to this interpretation. Aristotle would suggest that in practical cases, first

[233] Dahl understands that such 'particulars' are not facts nor actual actions, but the 'things-to-be-done', i.e. the action to be performed here and now and which I discover at the end of my deliberation (Dahl 1984: 231; followed by Woods 1986: 155-156). Then, he argues, the 'other proposition' cannot be the minor premise of a practical syllogism. If the 'other proposition' is about a description of an action that is to be done (e.g. this F is to be done), it cannot be the minor premise, but must rather stand the place of the conclusion. I do not follow Dahl on the point that *to eschaton kai endechomenon* should be understood as 'what is to be done'. At *EN* VII.3 1147a25, Aristotle clearly refers to the minor premise of a practical syllogism using *heteras* with *protaseôs* as the implicit subject.

[234] That the pronoun *hautai* has a plural form can be explained by its connection with *archai*, while it still refers to a singular. See Dahl 1984: 280, n. 14.

principles are known in the same way than the principles of theoretical sciences, namely through induction.[235]

If this reading were correct, the passage would then contain two very different assertions concerning the so-called practical *nous*. On the one hand there is something in practical thinking called '*nous*' and which is a kind of perception of the particulars. It is called *nous* in virtue of the function it has of spotting the last term in a process of thinking. In this respect, its function is analogical to that of the theoretical *nous* which is last in scientific understanding. Yet, both kinds of intellect are distinct because they are not active at the same stage of a thinking process and they are not related to the same kinds of object. On the other hand, however, Aristotle apparently makes the claim that in the practical context, just as in the theoretical one, first principles are known through a process of induction from the particulars. This would amount to admit that the same occurence of '*nous*' has two very different meanings. How is one to find a way out of this incompatibility?

An alternative to the intellectualist interpretation of lines 1143b4-5 is possible. Aristotle could also be making the point that *nous* in this context is the activity of spotting the features of the situation relevant for the realization of the end in view. The explanatory clause 'for universals come from particulars' has no dependency relation with the former assertion that the objects of practical *nous* (viz. the *archai*) are the starting points of the end.[236] Nothing in the text compels us to accept that the particulars are starting points of the universals in the sense that the apprehension of universals depends on the apprehension of particulars. Thus, rather than seeing a dependency relation according to which the starting points are starting points of an induction towards the universals, which is the end, another possible reading would be that the end is secured by the starting points, just as the universal is secured by the particular. *Archai* here would be taken in a constitutive way: particulars are the *archai* of the end in the sense that they are constitutive of the end: the end is brought about when I perform a particular action. In this sense, *archai* would have the same meaning as 'constitutive means'.[237] It is true that, whereas the usual sense of the 'other premise' is the minor premise of a practical argument, what realizes the end is not the minor premise, but the action (or the content of de-

[235] See e.g. Sorabji 1980: 214-16; Dahl 1984: 227-236. Other rationalist interpreters, however, do not agree with this interpretation(see Broadie 1991: 265, n. 76; Bostock 2000: 91-93). Besides, that there is such an induction of first principles of science is also debated even in the case of theoretical reason. For a review of the debate, see Bronstein 2012: 30-31.

[236] Dahl 1984: 229 on a suggestion by Barnes. In the end Dahl rejects this interpretation.

[237] For a similar interpretation, see Cooper 1975: 42, n. 52; Woods 1986: 160; Broadie 1991: 254-6; Moss 2012 189-190.

cision). However, my claim is that Aristotle wants to emphasize the particular circumstances of the situation, i.e. the *kath'hekasta* I have described at § 4.4.2. The particulars at stake in a process of practical thinking include various observations about the situation, abstract properties not immediately observable, as well as possible actions.

Now we are in a position where one ought to choose between emphasizing the allusion to a putative practical induction of principles and emphasizing the reference to *nous* of particulars as another way of speaking of perception of what to do. An important remark to draw from the context is that this passage does not constitute a part of the core account of practical thought. Rather, it is part of a dialectical discussion and should thereby weigh less in the reconstruction of Aristotle's doctrine. There are also two other reasons not to take this passage too seriously. First the passage as a whole does not have a clear argumentative structure. Lines 1143b9-11 seem to go with lines 1143a35-b5, but the progression is cut off by a small passage which is obviously not related to the whole. Second, Aristotle uses many puzzling expressions: '*en tais praktikais*', '*tês heteras protaseôs*', etc. These phrases seem inconsistent with the former mention of *nous* where Aristotle was opposing *phronêsis* as proper to the practical realm with *nous* proper to the theoretical. These elements also seem to show that Aristotle's account here is not accomplished and he might have wanted to revise this account and express it in a clearer way.

On the face of it, I contend that we have better reasons to emphasize the perceptive aspect. It has already been clearly shown earlier at 1142a25-30, in a context where Aristotle is developing his core account on *phronêsis*. Practical *nous*, if there is, is concerned with making the correct decision. There is no *nous* of practical principles in this passage, and no other evidence for anything like a practical intellection of moral principles in Aristotle's corpus whatsoever. This '*nous* of particulars' of 1143b35-b5 denotes the same disposition as that Aristotle is alluding to at 1144b4-14, when he compares an agent deprived of *phronêsis* as a strong body deprived of sight (text 42).

Let us come back to the question of knowledge of the end. Nowhere does Aristotle hint at an intellectual grasp of moral principles. It seems that if there is something like a cognitive grasp of such principles, it will not be a strong kind of knowledge. I want to defend the view that the end is *cognized* in some way, even though it is not determined by reason. Specifying the end through deliberation allows that there is a cognitive *grasp* of the end. The agent is able to consider the end intellectually and to insert it in a process of thinking. However, this does not involve a strong cognition of the end, which would also *determine* what the end is, i.e. the correct conception of the good.

5.2.3 *Phantasia* and knowing the end

Even though intellectualism cannot be attributed to Aristotle, there has been other rationalist positions according to which moral ends must ultimately be determined by reason. Some have it that what determines the end is deliberation (Wiggins 1975; Broadie 1991; McDowell 1998). Others agree with intellectualists that practical principles are given by *nous* but reject the inductive account. In their view, *nous* of practical principles is attained through dialectical thinking (Cooper 1975: 66-70; Irwin 1988: 336-338). All in all, it seems that what unites these rationalist interpretations is the conviction that what ultimately determines our moral ends must be reason, not desire.

There are various reasons for promoting a rationalist account of the acquisition of moral ends: First of all, if desire has a given content, it is propositional in its structure. Desire itself cannot provide its own content. Thus, there must be a certain rational state providing such a content, distinct from the desiderative state itself.[238] One could grant that there is non-rational cognition which provides a content to desire, namely *phantasia*. But rationalists could then reply that such a non-rational cognition is not sufficient for a truthful account of the good (see Moss 2012: 160). Rationalists can also invoke the role of wish in the determination of the end, as is presented at *EN* III.4 1113a23-26 (text 44). If wish is rational desire (as is sometimes thought to be the case), its object must be given by rational thinking rather than by evaluative *phantasia*. Moreover, this reading is apparently supported by recurrent assertions that "no one wishes for what he does not think to be good".[239]

At the same time, rationalist scholars admit that the determination of the end cannot rely on the rational part of the soul alone. This would be profoundly non-Aristotelian, as Aristotle insists so much about the prevalence of virtue and character when it comes to determining the end. Even intellectualists are aware that moral ends are not determined by reason exclusively. Most of them acknowledge that there is a share of the non-rational part of the soul in the process of acquiring moral ends. Thus Taylor (2008: 212):

> "Rather we must conceive of the process of habituation, not as a conditioning of 'blind' appetites, but as a 'twin-track' process in which the appetitive responses are progressively refined under

[238] This seems to be Taylor's implicit argument in favour of a rational determination of the end; Taylor 2008: 207. See also Allan 1953: 124.

[239] οὔτε γὰρ βούλεται οὐδεὶς ὃ μὴ οἴεται εἶναι σπουδαῖον *EN* 1136b7-8; *EE* 1223b7, 32-33; *Rhet*. 1369a3. In these passages, proponents of a high-level cognition of moral principles understand *oietai* as *think*, although this verb can also have the weaker sense of 'believe', 'reckon'.

> the guidance of the *intellect* which is itself undergoing a parallel process of refinement or rather enlightenment; the clearer the insight the intellect has of ethical principles, the more precise the instructions it can issue to the desires."

In other words, habituation has a cognitive aspect (Woods 1986: 159). However, intellectualist commentators contend that cognitive capacities such as the practical intellect are necessary for the correct orientation of our character (Taylor 2008: 217). They seem to hold the view that what ultimately justifies our moral ends is reason. In other words, the moral ends that we pursue in our deliberation can be rationally justified. This does not necessarily involve a foundationalist account. Interpretations that put forward the role of dialectic and the discussion of the *endoxa* about moral matters rather argue for a coherentist scheme (Taylor 2008: 214). Still, this kind of position involves that the justification of our knowledge of moral ends is ultimately rational.

I also endorse the twin-track process interpretation. As I have argued in §4.3, the content of the major premise of the practical argument is specified alongside deliberation. In the process, a vague, general end given by character receives a specific, rational content relative to the particular circumstances of the action. However, my view contrasts the rationalist account in that even though the specific end proper to a particular process of decision-making has been reached through a rational process, what ultimately justifies such an end is the more general end which depends on character and the kind of person one is. And this general 'defining' end cannot be justified by reason. As I have argued in §4.3, the direction of specification of the end as well as what grants the correctness or consistency of the deliberative end is not reason, but character (see p. 132). In other words, there is no fully rational justification of moral ends. There is only *phantasia* of the general end and a partly rational justification of the deliberative end.

In what follows, I shall argue in more details in favour of *phantasia* as the cognitive power providing the end. At the end of this section, I shall answer the various motivations for a rationalist position by showing that my interpretation can also deal with them.

That our cognition of general, defining, ends is not rational but pertains to the desiderative part of the soul is shown at *EN* III.4. In my view, this passage fosters the best evidence for the position I favour. Here, Aristotle affirms that the end is cognized by *phantasia* and that this non-rational grasp of the end is sufficient for virtuous behaviour.

Chapter 4 of Book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics* tackles the question whether what we wish for is the good or the apparent good. In this chapter, Aristotle raises

a problem about the nature of the end of practical reasoning. In the preceding chapter, *EN* III.3 on deliberation, he has claimed that deliberation is not of the end and that it is wish that is rather for the end.[240] Yet, there is a debate on what the end is. Some argue that the end is the good, whereas for others it is the apparent good. There are sensible intuitions for both positions. On the one hand, that we always wish for the good follows Socrates' claim that we never wish to do something bad knowingly (cf. Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 206-207). On the other hand, holding that things we wish are relative to the person who wishes these things corresponds to the subjectivity of the good. Each position is unsatisfactory. The Socratic position ends up in the *aporia* that the person who makes voluntarily a vicious decision has a *boulêton* which is both good (*ex hypothesi*) and bad (from the rule that decision is for the sake of what we wish). The subjectivist position, however, entails that there is no measure for the good and that every conception of the good from one individual to the other is worth the same.

In the following passage, partly quoted earlier (text 44), Aristotle gives his own answer to the problem by making a synthesis of both intuitions. According to him, when speaking without qualification, the object of wish is the good, but the object a particular person is wishing for is what appears good to him.

> 47) "But if, then, we are not content with these views, we should say that the good is without qualification and in truth the object of wish, whereas the object of wish for each person is the apparent good. We shall then be saying that for the virtuous person the object of wish is something which is truly good, whereas for the bad person it is any chance thing, just as with the body too the things that are truly healthful are healthful for people in good condition, whereas for diseased people other things are healthful; and similarly too with bitter, sweet, hot, heavy, and every other sort of thing" 1113a22-29
>
> εἰ δὲ δὴ ταῦτα μὴ ἀρέσκει, ἆρα φατέον ἁπλῶς μὲν καὶ κατ' ἀλήθειαν βουλητὸν εἶναι τἀγαθόν, ἑκάστῳ δὲ τὸ φαινόμενον; (25) τῷ μὲν οὖν σπουδαίῳ τὸ κατ' ἀλήθειαν εἶναι, τῷ δὲ φαύλῳ τὸ τυχόν, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων τοῖς μὲν εὖ διακειμένοις ὑγιεινά ἐστι τὰ κατ' ἀλήθειαν τοιαῦτα ὄντα, τοῖς δ' ἐπινόσοις ἕτερα, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πικρὰ καὶ γλυκέα καὶ θερμὰ καὶ βαρέα καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστα·

It seems that here Aristotle is answering both *aporiai* one after the other. The first assertion accounts for the Socratic intuition as well as provides an answer to the first *aporia*. Speaking without qualification, wish is for the good. But in a partic-

[240] *EN* III.2 1111b26: ἔτι δ' ἡ μὲν βούλησις τοῦ τέλους ἐστὶ μᾶλλον.

ular, actual case, what one wishes is the apparent good (see *EE* II.10 1227a28-30).[241] That wish is for the good is at first only given as a general rule of the relation of the subject towards its object from a first person point of view. This is how I understand '*haplôs*' (I shall speak later of the meaning of the *kat'alêtheian* clause). This way Aristotle accounts both for the intuition that nobody wishes something harmful or wrong, at least not for himself, and for the fact that someone who makes a wrong decision does not aim at the real good, but only at the apparent good. Then Aristotle answers the second *aporia* by adding a fresh point: when the subject is virtuous (*spoudaios*), then the object of his wish is in fact the real good, whereas when the subject is vicious (*phaulos*), what he wishes can be anything (*to tuchon*). In other words, the *phaulos* wishes an apparent good that can turn out to be anything. Thus, from a third person point of view, the object of wish is the apparent good. This claim has a normative aspect: the measure of what counts as an actual good is given by the virtuous person. This answers the argument against the subjectivity of the good. There is a norm of what truly counts as good, and the virtuous person's wish gives this norm. One can still maintain that being good is a subjective property, while agreeing that there is a norm of what counts as the real good. Even though the object of *boulêsis* is in both cases the apparent good, there is one case, namely the virtuous case, in which the apparent good turns out to correspond to the real good.

A consequence of the first point, that in a particular case the *boulêton* is the apparent good, is that the object of *boulêsis* is the apparent good in every particular case, let it be in the case of the virtuous as well as in the case of the *phaulos* man (cf. Labarrière 2008: 155-157). Even though the virtuous person has a grasp of the real good, he merely wishes what *appears* to him. In other words, that the object of wish for the virtuous man is good is true only extensionally, not intensionally, for the subject does not have access to what the object of his wish really is. This also makes sense of the vicious person, or the non-virtuous agent altogether, for such an agent does not wish what he intends to do under the description 'vile' or unjust, but under the description 'good' or 'advantageous' (See Sharples 2005: 291). Such a reading seems then to show that a low-order cognitive power such as *phantasia* is sufficient for a grasp of the good. The cognitive access to the good is not provided by a sophisticated intellectual faculty such as *nous*.

However, there is a question here about the virtuous person's access to the good. Up to now, I have assumed that the virtuous person does not have privileged

[241] I agree with Broadie (Broadie & Rowe 2002: 318) that *haplôs kai kat'alêtheian* qualifies the whole proposition 'the object of wish is the good'. One should not read the clause as qualifying only the *tagathon* (understanding 'the object of wish is the good without qualification').

access to the moral end. The actual object of wish is not the good itself, but the apparent good for both the virtuous and the non-virtuous person. They both wish for what *appears* to them to be good and 'luckily' the virtuous man is so disposed that what appears to him as good is in fact really so. Still, in the case of the virtuous man, it could make sense that he really knows that what he wishes is the real good. One could very well argue that the *spoudaios* has in fact a cognitive superiority over the *phaulos* because of some rational understanding of the good that the *phaulos* lacks. Otherwise, without privileged access to the real good, what would account for his prescriptive authority? In virtue of what would he be the measure of what counts as good? Correspondingly, one could understand that only the *phaulos* man wishes for the apparent good, whereas the virtuous man has a direct grasp of the real good. After all, the *boulêton* is the good without qualification *and in truth*. This could mean that when one's grasp of something as good is true, one is not concerned with the apparent good, but with the real good directly. 'Apparent' (*phainomenon*) in this case would not refer to the subjectivity of the good (phantastic reading), but to the mistaken character of one's grasp of the good (doxastic reading).[242] Consequently, the virtuous person would wish for the real good, whereas the non-virtuous person would wish for the apparent good (in the sense of 'deceiving'). This interpretation would be supported by the repetition of the '*kat'alêtheian*' phrase: 'in truth, the *boulêton* is the good' and some lines later: 'the *boulêton* to the *spoudaios* is the good *kat'alêtheian*' (1113a27).[243] Such an interpretation entails therefore the cognitive superiority of the virtuous over other moral agents. The virtuous man would access to a notion of the good through a more sophisticated cognitive state than *phantasia*.

As already mentioned at §5.2.1, I don't follow this doxastic interpretation. It seems to me that it does not distinguish both *aporia* carefully enough. Proponents of such an interpretation tend to read the *men oun* at 1113a25 as denoting a restatement of the first claim. Accordingly, then, the two statements – that the object of wish for the virtuous person is the real good and that the object of wish for the non-virtuous is any chance thing – are simply consequences of the first statement, namely that without qualification and in truth the object of wish is the good and that the

[242] I borrow the phrases 'doxastic' and 'phantastic' from Moss 2012: 70ff. The doxastic reading of *phainesthai* involves a belief (*doxa*), whereas the *phantastic* reading involves nothing more than *phantasia*. This use of 'doxastic' should not be confused with another use found in scholarship on ancient skepticism that opposes doxastic with 'epistemic' or 'dianoetic'.

[243] This seems to be Broadie's interpretation when she writes: " The good person's object of wish is the good, and the good is, without qualification, an object of wish; whereas the bad one's object of wish is the apparent good, and this is an object of wish in a qualified way, i.e. in relation to himself." (Broadie & Rowe 2002: 318).

object of wish for someone is the apparent good for him. Yet, as I have tried to show in my analysis of 1113a22-29, both claims do not involve each other. That the object of wish for the virtuous man is the apparent good for him does not involve that the object of wish for the virtuous man is the real good. The phantastic reading of *phainesthai* involves that the virtuous man does indeed wish for the real good, but he does not know in any intellectual way that the object of his wish is in fact the real good.

Against the doxastic interpretation which grounds the moral superiority of the virtuous man on his cognitive superiority, the rest of text (47) offers a powerful argument. In order to explain his point better, Aristotle offers an analogy with the body. Truly healthful are things healthful to people in good conditions, whereas things healthful to diseased people can be other things. Aristotle offers another analogy with the senses: what is truly sweet is what is sweet to people in good condition, whereas what is sweet to diseased people are other things (depending on their condition), and so on with other sensible properties (bitter, hot, heavy, etc.).

One should be careful with the analogy. In my view, it concerns only the second *aporia* on the relativity of goodness. It is useful only in order to make the point that normality in the case of moral properties is on the side of virtuous people, as normality in the case of health is on the side of healthy people. But the analogy is of no help to answer the first *aporia* whether the object of wish is the real good or the apparent good. Indeed, if we try to apply the analogy to the first proposition, namely that what appears to the virtuous man is the real good, whereas what appears to the vicious man is any chance thing, we obtain inconsistent results. In the case of health, a given object counts as truly good as soon as it is in relation with the appropriate particular individual (and one could add, in these particular circumstances). This way, something which is harmful *haplôs*, i.e. that would normally be harmful to healthy people can *in fact* be good to an ill person, and can *in fact* be good for such an individual in its consequences. I assume that Aristotle would not accept this with being good. He cannot grant that something which is bad *haplôs* is in fact good, i.e. beneficial for the bad person (here the *phaulos*). By contrast, the case of sensible properties seems closer to that of being good or bad. Apparently, what the healthy person feels as sweet really is sweet from a third person point of view, even though the sick person perceives it as bitter. Because of this discrepancy between both examples, it is not possible to argue on the basis of the analogy for the interpretation of the passage according to which the virtuous man has privileged access to the good. The analogy is useful only in order to show that what counts as a norm for the real good is the response of the virtuous person, but it does not say anything on the cognitive access of the virtuous person to the good.

The rest of the chapter seems to confirm that the cognitive state of the virtuous man is not more sophisticated than that of the non-virtuous one.

> 48) For the good person discriminates correctly in every set of circumstances, and in every set of circumstances what is true is apparent to him. For each disposition has its own corresponding range of fine things and pleasant things, and presumably what most distinguishes the good person is his ability to see what is true in every set of circumstances, being like a carpenter's rule or measure for them. But most people are deceived, and the deception seems to come about because of pleasure; for it appears a good thing when it is not. So they choose what is pleasant as something good, and they avoid pain as something bad. *EN* III.4 1113a29-b2
>
> ὁ σπουδαῖος γὰρ (30) ἕκαστα κρίνει ὀρθῶς, καὶ ἐν ἑκάστοις τἀληθὲς αὐτῷ φαίνεται. καθ' ἑκάστην γὰρ ἕξιν ἴδιά ἐστι καλὰ καὶ ἡδέα, καὶ διαφέρει πλεῖστον ἴσως ὁ σπουδαῖος τῷ τἀληθὲς ἐν ἑκάστοις ὁρᾶν, ὥσπερ κανὼν καὶ μέτρον αὐτῶν ὤν. ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς δὲ ἡ ἀπάτη διὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἔοικε γίνεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ οὖσα (1113b) ἀγαθὸν φαίνεται. αἱροῦνται οὖν τὸ ἡδὺ ὡς ἀγαθόν, τὴν δὲ λύπην ὡς κακὸν φεύγουσιν.

The cognitive privilege of the virtuous person seems to consist simply in his ability to judge correctly (*krinei orthôs*) in a particular situation. Judging (*krinein*) is the activity to discriminate among things. According to Aristotle, different cognitive powers such as perception, *phantasia* and *nous* are all forms of *krinein* (*MA* 6 700b19-21; *DA* III.3 427a17-22). It seems clear here that *krinein* does not refer to a higher cognitive faculty, because the next sentence recalls the same cognitive access of the virtuous person: in every situation, the truth *appears* to him. This proposition seems to be explicative of the first one: the virtuous discerns well, *that is to say*, the truth appears to him. Besides, other occurrences of the verb *krinein* in similar contexts show that Aristotle associates this verb with perceptual, or at least lower order, cognitive faculties, in particular when it comes to the ability of the virtuous person to discriminate among particulars (1109b23; 1114b7; 1126b4).[244]

Another passage makes the point of the moral superiority of the virtuous person without cognitive superiority even clearer. In the next chapter, *EN* III.5, Aristotle tackles the question of the extent of our responsibility for our actions. At some point, he considers the position that human beings are not responsible for certain bad actions because these actions depend on the kind of person they are. Allegedly, one could not reproach to the coward for running away from danger,

[244] For a similar reading, see Moss 2012: 159-160, although I am not committed to Moss' interpretation of evaluative *phantasia* here.

since as a coward, he is driven to do so by his character. After having refuted this position, Aristotle goes further by envisaging a refinement of this position.

> 49) "Suppose someone said that while every one of us aims at what appears to us good, we are not in control of the appearance, but rather the sort of person each of us is, whatever that may be, determines how the end, too, appears to him. Well, if each of us is himself somehow responsible for causing his disposition in himself, he will also be somehow responsible for the appearance in question." *EN* III.5 1114a31-b3
>
> εἰ δέ τις λέγοι ὅτι πάντες ἐφίενται τοῦ φαινομένου ἀγαθοῦ, τῆς δὲ φαντασίας οὐ κύριοι, ἀλλ' ὁποῖός (1114b) ποθ' ἕκαστός ἐστι, τοιοῦτο καὶ τὸ τέλος φαίνεται αὐτῷ· εἰ μὲν οὖν ἕκαστος ἑαυτῷ τῆς ἕξεώς ἐστί πως αἴτιος, καὶ τῆς φαντασίας ἔσται πως αὐτὸς αἴτιος·

One might say against Aristotle's responsibilism that even though someone was responsible for becoming the kind of person he has become because one's character depends on one's actions, and one is responsible for one's actions, there is still an extra element which one cannot be responsible for. Performing such and such an action depends on what kind of moral end one is pursuing, i.e. what conception of the good one has, and, the argument goes, one is not responsible for one's representation (*phantasia*) of the good. In other words, one is not responsible for how the good appears to one. Against this argument Aristotle answers that this does not make any difference because if one is somehow responsible for one's character, one is also responsible for one's representation of the good.

Aristotle's answer seems to imply that one's notion of the good one is following in order to perform actions is proper to the non-rational part of the soul, i.e. pertains to character. Indeed, one can ask Aristotle's detractor how it can be that one is not responsible for one's view of the good. It seems obvious at first sight that I understand the difference between what is good and what is bad, and that I can elaborate a conception of the good, or even of happiness, according to which I assess my actions. Then, either my idea of the good depends on my understanding and thus I am in control of it, or it does depend on the other part of the soul, namely the desiderative part. Here, the only way out for Aristotle's detractor is to assume that one's view of the good does not depend on understanding. By doing so, he must admit that one's view of the good depends on the kind of person one is, that is, on one's character (*hopoios*). This way, Aristotle's detractor has to go back to Aristotle's previous view that one is responsible for having become that kind of person one is.

Hence, Aristotle's argument shows that one's view on the good is not due to a higher order cognitive capacity, but to one's *character*. If he would believe that we access the real good thanks to a higher-order cognitive capacity like *nous*, the present argument would not make sense, because Aristotle would merely have to argue that we are responsible for one's grasp of the good, since we are in control of our thoughts. On the contrary, in order to refute his detractor, Aristotle follows him on the ground that one's representation of the good is due to our desiderative part of the soul. Then, Aristotle's terminology shows clearly that one's view on the good is provided by *phantasia*, which is a capacity of the non-rational, desiderative part of the soul.

Therefore, chapters *EN* III.4 and 5 both show that, according to Aristotle, one's notion of the good in a practical context is provided by *phantasia* and that at no point a more sophisticated cognitive capacity is required.

One passage of *EN* VI could be taken as an objection to my interpretation that the end is provided by *phantasia*. However, a correct reading of this passage in fact supports my claim that the virtuous agent's cognitive grasp of the good is not a sophisticated one. This short passage, which is at the very end of *EN* VI.9 on *euboulia* delivers a definition of *euboulia*, namely correct reasoning about the means to the end. How such a correctness should be understood has been discussed in §3.3.2.1. It involves a virtuous end and a means to implement that end which is not incidental. Then, the definition of *euboulia* goes as follows:

> 50) "If then to have deliberated well is a mark of *phronimoi* people, good deliberation will be correctness regarding what is useful to the end, of what *phronêsis* is a true belief." *EN* VI.9 1142b31-33
>
> εἰ δὴ τῶν φρονίμων τὸ εὖ βεβουλεῦσθαι, ἡ εὐβουλία εἴη ἂν ὀρθότης ἡ κατὰ τὸ συμφέρον πρὸς τὸ τέλος, οὗ ἡ φρόνησις ἀληθὴς ὑπόληψίς ἐστιν.

This passage, together with 1140b11-21 (text 14), is one of the few occurrences where Aristotle comes close to saying that *phronêsis* determines the end of practical reasoning. Indeed, *phronêsis* is dubbed a *'true hupolêpsis* of the end'. The text is ambiguous, for the pronoun *hou* could also refer to *sumpheron*, which is what conduces to the end. According to this reading the text would actually be consistent with the desiderativist reading I have advocated for. *Phronêsis* would be a 'true belief about what promotes the end'.[245] However, scholars have opposed that this

[245] The manuscripts are not univocal and most of them do not read *to telos*, but *ti telos* instead. If this version is the correct one, the most natural antecedent for οὗ will be 'what conduces to the end' (Moss 2012: 180, n. 62). But Gauthier (Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 518-519) ar-

reading is less natural than the one that considers *telos* as the antecedent. Indeed, Aristotle has clearly stated that in *euboulia* the end must be the correct one.[246] Intellectualists consider thus that reason in the form of *phronêsis* ought to take part in the determination of the end.[247]

However that *phronêsis* is a grasp of the end does not amount to saying that it determines what the end is. Alternatively, one could understand that even though *phronêsis* provides a cognitive grasp of the end, the end is determined by virtue. This grasp is true, because *phronêsis* gets right what is indicated by virtue. Still it does not determine it by itself. "[True] 'supposition of the end' [...] means not the thought that goes into *identifying* the end, but rather the grasping of the end *qua* end, i.e. the using of the end to guide deliberation" (Moss 2012: 182). This is also how I understand *EN* VI.5 1140b11-21 (text 14) in which Aristotle says that *sôphrosunê* preserves *phronêsis* (cf. p. 63). Preserving *phronêsis* amounts to preserving beliefs (*hupolêpseis*) about the starting points of action. Taken at face value, this assertion exactly means that *phronêsis* is limited to asserting such beliefs, but does not determine their content. Allan has argued in favour of the contrary claim, namely that virtue is incapable of determining such a content because it is not an intellectual state and cannot thereby have any content independently of *phronêsis* (Allan 1953: 77). However, if one assumes that the notion of the good that one follows depends not on intellect but on *phantasia*, Allan's argument does not hold.

What are the results concerning the epistemic evaluation of cognition of moral notions, then? Cognition of moral notions depends ultimately on the moral correctness of one's character. Moral notions are acquired by the process of habituation (*ethismos*). This process is not mindless, because the habituation of one's character still involves that the agent has a *phantasia* of the end. Moreover, one's conception of a specific, deliberative end in the process of deliberation is obtained thanks to rational thinking. However, when it comes to the ultimate justification of the correctness of one's end, character is decisive. It is character, not reason, which gives an orientation to the specification of the defining end into a deliberative end.

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gues that Bywater's emendation is correct for Aristotle would not want to define *euboulia* using a reference to any old end, while he has argued clearly that the end matters when speaking of *euboulia*.

[246] See especially 1142b28-31 where Aristotle makes a distinction between *euboulia haplôs*, which is in relation with the end *haplôs*, and other kinds of deliberation, which are in relation to any ends; see also 1142b17-22; see Gauthier and Jolif 1959: 518–19; Müller 1982: 267–8.

[247] Allan 1953: 77; Cooper 1975: 63-64; Dahl 1984: 39-40. Curiously, Sorabji 1980, Engberg Pedersen 1983 and Reeve 1992 do not make a big case of that passage.

This also entails that one cannot have a fully rational justification of one's moral end. At some point there is necessarily a reference to a desiderative element in the agent's justification of his decision, even in the case of the *phronimos*.

We can now reply to the motivations for the rationalist position (see p. 172). First, there was the requirement that the content of desire is provided by some cognitive power. On my interpretation, this cognitive power is *phantasia*, rather than *nous*, and *phantasia* is a kind of non-rational cognition. Secondly, there was the criticism against *phantasia* that it is not sufficient in order to warrant the correctness of the conception of the end of the virtuous agent. Against this claim, I answer that in fact in the practical realm no rational justification of the good is possible in general.[248] Finally, rationalism relies on the various occurrences of the phrase 'we wish only what we think (*oietai*) is good' (*EN* 1136b7-8; *EE* 1223b7, 32-33; *Rhet*. 1369a3). However, this phrase does not constitute evidence for the rationalist view. It can very well be interpreted in a weak sense as 'If we believe O, then we wish O'. Thus, knowledge of moral universals in a strong sense is not required.

These results are highly controversial. They imply that the worries of the rationalists for the necessity of rational cognition for the correctness of the conception of the good of the virtuous person are not founded. In fact, a fully correct account of the good based on rational considerations is not possible. I will discuss these matters in more details in the final conclusion of this work. For the moment, I want to tackle the second aspect of epistemic evaluation of practical knowledge, namely knowledge of particulars.

5.3 Knowledge of particulars and *empeiria*

As already said in the introduction of this chapter, knowledge of particulars cannot merely be identified with perceiving particulars. If knowing particulars were just a matter of perceiving them, the conditions for such knowledge would not be different than those in play in perceptual knowledge in general. Aristotle has a reliabilist account of perceptual knowledge. If perception occurs in standard conditions of observation, then perception is necessarily true (see Bolton 1996: 309-310). In practical situations, knowing particulars is a matter of trained perception, of discerning relevant circumstances from non-relevant others. And this is not an easy task to do, as Aristotle says on some occasions (*EN* II.9 1109a20-30; *EN* V.9 1137a9-

[248] The third motivation was that if wish (*boulêsis*) is a rational kind of desire, its content cannot be provided by *phantasia* but must come from rational cognition. I have not addressed this claim directly. I refer to Moss (2012: 162) who argues convincingly that *boulêsis* is in fact a non-rational kind of desire.

17, i.e. text (5) and (6) of the present dissertation). What matters, then, is to determine how the agent comes to learn how to discern relevant circumstances from non-relevant ones. In this respect, the crucial disposition is experience (*empeiria*) in moral notions.

The role of experience in practical thought is mentioned on several occasions. For instance, at *EN* VI.11, after passage 1143a35-b5 (text 46), Aristotle concludes the chapter with some remarks on practically wise people (*phronimoi*).

> 51) "Hence, one ought to be attentive to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced people, that is,[249] the ancients and the practically wise people, not less than to demonstrations. For they see correctly in virtue of their having an eye from experience." *EN* VI.11 1143b11-14
>
> ὥστε δεῖ προσέχειν τῶν ἐμπείρων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἢ φρονίμων ταῖς ἀναποδείκτοις φάσεσι καὶ δόξαις οὐχ ἧττον τῶν ἀποδείξεων· διὰ γὰρ τὸ ἔχειν ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὄμμα ὁρῶσιν ὀρθῶς.

Phronimoi people are compared to experienced as well as to old people in that they all share an ability to 'see things correctly' in practical matters (*horôsin orthôs*). Hence one ought to pay attention to what they say. The reference to the sense of sight as well as to the age of such people reminds us of *EN* VI.13 1144b4-14 (text 42). There beings having merely natural virtue and lacking full virtue, such as children and animals, were compared to strong bodies deprived of sight (1144b8-12), while here the old person is precisely gifted with sight. *Empeiria* is associated with age in this case, whereas elsewhere it is denied to young people (1095a2-3; 1142a15). This suggests that the kind of sight which children lack because they have only natural virtue is the same as that associated with *empeiria*. Moreover, *phronêsis* has been dubbed the 'eye of the soul' (1144a30). Thus, *phronêsis* is closely related to *empeiria*. This was already emphasized at *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23 (text 27): experienced people, having knowledge of the particulars, are more effective (*praktikôteroi*) than others who have knowledge of universals. What kind of thing this 'seeing correctly' is remains to be stated, though. It seems that such an ability has been acquired by experience (*empeiria*).

[249] The text is not clear concerning the relation between the three terms 'experienced men', 'old men' and *'phronimoi*'. Most translators take the series as a conjunction. But if *kai* is epexegetical, it could be distributive. This would entail that experienced people are either old or *phronimoi*. This would also mean that being experienced is a property of being *phronimos*. Burnet rejects the addendum *ê phronimôn* because it sounds inacceptable that *phronêsis* naturally come with age. I would be more moderate about that.

Before I come to this point, I need to discuss a further worry brought to you by intellectualists. The mention of *empeiria* has encouraged intellectualists in their interpretation. Indeed, in a theoretical context, *empeiria* is a stage between non-rational representation and rational intellection of a notion (see *APo* II.19 100a6-9 (text 18), already treated at §3.2.2). Hence some have seen in the connection of *empeiria* with *phronêsis* a sign that there is practical intellection of moral principles (Sorabji 1980: 216; Dahl 1984: 43-44). They think that *empeiria* bears the same relation towards *nous* in the practical case than in the theoretical case. However, in what follows I argue that the role of *empeiria* in practical thought is not the same as in theoretical thought.

5.3.1 The two jobs of *empeiria*

There is one passage in *EN* VI, where Aristotle refers to *empeiria* both in a practical as well as in a theoretical context. At the end of *EN* VI.7, he has insisted that *phronêsis* requires not only knowledge of universals but also knowledge of particulars (text 27). Then, some lines below, in chap. 8, he adds an argument that supports the indispensability of knowledge of particulars.

> 52) "A sign of what has been said[250] is also that young people can become geometers, mathematicians or people skilled in such things[251], but they seem not to become *phronimos*. The cause of this is that *phronêsis* is also of the particulars, and particulars become known (*gnôrima*) through experience, while a young person is not experienced. For experience arises after many years. *EN* VI.8 1142a11-16
>
> σημεῖον δ' ἐστὶ τοῦ εἰρημένου καὶ διότι γεωμετρικοὶ μὲν νέοι καὶ μαθηματικοὶ γίνονται καὶ σοφοὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, φρόνιμος δ' οὐ δοκεῖ γίνεσθαι. αἴτιον δ' ὅτι καὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστά ἐστιν ἡ φρόνησις, ἃ γίνεται (15) γνώριμα ἐξ ἐμπειρίας, νέος δ' ἔμπειρος οὐκ ἔστιν· πλῆθος γὰρ χρόνου ποιεῖ τὴν ἐμπειρίαν·

Here, Aristotle displays a 'sign' (*sêmeion*) supporting the importance of knowledge of particulars. A *sign* that knowledge of particulars is a necessary condition to have *phronêsis* is the fact that one cannot become *phronimos* when being

[250] "What has been said" refers to the end of *EN* VI.7, lines 1141b14-23 (text 24). This is commonly admitted by most commentators. E.g. Burnet, Rackham , Gauthier, Broadie & Rowe.
[251] It seems pretty clear that by 'being *sophos* in such things' Aristotle has other mathematical disciplines in mind; in the lines following this passage, mathematics is opposed to other theoretical domains such as physics (1142a16-20); hence, the distinction should not be made between practical and theoretical thinking in general, but between mathematics and *phronêsis*.

young. And that *phronêsis* requires knowledge of the particulars is the *cause* of this fact. Aristotle's use of the *sêmeion* as an argument seems thus to emphasize an observed fact which is explained by invoking the point about *phronêsis* he was just arguing for. This strengthens the plausibility of this claim, because it explains an observed fact.[252] Now how does this argument work? Why can young people become mathematicians but not *phronimoi*? Aristotle's argument is that *phronêsis* is of the particulars; one becomes familiar with particulars from experience (*ex'empeiria*), and being experienced takes time. Obviously, young people didn't have the time to get well acquainted with the particulars. Experience appears then as the state or method thanks to which one becomes acquainted with particulars. Besides, Aristotle apparently conceives *empeiria* as a form of knowledge (*gnôsis Meta.* I.1 981a16), which is close to *epistêmê* and *technê* (*Meta*. 980b27-28).

Then, in the following lines of *EN* VI.8, Aristotle seems to take into account a possible objection to this argument for the indispensability of knowledge of particulars. One could retort to his previous sign-argument that one cannot use the opposition of *phronêsis* with mathematics because mathematics is a theoretical science and not all theoretical sciences are accessible to young people. Aristotle therefore wants to show that the contrast he is alluding to concerns mathematics only but not other kinds of theoretical science. He observes that a young person (*pais*) can become proficient in mathematics but not in other areas of knowledge, such as physics.

> 53) "Then, we can also inquire why a child can become a mathematician, but not a *sophos* nor a physicist. Surely it is because the objects of mathematics are <known>[253] through abstraction, whereas the principles of the others are <known> out of experience. And of the latter [i.e. the principles][254], young people have no conviction,

[252] This sign argument is an instance of the kind of sign-argument Aristotle develops in the *Rhetoric* and which he calls non-necessary as bearing the relation of universal to particular: *Rhetoric* I.2 1357b17-21.

[253] I understand that Aristotle is speaking about the epistemological relation between a subject and the object of one type of science or the other. One could maybe substitute *estin* at 1142a18 with *ginetai gnôrima* for the sake of parallelism with the previous passage (text 52).

[254] The pronominal group '*ta men*' could refer either to the *principles* of empirical sciences, or more generally to the *objects* of such sciences. Translators sometimes leave the antecedent open (Rowe: "and in the one case the young only talk, rather than having anything they believe"; Inwood and Woolf 2013: "young people talk about the latter but do not really believe it"). I follow Ross and Crisp, who opt in favour of the principles.
One could understand that since the principles of physics are not fully internalized, the rest of what young people believe of physics has no epistemic value. Hence young people would talk of objects of physics in general. It seems however that Aristotle is rather considering the principles of natural sciences rather than the objects of such sciences more general-

> but only say the words, whereas the definition of mathematical objects is clear." *EN* VI.8 1142a16-20
>
> ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτ' ἄν τις σκέψαιτο, διὰ τί δὴ μαθηματικὸς μὲν παῖς γένοιτ' ἄν, σοφὸς δ' ἢ φυσικὸς οὔ. ἢ ὅτι τὰ μὲν δι' ἀφαιρέσεώς ἐστιν, τῶν δ' αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἐξ ἐμπειρίας· καὶ τὰ μὲν οὐ πιστεύουσιν (20) οἱ νέοι ἀλλὰ λέγουσιν, τῶν δὲ τὸ τί ἐστιν οὐκ ἄδηλον.

A child might become an expert mathematician, but not an expert in natural sciences (*phusikos*) and similar sciences. The reason for this is that being familiar with the *principles* of the objects of physics or other sciences is possible through experience only. The reference to principles acquired through experience shows that Aristotle refers to empirical sciences, i.e. sciences that have to do with the contingent world, such as physics or meteorology (besides, 'physics' (*phusikê epistêmê*) includes all the sciences that have to do with the natural world, *phusis*, i.e. that part of reality which is subject to growth and decay). Aristotle then elaborates why young people cannot become *sophoi* in natural sciences. They have no conviction (*ou pisteuousin*) in the principles (*ta men*) of such sciences. Having conviction seems to go together with having experience. The young people have not acquired the principles of physics because they have not had enough experience in these matters. If they engage in such sciences, they will rather repeat what they are told. Hence, even if it is true that young people can be experts in mathematics, they cannot be experts in empirical sciences.

This addendum raises a problem: the reason why young people do not become *phronimoi* turns out to be the same as the reason why they do not become physicists, namely invoking experience. On the one hand, Aristotle has argued that *phronêsis* is not accessible for young people because *phronêsis* is of the particulars and acquiring experience in the particulars takes time. On the other hand, acquiring the principles of physics is made through experience, and experience consists in collecting data about particulars. Then the specificity of *phronêsis* as implying knowledge of particulars is lost: in some way theoretical sciences also require knowledge of particulars.

The mention of the *principles* of empirical sciences provides a way out of this difficulty. The point is that knowledge of particulars is not used in the same way in

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ly. According to Aristotle's account in the *APo* conviction (*pistis*) in the objects of physics is obtained through *deduction* from the principles, not from *empeiria* (*APo* I.2 72a25-72b4). Younger people, when talking of objects of physics in general, would not talk mere talks, for they still would be able to make deductions. Moreover, that there is a parallel with the definition of mathematics (*to ti estin*) seems to show that here Aristotle is still speaking about the principles (*ta men*), not about the objects more generally.

empirical sciences and in *phronêsis*. Knowledge of particulars in the case of physics and the like is needed in order to acquire the principles of a science. The principles of physics are obtained by induction from the collection of observations and reputable opinions in *empeiria*. By contrast, knowledge of particulars is required in the standard exercise of *phronêsis*, namely in order to take virtuous decisions. But the requirement of *empeiria* in this context does not concern the grasp of principles.[255]

There seems therefore to be two different functions of *empeiria*. On the theoretical side, concerning empirical sciences, *empeiria* is a step towards the acquisition of the principles. On the practical side, *empeiria* is rather useful in order to find out the best decision.[256] The occurrence of *empeiria* in the context of practical thought does not constitute evidence for the intellectualist claim that there is a practical intellection of moral principles. On the contrary, I shall argue that the point of *empeiria* is the capacity to relate new cases to other ones that the *empeiros* has already encountered. Transposed to the *phronimos*, this entails that the *phronimos* is able to *connect* the particular circumstances of an action to the appropriate moral ends.

5.3.2 Experience in practice

What kind of psychic state *empeiria* exactly is and what role it plays in Aristotle's epistemology have been much debated in the last twenty years.[257] It seems clear that the psychological basis of *empeiria* is exclusively perceptual. *Empeiria* arises from memory, which in turn is a collection of perception. Many memories of the same thing result in having experience (980b29-981a1; *APo* 100a5). There has been controversies on issues such as whether the content of *empeiria* includes particulars exclusively or also universals[258], and whether animals are capable of *empeiria*, and if yes whether it is the same as human experience.[259] What seems clear though is that *empeiria* has a propositional content. *Empeiria* involves a *hupolêpsis* and a *hupolêpsis*

[255] Besides, the sign argument of passage (52) merely states that: 'that young people do not become *phronimoi* is a sign that *phronêsis* has to do with particulars'. Holding the competing claim that 'that young people do not become physicist is a sign that physics somehow involves knowledge of the particulars' does not undermine the first argument. All in all, Aristotle's sign argument is not very strong. I reckon that the important point in this passage is rather the similarity with empirical sciences on the importance of *empeiria* and *pistis*.

[256] Some commentators deny that *empeiria* in ethics has any role to play in grasping the principles: Burnyeat 1980: 73; Jimeñez in progress.

[257] See e.g. Frede 1996; Butler 2003; Gregoric & Grgic 2006; LaBarge 2006; Blackson 2006; Salmieri 2010; Bronstein 2012; Jimeñez in progress.

[258] Whether *empeiria* is about universals remains controversial. That the *empeiros* can produce universal beliefs is argued for by Gregoric and Grgic 2006: 16; LaBarge 2006; see also Frede 1996: 160-162. In favour of a particularist view, see Charles 2002 and Bronstein 2012: 44).

[259] See Gregoric & Grgic 2006.

is a propositional judgement (*Meta*. I.1 981a7-9).[260] Another decisive feature commentators all seem to agree on is that *empeiria* is a recognitional ability, the ability to recognize a particular token as an instance of a certain type.[261] This aspect will especially interest us here, for it will appear to be a fundamental feature of practical knowledge.

In *Meta*. I.1, Aristotle introduces a contrast between human beings and other animals on an epistemological basis. Regarding the kind of cognitions they are capable of, animals are limited to perception and memory (981a27-b25). At best, some animals are able of *phantasia* and experience. Instead, human beings are capable of science (*epistêmê*) and craft (*technê*). Then, in order to account for this difference, Aristotle details the relation between experience, on the one hand, and science and craft, on the other.

> 54) "And experience seems to be very similar to science and craft. Science and craft come to men through experience. For, as Polus said, experience produced craft whereas inexperience produced luck. Craft obtains when many notions (*ennoêmatôn*) of experience become one universal belief (*katholou hupolêpsis*) about things similar. For, on the one hand, to have a belief that when Callias was ill of this disease *this* did him good, and similarly for Socrates and for many others taken one by one, – this is a matter of experience; but, on the other hand, to have a belief that when they were ill of this disease, this has done good to all persons of such and such a quality (*pasi tois toioisde*), marked off according to one notion (*eidos hen*), e.g. to the phlegmatic or to the bilious people when burning with fever, – this is a matter of craft." *Meta*. I.1 981a1-12
>
> (981a) καὶ δοκεῖ σχεδὸν ἐπιστήμη καὶ τέχνη ὅμοιον εἶναι καὶ ἐμπειρία, ἀποβαίνει δ' ἐπιστήμη καὶ τέχνη διὰ τῆς ἐμπειρίας τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐμπειρία τέχνην ἐποίησεν, ὡς φησὶ Πῶλος, ἡ (5) δ' ἀπειρία τύχην. γίγνεται δὲ τέχνη ὅταν ἐκ πολλῶν τῆς ἐμπειρίας ἐννοημάτων μία καθόλου γένηται περὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ὑπόληψις. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔχειν ὑπόληψιν ὅτι Καλλίᾳ κάμνοντι τηνδὶ τὴν νόσον τοδὶ συνήνεγκε καὶ Σωκράτει καὶ καθ' ἕκαστον οὕτω πολλοῖς, ἐμπειρίας ἐστίν· (10) τὸ δ' ὅτι πᾶσι τοῖς τοιοῖσδε κατ' εἶδος ἓν ἀφορισθεῖσι, κάμνουσι τηνδὶ τὴν νόσον, συνήνεγκεν, οἷον τοῖς φλεγματώδεσιν ἢ χολώδεσι [ἢ] πυρέττουσι καύσῳ, τέχνης.

[260] Another key term is *ennoêma* at *Meta*. I.1 981a6 (see text (54) below). It is a *hapax* in Aristotle (Cambiano 2012: 16, n. 31). Cambiano understands *ennoêma* as meaning the same thing as *noêma* in *DA* III.8 432a11-12, namely a thought with a propositional content.

[261] Frede 1996: 163; Vasiliou 1996: 784; Everson 1997: 224-227; Gregoric & Grgic 2006; Bronstein 2012: 44-45.

The experienced person's cognitive capacities are not as developed as those of someone who possesses craft or science. Still, his abilities are quite remarkable. He can distinguish various *types* of things or states of affairs: he can tell whether this symptom is of a similar sort than that other symptoms. Thus, he is able to organize the data he has the experience of. He can make out groups under which particular instances can be gathered or not. What is the exact difference, then, between *empeiria* on the one hand and *technê* and *epistêmê* on the other?

Aristotle connects these kinds of knowing with what he calls knowing the "that" and knowing the "why".

> 55) "But we think that knowing and comprehending belong to craft rather than to experience, and we conceive that craftsmen are wiser than experienced people, which implies that wisdom (*sophia*) rather depends in all cases on knowledge. This is so because the former knows the cause, but the latter does not. For experienced people know the 'that', but they do not know why, whereas the others know the 'because', that is, the cause." *Meta.* I.1 981a24-30
>
> ἀλλ' ὅμως τό γε εἰδέναι καὶ τὸ ἐπαΐειν τῇ (25) τέχνῃ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὑπάρχειν οἰόμεθα μᾶλλον, καὶ σοφωτέρους τοὺς τεχνίτας τῶν ἐμπείρων ὑπολαμβάνομεν, ὡς κατὰ τὸ εἰδέναι μᾶλλον ἀκολουθοῦσαν τὴν σοφίαν πᾶσι· τοῦτο δ' ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν αἰτίαν ἴσασιν οἱ δ' οὔ. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἔμπειροι τὸ ὅτι μὲν ἴσασι, διότι δ' οὐκ ἴσασιν· οἱ δὲ τὸ διότι (30) καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν γνωρίζουσιν.

Aristotle distinguishes between two ways of knowing (*eidenai*) which he relates to science and craft on the one hand, and to experience on the other. Science and craft correspond to "knowing the because" (*to dioti gnôrizein*), i.e. knowledge of the cause of why such and such a fact is the case. Experience corresponds to "knowing the that" (*to hoti eidenai*), which amounts to knowledge of the fact itself. The previous example about medicine in text (54) becomes clear if one applies this distinction. Knowing that Socrates suffering from fever benefited from this remedy is 'knowing that'. That Callias benefited from the same remedy when exhibiting a similar symptom still is 'knowing that'. However, knowing that all people suffering from fever benefited from this remedy *because* they are bilious is knowing why. The universality of this latter kind of knowledge is connected with knowing the reason why.

The crucial difference in my view is the following: In virtue of *empeiria*, I can collect observations that this patient suffering from this fever will benefit from this treatment. I can then come to a general account that patients suffering from this kind of fever will benefit from this kind of treatment. However, this account is open to error and inaccuracies. I can come to identify a similar symptom in a new patient

and apply the general rule, although it turns out that this treatment is not appropriate in this case. The reason is that I do not have the cause of the symptom. By contrast, in the case of 'knowing why', similar symptoms are identified as the same disease in virtue of their cause. From this, Aristotle infers a notion of knowledge in a strong sense. It is because I know why S is P that I can truly assert that all S are P. Knowledge in a strong sense implies a 'truly universal' assumption (Frede 1996: 160-161), i.e. instead of saying that some people benefited from this treatment, one will say: all people with symptom F benefited from this treatment. The reason why one can make such a universal assertion is that one has an explanation why this assertion is true: all people with symptom F benefited from this treatment, *because* they all are bilious.

The acquisition of *technê* is similar to that of *empeiria*, even though they do not arise on the same level. Both originate from a multiplicity of cognition, yet of a different kind. *Empeiria* arises from many memories, whereas *technê* arises from many *empeiriai*. The unity of *empeiria* is the result of a conjunction of many items, whereas the unity of *technê* results from a plurality of empirical *ennoêmata as one universal judgement*. *Empeiria* is not yet the recognition of a single universal, and it does not involve the articulation of any single universal. *Empeiria* involves a plurality, whereas *technê* involves a totality (Cambiano 2012: 18). The series of similar empirical notion is open and could be continued (Müller 1900: 56). Moreover, the content of empirical notions are singular propositions. The content of *technê* differs insofar as it is universally quantified (*pasi tois toioisde*) (Cambiano 2012) and refers to a class defined according to one *eidos*. In the case of *empeiria*, no such a unifying *eidos* has been discovered.

However, drawing the contrast between knowledge in a strong sense and knowledge at the level of *empeiria* should not hide the remarkable achievement of the latter. *Empeiria* is sufficient to be acquainted with general notions. The experienced person is able to recognize particular things or states of affairs as *instances* of general types, even though such types are not fully known by *empeiria* itself. Of course, this process of recognition is open to error, since the *empeiros* does not have knowledge of the cause.[262] Nevertheless, *empeiria* represents a significant step on the way to full conceptual knowledge.

Moreover, I contend that experience fosters a further capacity. In my view, thanks to experience, I am able to *refine* my general notions. *Empeiria* is an ability

[262] Without full knowledge, an individual will not be able to define this type. He will even not be able to name it (See Gregoric & Grgic 2006: 17, who also refer to Politis 2004: 38). This type might be merely known in a kind of preconceptual way (and thus *empeiria* would be achievable by animals).

thanks to which I can order the multiplicity of data I am confronted with.[263] The more occasions I have to face a situation of a certain type, the better acquainted I am with the multiplicity of facts and thus the better able I am to recognize similar features, group particulars into categories and refine the taxonomy of such categories. In the case of medicine, the young physician will little by little learn to distinguish various symptoms which seemed very similar at first sight. He will gain a nuanced notion of such symptoms and thereby a better idea of when to apply such and such a treatment.

If one understands it in this way, *empeiria* becomes very interesting in a practical context. It becomes an ability to recognize particulars as instances of moral notions.

5.3.3 The function of *empeiria* in practical behaviour

If one applies this description of *empeiria* as a recognitional ability on a practical context, *empeiria* appears as an ability to recognize features of a situation as instances of certain types, more specifically as instances of moral notions such as the good, the just, the temperate, etc. (See Vasiliou 1996: 784). Thus, the *empeiros* will be able to make judgements about new cases using these notions and applying them to these new cases.

The function of *empeiria* in a practical context is best seen in Aristotle's chapters on the virtue of courage (especially *EN* III.6 and 8). It is moreover the only occurrence in the *Ethics* where Aristotle asserts that one can be experienced without being virtuous.[264]

> 56) "In the primary sense, then, courageous will be said of the one who is fearless about a fine death, or about sudden situations that threaten death; and of this sort are mostly situations which occur in war. Moreover, the courageous person will also be fearless at sea as well as when he is ill, but not in the same way as the seamen. For, while some have given up hope of survival and are unable to endure such a death, seamen are full of hope because of their experience." *EN* III.6 1115a32-1115b4
>
> κυρίως δὴ λέγοιτ' ἂν ἀνδρεῖος ὁ περὶ τὸν καλὸν θάνατον ἀδεής, καὶ ὅσα θάνατον ἐπιφέρει ὑπόγυια ὄντα· τοιαῦτα δὲ μά(35)λιστα τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν θαλάττῃ (1115b)

[263] On *empeiria* as an ability to order particulars, see Gregoric & Grgic 2006: 10; Miller 2014: 130.

[264] There are similar occurrences in the parallel passages on courage of the *EE* but where the cognitive function of *empeiria* is less explicit; I owe the reference to the chapters on courage to Jimeñez (in progress).

> καὶ ἐν νόσοις ἀδεὴς ὁ ἀνδρεῖος, οὐχ οὕτω δὲ ὡς οἱ θαλάττιοι· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀπεγνώκασι τὴν σωτηρίαν καὶ τὸν θάνατον τὸν τοιοῦτον δυσχεραίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ εὐέλπιδές εἰσι παρὰ τὴν ἐμπειρίαν.

Aristotle contrasts genuinely courageous people with people who have experience in situations of deadly danger such as sailing. Seamen when in danger at sea do not give in to fear because they are able to see whether and how they will be able to survive. Their experience provides them with a view of how they will be able to achieve their goal. Aristotle states a similar point some lines below, this time about warfare:

> 57) "It also seems that experience in each particular domain is courage.[265] [...] There are different people like this [i.e. who have experience] in different domains, and in the domain of warfare it is the soldiers. For it seems that in war there are many situations empty of risk, and soldiers in particular have been able to witness such situations. They appear courageous, then, because the others do not know what these situations are like." *EN* III.8 1116b3-8
>
> δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ ἡ ἐμπειρία ἡ περὶ ἕκαστα ἀνδρεία εἶναι· [...] (5) τοιοῦτοι δὲ ἄλλοι μὲν ἐν ἄλλοις, ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς δ' οἱ στρατιῶται· δοκεῖ γὰρ εἶναι πολλὰ κενὰ τοῦ πολέμου, ἃ μάλιστα συνεωράκασιν οὗτοι· φαίνονται δὴ ἀνδρεῖοι, ὅτι οὐκ ἴσασιν οἱ ἄλλοι οἷά ἐστιν.

Soldiers have had experience of different cases, some of which really were dangerous and others which were false alarms. Their experience provides them with a sense of when an apparent threat is indeed a threat and when it is not as dangerous as one had thought initially. Then Aristotle adds a further reason why experienced people appear courageous. This has to do this time with their experience in fighting:

> 58) "Furthermore, <soldiers> are best able to inflict damage without suffering from it thanks to their experience, since they are able to use weapons and they have such weapons that are the most powerful to inflict damage and to not suffer from it." 1116b9-12
>
> εἶτα ποιῆσαι καὶ μὴ παθεῖν μάλιστα δύνανται ἐκ τῆς (10) ἐμπειρίας, δυνάμενοι χρῆσθαι τοῖς ὅπλοις καὶ τοιαῦτα ἔχοντες

[265] Translators often render *hê empeiria hê peri hekasta* as 'experience of particulars' or 'of particular facts' (Ross, Crisp). Here I follow Rowe and Irwin because Aristotle does not say *hê empeiria hê peri* ***ta*** *kath'hekasta*, which would be a more accurate phrase to refer to the particulars. I think that Aristotle here does not refer to the particulars in the technical sense I have constructed in chap. 4. Therefore I prefer avoiding confusion.

> ὁποῖα ἂν εἴη καὶ πρὸς τὸ ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸς τὸ μὴ παθεῖν κράτιστα·

Soldiers as experienced people also have an advantage over untrained people in that they know their tools. They know on what weapons they can rely on. In other words, they are best able to identify what means will be best adapted for such or such a combat.

From these few passages, two crucial features appear as proper to experienced people. First, the *empeiroi* are able to identify a situation as being really instantiating a practical matter or not. For instance, in warfare such or such a situation can *really* be dangerous or can merely be a false alarm. Similarly in other domains of human activities: Such or such situation can *really* be unjust or not, or really shameful or not. Second, the experienced person is able to identify the best means towards success in action. Thanks to the knowledge of particular cases he has, he is best able to understand whether such or such a means is appropriate or not. As in the case of the physician, because he already had plenty of occasions to be confronted to several different diseases and to relate them to the appropriate remedies, he is better able to see whether such or such a remedy will be appropriate for such or such a disease (see *EN* V.9 1137a9-17 text (6)).

Practical experience concerns not the acquisition and formulation of principles, but their application.[266] The idea here is that when I acquire experience in applying moral rules, I also acquire a refined idea of how the principle applies and when. Take the example: 'harming animals is wrong'. If I apply this principle to the letter, without distinction, there are chances that I shall not survive very long in this world – even though it is an industrialized one. I might let any insect bite me; get chased by dogs, etc. I need to understand more accurately what it is to hurt animals (is chasing a bee away a case of hurting animals?), whether there are circumstances in which hurting animals is legitimate (e.g. in cases of self-defence, in case of infestation of an area by a non-local species, etc.), maybe even whether it is legitimate to hurt or kill certain species of animals (animals without a developed nervous system, some kind of especially vicious animals or cases of pest). In other words, when gaining experience with animals, I get a refined notion of the basic principle. The experienced man has such a subtle notion of the principle in his own domain of expertise. And so does the *phronimos*.

[266] Acquiring moral ends depends on character, as I have argued above. Habituation as the formation of character and *empeiria* as the ability to apply concepts correctly to a particular situation are two distinct dispositions. See below.

The *phronimos* as an experienced person is able to relate a new moral case to others he has already experienced. This involves that he is able to relate moral cases to some rules of action or to certain values. He can tell whether or not a general rule applies to a particular case. This is how I understand that the *phronimos* is defined as being '*praktikos*' in things good and bad for human beings (See *EN* VI.5 1140b4-6; 20-21, text 12). The *phronimos* has come to a point when he is able to spot regularities in the practical realm. So, my view at *EN* VI.13 1144b4-14 on the naturally virtuous (text 42) is that what the non-*phronimos* person lacks, even though naturally virtuous, is a 'sense of the particular', a 'moral sensibility' that consists in making the right distinctions between them as well as grouping them under the right types and tying them to the right moral value or principle. Knowing about particulars makes one *praktikôteros* because one knows better what is required for an individual or a subcategory of them. In other words, one knows better what is *appropriate* to them. Knowledge of particulars is of such kind that it can connect a certain subject with something directly appropriate to it. And such knowledge is made possible thanks to *empeiria* and the acquaintance with particular cases. Moreover, according to my interpretation of the *kath'hekasta* as the particular circumstances of a situation (§4.4.1), the object of such knowledge is not a single individual or state of affairs, but an overall situation which the agent connects to his idea of what he should do. What the agent requires in order to apply a moral rule correctly is not only one single observation about the situation. Rather, he needs to come to an overall appreciation of the situation, according to several parameters.

However, as was the case in the previous section about *empeiria* in general, cognition of particulars on the basis of *empeiria* in a practical context is open to mistakes, too. This indicates that *empeiria* comes in degrees. One can be more or less experienced. *Empeiria* arises progressively. The more experienced the agent is, the more reliable his judgement on particulars will be. Remember the example at §3.3.2.3 of the friend who mistakenly punishes his friend while thinking that he is doing him good. With some more experience, this person will have a refined notion of what being just is and will probably identify justice in a different way than by punishing his friend.[267] Acquiring experience requires therefore to have collected quite a lot of observations as well as having somehow understood connections among observed facts. Hence, with regard to *EN* VI.8 1142a11-16 (text 52), one understands better why acquiring *empeiria* takes time. The subject needs to have collected a large amount of data.

[267] See also Hursthouse's example of the nice adolescent, who ends up harming people although he is initially well-intentioned, because he lacks the appropriate grasp of an ethical concept in order to apply it well (Hursthouse 1991: 231).

Before concluding this chapter on the epistemological evaluation of practical knowledge, let me consider two issues related to my construction of *empeiria*. First, I have insisted a lot on the share of experience in practical thought. But does this position not tend to identify *phronêsis* with *empeiria*? This consequence would be counter-intuitive. Scholars usually regard *phronêsis* as being *more* than *empeiria*. In particular, since *phronêsis* is seen as something akin to knowledge or wisdom, it is sometimes interpreted as a more sophisticated notion of knowledge, for instance a kind of knowledge including a rational grasp of ethical principles. Secondly, it might seem dubious to hold that in moral matters my perception of particulars is free from any influence from my character. Rather, one could plausibly argue that the kind of character I have has an impact on the kind of circumstances I perceive. For instance, an agent who tends to feel attraction towards sweet things could be prone to perceive sweet things and to overlook other kinds of food. More generally, one could suspect that the process of acquiring *empeiria* is not distinguishable from the process of forging character, namely habituation.

First, then, is there a difference between *phronimos* and *empeiros*? Obviously, it is possible to be *empeiros* without being *phronimos*. The experienced soldiers mentioned above are not virtuous. Moreover, at *EE* I.7 1217a4 Aristotle mentions the case of experienced people who get fooled (*aliskesthai*) by ignorant people or fraud. Getting fooled by such people is not something that one would expect from someone *phronimos*. Then how does *phronêsis* differ from *empeiria*? According to intellectualists, what the *phronimos* has which the *empeiros* has not would be a capacity to provide a higher-order justification for his action (Sorabji 1981: 2016-207; Reeve 2012: 150). The *empeiros* is not able to provide such a justification (see *Meta.* I.1 981a5-12). The *empeiros* is able to prescribe poultry meat in a particular case of, say, Socrates suffering from phlegm, but he cannot provide the knowledge that 'light meat is good for health' in order to account for his prescription (even though such knowledge is not useful for *praxis*).

However, I am not sure that one should attribute such a capacity of higher-order justification to the *phronimos* without qualification. What distinguishes the *phronimos* from the experienced man lies in a different aspect. It is true that knowing causes also has practical significance:

> 59) "Presumably, too, then, someone who wishes to make people better, whether they are many or few, by his care should try to become expert in legislation, if it is through laws that we would become good. For, producing a noble disposition in anyone, just whoever is put before one, is not for the first chance comer. But if anyone can do it, it is the one who knows, as in the case of medi-

> cine and the other matters where some kind of care and practical wisdom are required." *EN* X.9 1180b23-28
>
> τάχα δὲ καὶ τῷ βουλομένῳ δι' ἐπιμελείας βελτίους ποιεῖν, εἴτε πολλοὺς εἴτ' ὀλίγους, νομοθετικῷ πειρα(25) τέον γενέσθαι, εἰ διὰ νόμων ἀγαθοὶ γενοίμεθ' ἄν. ὅντινα γὰρ οὖν καὶ τὸν προτεθέντα διαθεῖναι καλῶς οὐκ ἔστι τοῦ τυχόντος, ἀλλ' εἴπερ τινός, τοῦ εἰδότος, ὥσπερ ἐπ' ἰατρικῆς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ὧν ἔστιν ἐπιμέλειά τις καὶ φρόνησις.

So Reeve (2012: 149):

> "It would be a serious mistake to suppose, therefore, that knowledge of explanatory universals is not an important part of practical wisdom at all, just because it is a less important one than the particularist part of it crucial in deliberation."

Notwithstanding, my point is not that architectonic knowledge of universals is not important for practical wisdom, but rather that it is not relevant when it comes to assess epistemically one's decision to act. One ought to distinguish between two contexts. On the one hand, the *phronimos* is deliberating with action in view. On the other hand, he is in a context of discussion, argumentation or teaching. My view is that knowledge of universals as knowing the cause is useful in a context of architectonic thinking (what I have called ethical science in chap. 2), but not of deliberation.[268] *Qua* deliberator, the *phronimos* does not need any such higher-order justification about what *eudaimonia* or the good consists in. In fact, Aristotle never (at least not that I know) opposes *phronêsis* with *empeiria*.[269] Moreover, the above passage *EN* X.9 1180b23-28 makes the point that knowledge of ethical science is useful in a context of governing others and making them better, not in a context of decision-making. In *Meta*. I.1, *empeiria* is differentiated from *technê* in similar terms. *Technê* involves understanding the cause, yet with respect to action Aristotle affirms that *empeiria* does not differ from *technê*. He even adds that someone with experience will be better in action than someone with theory but without experience (*Meta* I.1 981a12-26).

Rather, the difference between *phronêsis* and *empeiria* resides in my view in that *empeiria* does not immediately contribute to one's access to moral ends. As argued at §5.2, moral ends are not determined by reason, nor by *empeiria*. The person who is experienced only, without having had the right moral habituation, will not

[268] See Achtenberg (2002: 76-95): Inquiring universal causes in ethics does not belong to ethics, but rather to metaphysics, physics and psychology.

[269] *Pace* Sorabji 1981: 207, who mentions 1141b16-21, where *phronêsis* is precisely *compared* to *empeiria*.

value the right moral notions and will not value them as one should. This is patent in the case of experienced soldiers, again:

> 60) "But soldiers become cowards when the danger is extreme and they are inferior in number and equipment. For they are the first to run away, while the citizen elements stand and die, as happened at the temple of Hermes. For to the latter, running away is something shameful, and death is more desirable than saving oneself in such way; whereas the soldiers from the very beginning were ready to face the dangers because they believed they had the advantage, and once having seen they do not, they run away; because they fear death more than the shameful." *EN* III.8 1116b15-23
>
> (15) οἱ στρατιῶται δὲ δειλοὶ γίνονται, ὅταν ὑπερτείνῃ ὁ κίνδυνος καὶ λείπωνται τοῖς πλήθεσι καὶ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς· πρῶτοι γὰρ φεύγουσι, τὰ δὲ πολιτικὰ μένοντα ἀποθνήσκει, ὅπερ κἀπὶ τῷ Ἑρμαίῳ συνέβη. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τὸ φεύγειν (20) καὶ ὁ θάνατος τῆς τοιαύτης σωτηρίας αἱρετώτερος· οἱ δὲ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκινδύνευον ὡς κρείττους ὄντες, γνόντες δὲ φεύγουσι, τὸν θάνατον μᾶλλον τοῦ αἰσχροῦ φοβούμενοι·

What the experienced soldier misses is a correct valuation of the moral end. He is able to identify it, for he was told what the purpose of his fighting is (e.g. protecting the city). He is also aware of the relevant circumstances of the situation, thanks to his experience in combat. However because of a non-virtuous character, he does not desire the end appropriately. Thus, because he does not value the virtuous end enough, he does not act virtuously and instead prefers a different, non-virtuous, course of action. My point is that knowledge of the cause does not help the experienced man in having a better view on moral values. The experienced man does not fully understand why the principle is significant because he does not have an internalized notion of it (supposition about the why': *hupolêpsis tou dia ti*, *EE* II.10 1226b21–5). He has not acquired it through habituation of character, or not well enough. His position to the principle is merely 'external', although he is then very well off when it comes to applying the principle. He holds it and admits it is true or desirable, but he does not genuinely desire it. Professional soldiers on the battlefield are very knowledgeable about combat, but they don't have a strong notion of *why* they fight. They just fight because it is their job.

This account of *empeiria* and of the difference with *phronêsis* involves that *empeiria* is a cognitive state distinct from habituation. Hereby, I tackle the second issue on *empeiria*. As I conceive it, habituation is a process of forging one's character that relies in learning to desire the correct things by learning to take pleasure in them. Thus, it pertains to the non-rational part of the soul. By contrast, *empeiria* im-

plies a different process. It merely consists in gathering perceptual data, ordering them into categories, and identifying instances of the types made out of the ordering process. Acquiring experience does not concern the desiderative part of the soul. It is not even limited to the domain of moral psychology, since, as is clear from the *Metaphysics*, experience is a crucial step towards the acquisition of theoretical science.

One could object that perception of circumstances is not distinguishable from character. The kinds of circumstance I attend to are partly determined by the kind of person I am. In this sense, my experience is influenced by my character.[270] I think one way to answer this objection is to affirm that only the end I consider is influenced by my character. In other words, character 'sets the stage' under which guise I attend to the situation. However, the particular achievement of recognizing individual features as instances of moral types is an independent one. If, when confronted to a situation, I am attracted to pleasure of food, I shall tend to regard the overall situation with a focus on this end, i.e. enjoying good food. However, the task of identifying such or such objects as instances of chicken or sweet is not tainted by character. Habituation and experience are two distinct processes that both contribute towards becoming fully virtuous, yet in their own respective way.[271]

5.4 Conclusion

What with the epistemic evaluation of practical thought, then? Aristotle's explicit account is that practical knowledge is achieved when one has 'knowledge' (*gnôrizein*) of both universals and of particulars. In this chapter, I have given my own interpretation of these kinds of knowledge.

Concerning knowledge of universals, the central claim is that character gives the end. The good is in fact what appears to be good. According to this interpretation, moral ends or principles are acquired through habituation. The content of the end is given by *phantasia*, which is a non-rational cognitive faculty, but there is no contribution of a higher, more sophisticated, cognitive faculty such as a *nous* of principles as in the theoretical case. It is true that moral ends might receive an explicit rational formulation as they can enter into a process of deliberation. However, the ultimate justification of these specific ends proper to a particular delibera-

[270] Some scholars have argued that habituation and *empeiria* are not distinct and that they are two aspects of the same process of learning to be good (Vasiliou 1996: 780; See also Tuozzo 1991: 204-205).

[271] See Jimeñez in progress: 12-13, n. 8 on McDowell: The moral learner needs to acquire *two* distinct 'conceptual apparati', one through habituation and the other through *empeiria*.

tion does not pertain to reason, but to character. No ultimate justification of moral ends is possible.

Concerning knowledge of particulars, I have argued that what matters is not justifying whether such or such a particular belief is true, but rather accounting for why the agent is sensitive to this aspect of the situation rather than to that one. The agent starts from a very rough notion of the good, the 'defining end', which is given by character, and learns little by little to apply this notion to other cases and at the same time to refine this conception of the good. There is a need for moral notions to be probed over time, while repeating the same kinds of action several times. In other words, the grasp of principles is refined through one's experience of moral matters. The learner comes to a better notion of moral values and principles by getting to know when they apply and when there are exceptions, or when some value should be silenced on the face of a more important value. This can only be done through practice, and thanks to the contribution of perception.

This interpretation assumes that no such thing as practical induction is required, because no firm knowledge of the good can be achieved. The agent merely gets to a better, finer and more flexible idea of what counts as good without being ever able to have *nous* of it, as opposed to the objects of theoretical *epistêmê*. The contribution of *empeiria* provides the agent with a rational grasp of moral notions.

An important consequence of this chapter is that what I have called 'knowledge' of universals and of particulars is in fact not knowledge in a strong sense. In the case of universals, I have argued that we cannot have a fully rational justification of moral universals. We rather have representations or beliefs of the good, of the just, and of such notions, but we cannot obtain a well justified understanding of what these notions are. In the case of particulars, the situation is similar. What provides 'knowledge' of particular is perception. Although Aristotle does not seem to worry about the epistemic status of perception, it is true that perception cannot constitute a fully reliable foundation for our knowledge of particulars. However, I have tried to show, especially in §5.3 on *empeiria*, that the crucial aspect concerning practical knowledge does reside in the relationship between one's cognition of universals and of particulars. The experienced agent knows better how to relate perceptual data with his conception of moral notions. His refined conception of moral values enables him to see a closer connection between these values and the particulars he perceives.

In order to get a better idea of all that, I wish to inquire into practical cases where things do not go as smoothly as in the case of the *phronimos*. This will provide an insight into what it is to genuinely *know* practically by contrast to cases in

which the agent does not *know* in such a strong sense. And this will also suggest in what sense the *phronimos* fully knows, by contrast to others.

CHAPTER 6

6 *Akrasia* and other flaws of practical thought

6.1 Introduction

In chapter 5, I offered an account of epistemic evaluation of practical thought. Practical thought can be formalized as an argument which constitutes the content of an episode of decision. This argument consists in a major premise which states a moral rule and in a minor premise which picks a crucial feature of the situation. A decision is evaluated morally if the major premise is morally correct, i.e. morally good, and if the minor premise offers an adequate way to apply the moral principle to the situation. Moreover, one can affirm that the agent really *knows* whether his decision is the right one or not if he is aware of the moral principle that he follows and if he has experience of how to apply it. Practical *knowledge* occurs, then, if the agent has a correct representation of the moral principle and if he applies it correctly to the situation, that is, if he spots a true instance of this principle.

This account is centred on *EN* VI, in which Aristotle has in view the case of the ideal agent, namely the *phronimos*. However, not every agent is *phronimos*. One can fall short of displaying virtuous behaviour in a variety of ways. We have already encountered the cases of the vicious person (*phaulos*), who does not consider the correct principles of moral action, and that of the 'simple deliberator', as I have called him, who ends up performing a good action, but not through correct reasoning (see §3.3.2.3). In order to complete my account of the conditions for practical knowledge and the evaluation of practical thought, I want to turn now to non-virtuous cases, i.e. to the various flaws of practical reason. Aristotle distinguishes at least three types of moral behaviour which are not virtuous: badness (*kakia*), lack of self-control (*akrasia*), and self-control (*enkrateia*). I have already mentioned badness (*kakia*) as a moral state which is opposed to virtue (§2.5 and §4.3.2).[272] As virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency, badness denotes a state (*hexis*) which is either an excessive response towards a kind of object, or a response deficient towards the

[272] At §4.3.2, the Greek term is *mochthêria*, not *kakia* (1151a15 – text 32). However, both terms do not differ significantly in terms of their function and Aristotle seems to consider them as synonymous (see 'vicious' in Irwin's glossary, Irwin 1985: 352).

same kind of object (*EN* 1106b33-34). Common definitions of *akrasia* and *enkrateia* are the behaviour of someone who acts according to one's appetite (*epithumia*) and against one's reason or one's wish (*EE* 1223a27-28; *EN* V.9 1136b5ff.; IX.4 1166b7-8) and the behaviour of someone who experiences strong appetites for something but still acts following his reason (*EE* 1223b12-13; *EN* 1111b14-15). Do these types of non-virtuous moral behaviour exhibit moral knowledge as I have described it?

In the case of the vicious type, the answer is straightforward. Although his grasp of the moral end is epistemically not weaker than that of the *phronimos*, his account of the moral principle is wrong. Thus, his decision cannot be correct, i.e. practically true. The vicious person could come up with an incidentally correct decision, yet one could not attribute to him the belief that he knows what he ought to do, because his moral justification would not contain a correct moral principle. The cases of the *akratês* and the *enkratês* are trickier. In fact, the question whether the *akratês* knows what he should do occupies a whole chapter in book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This question is raised by Aristotle at the beginning of the book together with a couple of other *aporiai* on non-virtuous character-types. Concerning enkratic behaviour, there is also a similar question whether one can attribute practical knowledge to the *enkratês*. The latter exhibits a kind of behaviour similar to that of the *phronimos* but for the disposition of his character. Still, since he ends up performing a morally good action, one could still hold that he knows what he should do.

Traditionally, commentators have drawn attention to *akrasia* alone. Accounts of *akrasia* usually focus on the question whether the *akratês* is consciously aware of what he is doing or not. This is understandable insofar as Aristotle himself spends most of *EN* VII on *akrasia* and devotes a whole chapter on the question of the cognitive state of the *akratês*. I put the same emphasis on *akrasia*, though I eventually aim at giving an account for all three kinds of non-virtuous behaviour. Thus, I devote the second part of this chapter to an extensive reading of the highly disputed chapter 3 of book VII. In this chapter, Aristotle develops an account of the cognitive state specific to the akratic agent.

Akrasia has generally been understood as a failure of practical knowledge. The akratic agent somehow does not know some aspect of what would be the best thing to do. Yet, what exactly this aspect is has been an object of dispute. Since Albert the Great and Aquinas, most commentators have held the view that the *akratês* is not aware of the particular object of his deliberation; in other words, he does not actively know the minor premise of a practical syllogism.[273] However, a few com-

[273] See e.g. Ross 1949, 140; Bostock 2000: 130-131.

mentators have adopted a different view, according to which the *akratês* has complete awareness of the situation he is in, but somehow fails to connect his notion of what he should do with the situation, and therefore is ignorant of the practical conclusion one would expect.[274]

I follow the latter trend according to which the *akratês* is aware of what he does and that his action is not in agreement with what he should do. The main reason for this is that the former interpretation, according to which the agent is not aware of the conclusion of what he should do, does not account for the fact that the *akratês* experiences a conflict between opposite desires. The view of *akrasia* I defend in this chapter is that what makes akratic behaviour possible in general is the way the agent connects his knowledge of moral rules with particular circumstances. Whereas in the case of the *phronimos* the agent ties his perception of particular circumstances with moral principles appropriately, in the akratic case the agent does not identify an instance of a moral principle correctly. This failure at relating an instance of moral behaviour to its type is thus the reason why the *akratês* person is unable to stick to the course of action he knows is best.

The present chapter advances the idea that the epistemic evaluation of practical thought and decision depends on the way the contents of practical thought are related to each other. This account is given in the famous third chapter of *EN* VII, where Aristotle gives his most extended account of *akrasia*. In my view, the point of *EN* VII.3 is to work out the conditions in which practical reasoning is done properly, namely when a subject holds a practical conclusion to act in a certain way, which is backed up by an argument that supports the conclusion appropriately. Correspondingly, the case of *enkrateia* is explained in that the *enkratês* agent, although prone to excessive appetite for pleasurable things, manages to connect appropriately his general ideas or principles of what one should do with his perception of the actual situation he is in. These results are in line with what I have developed in the earlier chapters of this work.

In order to come to such conclusions, I first need to come back to the desiderative side of practical thought. I shall establish the point that all three kinds of non-virtuous moral behaviour, *kakia, akrasia,* and *enkrateia*, are similar concerning the desiderative side of the soul, for they all consist in an excessive reaction towards pleasurable objects. The task will therefore be to account for their differences on the basis of the cognitive side of the soul.

[274] Kenny 1966; Santas 1969; Charles 1984 and 2009; this view also appears in the Middle Ages with Walter Burley; see Charles 2009:42.

6.2 The 'pathetic' side of practical thought

In book VII of the *EN*, Aristotle inquires into types of behaviour other than *phronêsis* which are relevant for moral evaluation. These are badness (*kakia*), lack of self-control (*akrasia*), self-control (*enkrateia*) (*EN* VII.1 1145a15-22).[275] Badness is opposed to virtue, while *akrasia* is opposed to self-control.

At the beginning of *EN* VII, Aristotle lists various reputable opinions (*endoxa*) on the various character types: the *akratês* tends to depart from his reasoning (*ekstatikos tou logismou*), while the *enkratês* sticks to it (*emmenetikos*) (1145b10-12); the *akratês* acts somehow moved by his emotional affections (*pathê*), while knowing (*eidôs*) that what he does is vile (*phaulon*). The *enkratês* by contrast knows that his desires are vile and thus does not follow them, but follows reason instead (1145b12-14; see also 1111b13-15). *Akrasia* can thus be described roughly as the behaviour of someone who has a correct notion or idea of what he should do, but who experiences at the same time a non-rational emotional state incompatible with this idea. He ends up performing an action in accordance with his non-rational desire, while knowing that what he is doing is bad. *Enkrateia* is the opposite state: experiencing desire but resisting to it and following the call of reason. Yet this first approximation of the various character types is not accurate enough. Among the opinions reported, Aristotle mentions also those that merely conflate *akrasia* with self-indulgence (*akolasia*) (1145b16-17). He also notes that sometimes people considered as *phronimoi* are also viewed as *akrateis* (1145b17-19). Aristotle needs therefore to clear the ambiguities surrounding these types of behaviour and to distinguish them from one another. In order to do so he raises a couple of *aporiai* that arise from the consideration of the various opinions on these character types.

The first *aporia* raised by Aristotle is the question of how it sometimes happens that someone may act in a way which goes against what he thinks is the best thing to do (1145b21-1146a9). A second *aporia* questions the similarity between *sôphrosunê* and *enkrateia* in terms of the intensity of desire. On the one hand, the temperate person does not seem to have strong desires for base things, but on the other hand, the self-controlled person seems to resist intense desires, yet otherwise his resistance has nothing special (1146a9-16). The third *aporia* originates in the supposed description of *enkrateia* as the disposition to stand by one's opinion. Thus, if the opinion is bad, then *enkrateia* will be something bad (1146a16-21). The fourth

[275] Aristotle also mentions two further kinds of behaviour: brutishness (*thêriotês*) and a sort of superhuman, either heroic or divine, excellence. However, both of these character-types exceed what is properly human. They are rare among humans and are not subject to moral evaluation (1145a22-33). Hence, they will not interest us here.

aporia deals with a sophistic argument that mindlessness (*aphrosunê*) combined with *akrasia* is in fact virtue. In such case, the agent will fail to stick to his opinion about what is good and thus do the contrary akratically. But since his opinion about the good is mistaken, he accordingly ends up doing what is in fact good (1146a21-31). The fifth *aporia* questions whether the self-indulgent person (*akolastos*) is better than the unself-controlled one (1146a31-b2), whereas the sixth and final *aporia* asks whether there is *akrasia* without qualification or *akrasia* is always proper to a domain of activity (1146b2-5). Hence, Aristotle's main task in the first part of *EN* VII is to clear up the various types of moral behaviour, to define them, and to determine the relations they bear to one another.[276]

These *aporiai* have not all enjoyed the same attention. Most of the recent scholarship has focused on the first *aporia* dealt with at *EN* VII.3, perhaps because it is the most difficult chapter of the book, or perhaps simply because it is the first.[277] Likewise, the first *aporia* will occupy most of this chapter, while the other *aporiai* will receive less attention (I shall not linger at all on the second to fourth *aporiai*). However, I shall start my account of *akrasia* and other non-virtuous character types by ignoring *EN* VII.3 and jumping directly to the fifth and sixth *aporiai*. I consider chapters 4, 7 and 8 of *EN* VII indispensable for arriving at a correct definition of *akrasia*, *enkrateia*, and self-indulgence.

6.2.1 *Akrasia* as a *hexis*

At *EN* VII.4, Aristotle answers the sixth *aporia* and determines whether there is a sense of *akrasia* which is unqualified, or whether *akrasia* is always specific to a domain of action. This chapter is useful because it determines the kind of object *akrasia* and the other non-virtuous character types are about.

Aristotle starts from something obvious (*phaneron*): the self-controlled man and the resistant, as well as the *akratês* and the soft man are in some way pursuing or avoiding various sorts of pleasure and pain.[278] There are various kinds of pleas-

[276] The second part of book VII turns to another topic, that of pleasure (*hêdonê*), from chapter 11 till the end of the book. For recent scholarship on the various *aporiai* of *EN* VII, see Natali 2009, in which each chapter of book VII is the object of one study.

[277] For recent studies on *akrasia*, centred on *EN* VII.3, see Charles 2009; Moss 2008; Pickavé & Whiting 2008.

[278] 1148a21-23: ὅτι μὲν οὖν περὶ ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας εἰσὶν οἵ τ' ἐγκρατεῖς καὶ καρτερικοὶ καὶ οἱ ἀκρατεῖς καὶ μαλακοί, φανερόν. Aristotle sometimes distinguishes between *akrasia* and softness (*malakia*) and between *enkrateia* and resistance (*karteria*). *Akrasia* and *enkrateia* are related to pleasure, that is, the *akratês* tends to pursue pleasures, whereas the *enkratês* is capable of refraining from them. Softness and resistance are related to pains. The soft man tends to avoid pains, while the resistant man can endure them. However, it seems that be-

ant thing. Some are necessary, like food and sexual pleasures (*ta aphrodisia*), whereas others are sought after for themselves (*haireta kath'auta*). These are e.g., winning, honour, or wealth. Aristotle then deduces that the various kinds of *akrasia* are relative to the various kinds of pleasure or pain (and so it goes for the other kinds of non-virtuous behaviour). One can lack self-control regarding money, regarding honours, regarding winning, etc. Nevertheless, Aristotle makes clear later in the chapter that we speak of *akrasia* without qualification only in the case of the lack of self-control which is concerned with necessary pleasures, i.e. in the case of pleasurable things related to food, drink, and sex, which are the domain of the intemperate person (1148a23-b4). The domain of *akrasia haplôs* is thus the same as that of self-indulgence (*akolasia*), since the latter has been defined as a disposition to have appetite for any pleasant thing, and this excessively (1107b4-6; 1119a1-3). This way of distinguishing between *akrasia haplôs* and *akrasia* in a qualified sense seems to be transferable *salva veritate* to *enkrateia*, resistance and softness. There will be self-control *haplôs*, which is related to necessary pleasures, as well as self-control regarding money, regarding honours, etc., and so on with softness and resistance.[279]

A first determination of *akrasia*, then, is that it is a state of the soul which has necessary pleasures related to the body as its object. From now on, when speaking of *akrasia* I shall refer to the restricted notion of *akrasia haplôs*, namely the kind of lack of self-control which is concerned with necessary pleasures.[280] I want now to specify what kind of state *akrasia* and the other similar states are.

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side this terminological point there is no further substantial distinction between *akrasia* and *malakia* on the one hand and *enkrateia* and *karteria* on the other. In what follows, I leave *malakia* and *karteria* aside and consider *akrasia* and *enkrateia* to include softness and resistance respectively.

[279] Aristotle's argument for calling *akrasia* about necessary pleasures *akrasia haplôs* seems to be grounded on linguistic usage of the time. Later on in *EN* VII.4, he offers a more elaborated division between kinds of pleasure (1148a22-b2) which explains better why *akrasia* regarding necessary pleasures is *akrasia haplôs* (see text 62). On these issues, see Lorenz 2009.

[280] Aristotle makes a further distinction within *akrasia*. On the one hand, there is *akrasia* as impulsiveness (*propeteia*); on the other, there is *akrasia* as weakness (*asthenia*) (*EN* VII.7 1150a19-22; VII.8 1151a1-3). One specie of *akrasia* – the weak kind – is characterized by the fact that there is indeed deliberation, and that the agent has come to a result in his deliberation, yet he does not stick to (*ouk emmenousin*) the conclusion of his deliberation. The other species does not involve deliberation. The agent acts 'under the influence' (*hupo*) of *pathos*. The reason why the agent does not act according to what he wishes to do is the same in both cases, namely the agent's affective state (*pathos*). Aristotle adds a value judgment regarding the comparative value of each of these kinds of agent. Impulsive *akrateis* are better than the weak ones for two reasons. First, they have not deliberated beforehand. This is a reproach towards the weak *akrateis*: since they have deliberated, they should be better able to see what they should do, but nevertheless do not stick to their judgment. Second, the

In the course of chapter 4, Aristotle gives a rather complete definition of *akrasia haplôs* at 1148a4-11, where the reference to desire for bodily pleasures is explicit:

> 61) "Among kinds <of character> that are about bodily enjoyments, i.e. enjoyments that the temperate and the self-indulgent people are concerned with, the one which pursues (*diôkôn*) excessive pleasures not out of decision – and which avoids pains (physical hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and the like concerning touch and taste), but against decision and thought, this one is called *akratês*, and this without specifying that it is about this or that domain, like anger, but simply without qualification." *EN* VII.4 1148a4-11
>
> τῶν δὲ (5) περὶ τὰς σωματικὰς ἀπολαύσεις, περὶ ἃς λέγομεν τὸν σώφρονα καὶ ἀκόλαστον, ὁ μὴ τῷ προαιρεῖσθαι τῶν ἡδέων διώκων τὰς ὑπερβολάς—καὶ τῶν λυπηρῶν φεύγων, πείνης καὶ δίψης καὶ ἀλέας καὶ ψύχους καὶ πάντων τῶν περὶ ἁφὴν καὶ γεῦσιν—ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν καὶ τὴν (10) διάνοιαν, ἀκρατὴς λέγεται, οὐ κατὰ πρόσθεσιν, ὅτι περὶ τάδε, καθάπερ ὀργῆς, ἀλλ' ἁπλῶς μόνον.

The core element of *akrasia* then is the tendency to pursue pleasure and to avoid painful things related to bodily pleasures. We know from *EN* VI.2 that pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain are aspects of desire: pursuing and avoiding are for desire what asserting and denying are for *logos* (1139a21-22) (text 11). In other words, pursuing pleasant things is a positive desire towards the object, whereas avoiding painful things is a negative desire away from the object. Hence, what is characteristic of the *akratês* is to feel a certain desire towards pleasurable things and avoidance towards painful things.[281] By contrast, *phronêsis* at *EN* VI.5 was characterized by tending to look for what is 'practically true' (i.e. morally right) concerning things good and bad for humans. In this definition of *akrasia* there is no mention of looking for what lies beyond our immediate perception of what is pleasant or painful. It seems then that a characteristic feature of the *akratês* is to be responsive to pleasure in a way that the *phronimos* is not. Also, Aristotle is careful to add that the tendency for pleasure of the *akratês* goes contrary to decision and thought (*proairesis kai dianoia*). As he will make clearer later, a crucial feature of the *akratês* is that he does not act according to *proairesis* (1150a16-21; 1148a16-17; 1151a5-7).

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impulsive kind is subject to more *pathos* than the weak kind. One may reproach someone even more if he has ceded to a passion that most people are able to withstand. By contrast, the *pathos* overwhelming the impulsive *akratês* is harder to resist: thus one might show more understanding to the people who have given in to it. This distinction will matter below when it comes to the interpretation of *EN* VII.3; see §6.3.

[281] What kind of desire? I'll be more specific about that in the next section §6.2.2.

Furthermore, the *akratês* feels desire towards pleasurable things and repulsion away from painful things *excessively*. This is expressed well in the case of qualified *akrasia*. After having defined the *akratês simpliciter* at *EN* VII.4, Aristotle compares his behaviour with that of other weak-willed people in other domains:

> 62) "Since some appetites and pleasures are fine and excellent in kind (for some pleasures are naturally choiceworthy), some others are opposite to these, and others are in between, as we have distinguished earlier (for example, money and profit and victory and honour); and with respect to all such desires and pleasures and the intermediates people are not blamed just because they are affected by them or have an appetite for them or like them but rather because they do so in a particular way, i.e. to excess. That is why we blame all those who, contrary to reason, are dominated by or pursue things fine and good by nature, like those who are devoted to honour more than they should be, or to their children and parents. Certainly, these things are good and those who are devoted to them are praised; but still even concerning these things excess is possible: if someone should fight even against the gods like Niobê or be like Satyros, nicknamed the Father-lover, who seemed, when it came to his father, to be excessive in his stupidity." *EN* VII.4 1148a22-b2
>
> ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν αἱ μέν εἰσι <τῶν> τῷ γένει καλῶν καὶ σπουδαίων (τῶν γὰρ ἡδέων ἔνια φύσει αἱρετά), τὰ δ' ἐναντία τούτων, τὰ δὲ (25) μεταξύ, καθάπερ διείλομεν πρότερον, οἷον χρήματα καὶ κέρδος καὶ νίκη καὶ τιμή· πρὸς ἅπαντα δὲ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ τὰ μεταξὺ οὐ τῷ πάσχειν καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ φιλεῖν ψέγονται, ἀλλὰ τῷ πῶς καὶ ὑπερβάλλειν (διὸ ὅσοι μὲν παρὰ τὸν λόγον ἢ κρατοῦνται ἢ διώκουσι τῶν φύσει τι καλῶν (30) καὶ ἀγαθῶν, οἷον οἱ περὶ τιμὴν μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ σπουδάζοντες ἢ περὶ τέκνα καὶ γονεῖς· καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα τῶν ἀγαθῶν, καὶ ἐπαινοῦνται οἱ περὶ ταῦτα σπουδάζοντες· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἔστι τις ὑπερβολὴ καὶ ἐν τούτοις, εἴ τις ὥσπερ ἡ Νιόβη μάχοιτο καὶ πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, ἢ ὥσπερ Σάτυρος ὁ φιλο(1148b) πάτωρ ἐπικαλούμενος περὶ τὸν πατέρα· λίαν γὰρ ἐδόκει μωραίνειν)·

This passage concerns *akrateis* people in domains of things that are choiceworthy by themselves, such as honour and wealth. To desire such things in themselves is not a bad thing. Yet, what Aristotle wants to show is that it is possible to experience excessive appetite for such things. For instance, Niobê was so proud of her children, claiming they made her equal with Letô, mother of Apollo and Artemis, that she offended the gods. All her children where slaughtered by Apollo and Artemis. Niobê displayed excess in the pride she had in her children, and this is blameworthy, although without qualification being proud of one's children is a fine

thing.[282] Thus, in various domains of pleasures, excessive desire for pleasure and avoidance of pain are possible. Also, one understands well why according to Aristotle qualified types of *akrasia* are named by reference to unqualified *akrasia*.

Texts (61) and (62) suggest that *akrasia* and similar kinds of behaviour are *dispositions* (*hexeis*) in the technical sense of *EN* II.5. There Aristotle has defined *hexeis* as a sort of character trait thanks to which one is well or badly disposed to respond to an affection (*pathos*) (*EN* II.5 1105b25-28; see text (15) at §2.6). In order to express this notion of disposition, Aristotle uses the grammatical construction *echein* + adverbial form. It appears that he uses the same terminology of disposition for *akrasia* (1146b15; 1147a14-18; 1150a11-12, 18; 1152a35). The *akratês* is disposed excessively towards pleasurable things. That is, the *akratês* will have an excessive response to the pleasurable object and this excessive response takes the form of an intense desire. This is illustrated by the following metaphor:

> 63) "For the *akratês* is similar to those that get drunk quickly, that is with little wine and less than most people." *EN* VII.8 1151a3-5
>
> ὅμοιος γὰρ ὁ ἀκρατής ἐστι τοῖς ταχὺ μεθυσκομένοις καὶ ὑπ' ὀλίγου οἴνου καὶ ἐλάττονος ἢ ὡς οἱ πολλοί.

The *akratês* experiences a kind of affective state (*pathos*), which is due to his excessive response to a pleasurable object. This response takes the form of an episode of desire for this object. This result is important because it shows that the primary impulse in the behaviour of the *akratês* depends solely on his character and on how he has been habituated. This will matter later when I come to interpreting *EN* VII.3 and what happens on the cognitive side.

Before turning to the cognitive state of *akrasia* (and of *enkrateia* as well), one ought to solve a difficulty. The description of *akrasia* just offered is not very different from Aristotle's account of the self-indulgent and the self-controlled. *Akolasia*, as the vice related to the virtue of temperance, is precisely defined as a disposition to respond to bodily pleasures excessively.[283] The *enkratês* is also subject to responding excessively to pleasure, even though he is able to withstand his desire. At *EN* VII.7 1150a9-16 the *enkratês* is indeed described as someone who withstands appetite so intense that most people would not be able to resist (see also 1150b5-8; 1151b34-1152a3). I shall tackle the contrast between *akrasia* and *enkrateia* at the end of this chapter. In what follow I shall focus on the difference between *akrasia* and *akolasia*.

[282] The example of Satyros is less clear. Satyros seems to have been the son of a king and deified his father (Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 624-625).

[283] See *EN* II.7 1107b4-6; III.11, especially 1119a1-3. On temperance as a mean between excess and deficiency, see §§2.4 and 4.2.

6.2.2 *Akrasia* and *akolasia*

Aristotle takes care to distinguish the *akratês* from the *akolastos*. A revealing passage comes right after Aristotle's definition of the *akratês* at *EN* VII.4. There Aristotle probably wants to clarify the notion of *akrasia* by contrasting it with *akolasia*, thereby providing the basis for an answer to the fifth *aporia* on whether *akolasia* is better than *akrasia* (the answer is eventually given later, at 1151a24-25).

> 64) "These kinds of behaviour [i.e. *akrasia*, *akolasia*, *enkrateia* and *sôphrosunê*] are related to the same things, but they are not related to them in the same way. Some [i.e. self-indulgent and temperate] act on the basis of decision, whereas others [i.e. the *akratês*] do not act on the basis of decision. Hence, we call 'self-indulgent' the one who pursues excessive pleasures and avoids moderate pains with no appetite, or only with mild appetite, rather than the one who pursues excessive pleasure and avoids moderate pains because of intense appetite. For what would that one [i.e. the self-indulgent] do if in addition he had an energetic appetite and felt a powerful distress at not having the necessary pleasures?" *EN* VII.4 1148a16-22
>
> οἱ δ' εἰσὶ μὲν περὶ ταὐτά, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡσαύτως εἰσίν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν προαιροῦνται οἱ δ' οὐ προαιροῦνται. διὸ μᾶλλον ἀκόλαστον ἂν εἴποιμεν ὅστις μὴ ἐπιθυμῶν ἢ ἠρέμα διώκει τὰς ὑπερβολὰς καὶ φεύγει μετρίας λύπας, ἢ τοῦτον ὅστις διὰ (20) τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν σφόδρα· τί γὰρ ἂν ἐκεῖνος ποιήσειεν, εἰ προσγένοιτο ἐπιθυμία νεανικὴ καὶ περὶ τὰς τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐνδείας λύπη ἰσχυρά;

According to this passage, the *akratês* differs from the *akolastos* in two respects. First, he does not act out of decision. Aristotle repeats this on several occasions (*EN* III.2 1111b13-14; *EN* VII.3 1146b22-24; *EN* VII.8 1151a5–7). Secondly, the kind of desire involved in akratic behaviour seems to be different from that of the *akolastos*. The *akratês* is driven by *epithumia*. On the contrary, the *akolastos* does not experience *epithumia*, or only mildly (*mê epithumôn ê êrema*; see also 1150a27-31 cited below, text 66). A third point of contrast is put forward later in *EN* VII, namely that *akolasia* involves being persuaded (*pepeisthai*) of what he is doing, but *akrasia* does not. Consequently, the *akratês* is easy to persuade of the contrary while the *akolastos* is not (*EN* VII.8 1151a11-14).

That the *akratês* does not act out of decision is puzzling when one considers other statements Aristotle makes about decision. First, (a) Aristotle defines decision as a state of which the content is determined by deliberation (*EN* III.3 1113a2–5). The present passage adds that (b) the *akratês* does not act out of decision; rather, he acts against his decision (e.g. *EN* III.2 1111b13-14, *EN* VII.8 1151a5–7). This would suggest that what the *akratês* sets out to do is not determined by deliberation. How-

ever, it is commonly assumed that (c) an akratic agent, even when acting against his decision, does occasionally determine what to do by deliberation.[284]

The common answer to this problem is that (a) should be revised: decision is not simply determination by calculation or deliberation, but determination by deliberation in a way that reveals one's moral character (see e.g. *EN* III.2 1111b5–6; 1112a2; VI.2 1139a33–34). Decision properly understood is made on the basis of one's wish (*boulêsis*), and *boulêsis*, as the *rational* kind of desire, concerns one's conception of the good. On the contrary, the *akratês*' quasi-decision is not made on the basis of a *boulêsis*, but on the basis of an *epithumia*.[285] Hence, at 1142b18-19 the *akratês*' intention to act does not satisfy the technical sense of a *proairesis*. This also entails that the self-indulgent person makes a decision on the basis of wish and not on the basis of *epithumia*.

This consequence would be consistent with the claim that the *akolastos* does not experience *epithumia* or only mildly, which is the second point of contrast between *akrasia* and *akolasia*. However, this second point is quite disturbing, because on other occasions Aristotle is explicit that the *akolastos* experiences *epithumia*. See for instance:

> 65) "So the self-indulgent person, for his part, has an appetite (*epithumei*) for any pleasant things, or for the most pleasant, and he is driven by his appetite so as to choose these instead of anything else." *EN* III.11 1119a1-3; see also 1118a12-13, b12; 1119a32, b3-7
>
> Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀκόλαστος ἐπιθυμεῖ τῶν ἡδέων πάντων ἢ τῶν μάλιστα, καὶ ἄγεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ὥστε ἀντὶ τῶν ἄλλων ταῦθ' αἱρεῖσθαι·

Now, these passages taken from Aristotle's chapters on temperance (*sôphrosunê*) are in direct contrast with *EN* VII. Furthermore, Aristotle raises twice

[284] See Pearson 2012: 165-166 for a statement of the problem. The sole passage where Aristotle says that the *akratês* has deliberated intentionally is *EN* VI.9 1142b19: "For the unself-controlled, that is, the bad person, will achieve by calculation what he proposes as required" (ὁ γὰρ ἀκρατὴς καὶ ὁ φαῦλος ὃ προτίθεται δεῖν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ τεύξεται; see text 22). Since Anscombe (1965: 146), this passage has usually been understood in the following way: an akratic agent first determines what to do (cheating on his wife), even though he disapproves of it, and then deliberates how to do it. At §3.3.2.1, I have argued that we should not take *akratês* in a technical sense in this passage, but rather as a loose synonym for *phaulos*. However, I do not exclude that Aristotle might have acknowledged such a type of akratic behaviour. Hence, it is worth discussing the problem.

[285] See Heinaman 2009: 487: "The incontinent agent's decision to pursue physical pleasure is not a choice since it results from deliberation on how to satisfy an appetite rather than a wish (*EN* III.2 1111b13–15, VI.4 1148a4–10, VII.8 1151a6–7)".

the rhetorical question of what it would be if the *akolastos* would moreover feel *epithumia*:

> 66) "But everyone would think a person worse for doing something shameful without or with only gentle prompting from appetite than for doing it from intense appetite, and for punching someone when not angry (*mê orgizomenos*) than for doing it in anger; for what would he do if he were in one of these affective states? Hence the self-indulgent type is worse than the un-self-controlled one." *EN* VII.7 1150a27-31; Cf. 1148a20-22
>
> παντὶ δ' ἂν δόξειε χείρων εἶναι, εἴ τις μὴ ἐπιθυμῶν ἢ ἠρέμα πράττοι τι αἰσχρόν, ἢ εἰ σφόδρα ἐπιθυμῶν, καὶ εἰ μὴ ὀργιζόμενος τύπτοι ἢ (30) εἰ ὀργιζόμενος· τί γὰρ ἂν ἐποίει ἐν πάθει ὤν; διὸ ὁ ἀκόλαστος χείρων τοῦ ἀκρατοῦς.

This is not the only tension between the chapters on *sôphrosunê* and *akrasia*. For instance, Aristotle claims at *EE* 1231a24-25 that the kind of thing *akrasia* is about is not the same as the kind of thing which *akolasia* is about, although this is precisely how he defines *akrasia haplôs* at *EN* VII.4, as we have just seen.[286] Thus, one should not expect complete agreement between the different contexts.[287] But what certainly holds in both contexts *EN* III.10-12/*EE* III.2 and *EN* VII is that the *akolastos* is disposed in such a way that he is attracted excessively by pleasurable things related to food, drink and sex. Now, the two contexts do not agree on what kind of desire this attraction for pleasurable things presupposes. I do not claim that Aristotle is being totally consistent. Rather, I contend that there are elements in the text that suggest a satisfactory solution.

In my view, the very discussion at *EN* III.11 on the nature of the object of self-indulgence can answer this worry. In this chapter, Aristotle is examining closely what kind of appetite (*epithumia*) is proper to the *akolastos*. He draws a distinction between common appetites (*koinai epithumiai*), which are uniformly shared among human beings, and peculiar appetites (*idioi*), which are shared by some individuals only (1118b8-9). Aristotle calls the former 'natural' (*phusikai*), by which he understands appetites for food, drink, and sex in an unqualified way, insofar as they are

[286] "Nor in general do we speak of self-indulgence with regard to that in respect of which people are said to lack self-control. Those who lack self-control are neither self-indulgent nor temperate." (*EE* 1231a24-25: καὶ ὅλως περὶ ὅσα μὴ λέγονται ἐγκρατεῖς· οἱ δ' ἀκρατεῖς οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀκόλαστοι οὐδὲ σώφρονες.)

[287] Commentators seem not to be worried by this tension. Gauthier & Jolif 1970, Corcilius 2008a and Pearson 2012 do not mention it. Bobonich (2009: 142-143, n. 27) does not notice it when he speaks of the passage.

directed towards a natural need (b9-11).[288] Peculiar kinds of *epithumia*, however, are more sophisticated and seem to be characterized by a more specific content: an appetite for such or such food, or an appetite for homosexual intercourse (b12). Similarly, the kind of mistake one can make concerning each kind of appetite is not the same. Natural appetites can go wrong by excess, e.g. overeating, whereas peculiar appetites can go wrong in many different ways: one can have appetites for the wrong things, or excessive appetite for something, or one can enjoy things in the wrong way (1118b15-25).

Now, Aristotle associates self-indulgence with peculiar appetites rather than with natural appetites. Self-indulgent people enjoy things one should not do as well as things one should; even the latter they enjoy more than they should (1118b25). By contrast, when he describes the proper object of *akrasia haplôs*, Aristotle is not very specific and is content to discuss pleasurable things related to food, drink and sex, without any further details. That he calls them 'necessary' shows that here he is more concerned with pleasurable things in the sense of natural appetites than in the sense of peculiar appetites (1147b23-28). So the idea is this: what Aristotle calls *epithumia* in book VII of the *EN* corresponds to the *epithumia* for natural things of *EN* III.11. It is a strictly non-rational desire, a raw impulse that is opposed to reason. It is characterized by a non-specific content. By contrast, the kind of desire of the *akolastos* is a more sophisticated kind of appetite with a more specific content. This kind of subtle appetite involves a share of cognition which is more specific. It might even involve reason, insofar as reason is subordinate to it. The *akratês* does not have such a specific object of appetite. He might just be tempted by, say, an extra glass of wine. By contrast, the *akolastos* has no desire for wine in general, but for a specific type of wine, e.g. an excessive amount of Chateau Petrus. Hence, Aristotle does not call this kind of appetite *epithumia* in book VII, although this kind of desire is indeed a kind of *epithumia* insofar as its typical objects are pleasurable things.

So, the kind of desire in play in an episode of akratic behaviour is *epithumia*, or more precisely, a kind of low-order *epithumia* which is opposed to reason and does not involve a specific content for a bodily pleasure, as is the case in *akolasia*. The reason for this difference in the content of each kind of appetite is certainly due to the fact that in the case of the *akolastos* the determination of the object of his de-

[288] Aristotle remarks that one might have a need for sex just to feel better and refers to a passage in the *Iliad*: "My child, how long wilt thou devour thine heart with weeping and sorrowing, and wilt take no thought of food, neither of the couch? Good were it for thee even to have dalliance in a woman's embrace." (Iliad 24.129-130; trans. Perseus) Here 'bed' (εὐνή) stands therefore for the need for sex, but in a moderate way.

sire is univocal, whereas in the case of the *akratês*, it is divided. There is a discrepancy between the object of his appetite and his notion of what he ought to do.

The third point of contrast between *akrasia* and *akolasia* confirms this first approximation and fosters a more fundamental explanation of the contrast. Aristotle affirms that the *akolastos* is persuaded of what he does, while the *akratês* is not:

> 67) "And since one [i.e. the *akratês*] is such as to pursue bodily pleasures that are excessive and contrary to the correct reason, but not because he is persuaded he should, while the other [i.e. the *akolastos*] is so persuaded, because he precisely is of such sort as to pursue them, the former is easy to persuade that he should change his behaviour, the latter not." *EN* VII.8 1151a11-14
>
> ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος οἷος μὴ διὰ τὸ πεπεῖσθαι διώκειν τὰς καθ' ὑπερβολὴν καὶ παρὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον σωματικὰς ἡδονάς, ὁ δὲ πέπεισται διὰ τὸ τοιοῦτος εἶναι οἷος διώκειν αὐτάς, ἐκεῖνος μὲν οὖν εὐμετάπειστος, οὗτος δὲ οὔ·

The *akratês* is disposed in such a way that he tends to pursue bodily pleasures excessively, but he is not persuaded that he should do so. The *akolastos* is persuaded that he should pursue excessive bodily pleasures, and the reason for his being so persuaded is merely that he is the kind of individual who will pursue these kinds of pleasure. In other words, the reason for him to be so persuaded is his very own type of character (*hoios*; i.e. because he is of *such* sort).[289]

Aristotle then develops a long argument in order to explain the apparent differences between the *akratês* and the *akolastos*. In doing so, he provides a definitive answer to the fifth *aporia* whether the self-indulgent (*akolastos*) is better than the unself-controlled person (1146a31-b2):

> 68) "For virtue and vice respectively preserves the starting point and corrupt it. And in the case of actions, the starting point is that for the sake of which, just as in mathematics it is the hypotheses. Neither in that case [i.e. in mathematics] it is reason that teaches the starting points, nor it is here [i.e. in the case of actions]. Rather, it is virtue, either natural or habituated, which is responsible for correct belief about the starting point. Thus, the temperate is of such character, whereas the self-indulgent is its contrary. But there is one type of agent which departs from the correct reason because of his affective state. His affective state controls him insofar as he does not act according to the correct reason, but it does not control him insofar as he is of such a sort that he is persuaded that he should pursue such pleasures [i.e. bodily pleasures] without re-

[289] See also *EE* 1220a12, where Aristotle denotes someone's character by using the qualitative relative pronoun; See also Irwin's glossary 1985: 319.

> straint. This agent is the unself-controlled. He is better than the self-indulgent, nor is he bad without qualification, for <in his case> the best is preserved, namely the starting point." *EN* VII.8 1151a15-26 (partly cited in text 32)

> (15) ἡ γὰρ ἀρετὴ καὶ μοχθηρία τὴν ἀρχὴν ἢ μὲν φθείρει ἢ δὲ σῴζει, ἐν δὲ ταῖς πράξεσι τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα ἀρχή, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς αἱ ὑποθέσεις· οὔτε δὴ ἐκεῖ ὁ λόγος διδασκαλικὸς τῶν ἀρχῶν οὔτε ἐνταῦθα, ἀλλ' ἀρετὴ ἢ φυσικὴ ἢ ἐθιστὴ τοῦ ὀρθοδοξεῖν περὶ τὴν ἀρχήν. σώφρων μὲν οὖν ὁ (20) τοιοῦτος, ἀκόλαστος δ' ὁ ἐναντίος. ἔστι δέ τις διὰ πάθος ἐκστατικὸς παρὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον, ὃν ὥστε μὲν μὴ πράττειν κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον κρατεῖ τὸ πάθος, ὥστε δ' εἶναι τοιοῦτον οἷον πεπεῖσθαι διώκειν ἀνέδην δεῖν τὰς τοιαύτας ἡδονὰς οὐ κρατεῖ· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀκρατής, βελτίων <ὢν> τοῦ (25) ἀκολάστου, οὐδὲ φαῦλος ἁπλῶς· σῴζεται γὰρ τὸ βέλτιστον, ἡ ἀρχή.

First Aristotle comes back to a general principle of his moral psychology. What determines the starting point in moral action is not reason but character. More accurately, if character is good, i.e. virtuous, the starting point is preserved, and if it is bad, i.e. vicious (*mochthêros*), the starting point is corrupted (in the sense of perverted). The distinction between the temperate and the self-indulgent is made on this basis only. The temperate has good starting points, whereas the self-indulgent has bad ones. Then comes the case of the *akratês*. The *akratês* is such that he diverges from the *orthos logos* because of his *pathos*. His *pathos* controls him (*kratei*) so that he does not act according to the *orthos logos*, but it does not control him so much that he becomes persuaded that he should pursue such pleasures without restraint (*anedên*). The *akratês* is better than the *akolastos* and is not bad without qualification, because the best part, i.e. the principle, remains safe.

This passage offers an elaboration of the psychology of the *akratês*. The fact that the *akratês* is not persuaded in what he is doing (i.e. the bad course of action) is explained by invoking the principle at stake in moral action (*archê*). The *archê* is the moral principle which an agent follows as the purpose of his action, i.e. the end, as I have argued in §4.3. The *akratês* possesses the right moral principles, and the discrepancy between his principles and his actions shows that he does not believe in what he does. This also implies that the *akratês* suffers from a genuine conflict of motives between what he ought to do and what he desires to do. By contrast, the *akolastos* does not have the right moral principles, but perverted ones. His actions are in accordance with such principles and he is thereby persuaded of what he does. This comparison between the *akolastos* and the *akratês* reveals that the latter does not have a bad starting point. In other words, he does not consider a perverted starting point as the end of his action.

Having a representation of one's end stands then at the basis of the contrast between the *akolastos* and the *akratês*. Since the *akolastos* has a representation of the end he is promoting, his desire for what he intends to do is more determined than that of the *akratês*.[290] Because he considers such an end and wants it for its own sake, the *akolastos* is persuaded that he ought to pursue it. Lastly, considering the end of what he intends to do also involves that he *decides* what he does, because the content of his decision is directed towards this end. By contrast, the *akratês* is considering a different end, which is a good one. His action is not directed towards any determined purpose, nor is his desire for this action. Also, he does not decide what he does, nor is he persuaded that what he does is what he ought to do, because the description of the action he does is not subordinated to any higher order end.

This contrast between the *akolastos* and the *akratês* also involves that the kind of desire proper to the *akolastos* is a sort of hybrid desire between *epithumia* and wish. On the one hand, the *akolastos* has *epithumia* for what he does, because of the nature of the object of his intention. On the other hand, his desire corresponds rather to wish (*boulêsis*), because it includes a description of an end. This confirms that in the case of *akolasia* the agent's desire and cognition of what he wants to do are in agreement, whereas in the akratic case there is a discrepancy between the two components. To put it succinctly, in the case of *akrasia*, cognition is less engaged in the desiderative part of the soul than in the case of *akolasia*.[291]

In order to clarify this distinction between *akrasia* and *akolasia*, one must confront a difficulty for my interpretation. According to passage 1151a15-26 (text 68), the *akratês* has correct starting points. Since, in my view, the starting point is given by virtue or vice (i.e. character), then the *akratês* has a good character. This means that he has been well habituated. However, as I have argued, Aristotle also speaks of *akrasia* as a *hexis* for excessive pleasure, in the same way as *akolasia*. This involves bad habituation, whereas if the *akratês* has good starting points, he must have been well habituated. But then how is it that he is prone to excessive responses towards

[290] Even though the *akolastos* does not necessarily seek such an evil end *qua* evil. He can simply look to promote a morally wrong end *qua* advantageous to himself, with no regard for the moral value of such an end, see p. 180.

[291] This interpretation of the distinction between two kinds of *epithumia* should be able to account for Aristotle's remark that if the *akolastos* had *epithumia* on top of everything else, who knows what he would be capable of. I have no well-justified solution for this puzzle. My suggestion is that when Aristotle considers *epithumia* in the context of *akrasia* he has in mind the kind of low-order appetite. This kind of *epithumia* is so violent that it can overcome the prescriptions of reason. As he does not associate such a violent desire with *akolasia*, the thought occurs to him of what it would be, what the *akolastos* would be capable of, if he were subject to such an irrational desire.

pleasurable things? Hence my interpretation of *akrasia* as an excessive *hexis* towards appetite might be committed to the compromise that the *akratês'* (and the *enkratês'*) habituation has been partly good and partly bad. Sometimes the *akratês* has been introduced to the right starting points, but at other times he has not been habituated well enough to internalize them fully. However, this explanation sounds rather *ad hoc* and is not satisfactory. For it does not account for why sometimes performing a certain type of action has led to valuing morally good ends, and sometimes it has led to valuing wrong ends.

Maybe the appeal to the contrast between natural virtue and full virtue could be useful here. Natural virtue is an innate propensity to act in a morally good way. For instance, natural justice is the inclination to share one's goods equally. By contrast, full virtue adds the ability to spot correctly and reliably moral notions in the situation (i.e. specifications of moral principles): 'this is an instance of justice'. The fully virtuous agent regarding justice will then be in a position to know when it is appropriate to share goods equally and when it is not, and what 'equally' consists in. Accounting for *akolasia* suggests that the same kind of moral development is possible in the wrong way. Somebody could be habituated in such a way that he gets to value the wrong moral ends, for instance if his parents or teachers insist on telling him that sharing is less advantageous than keeping everything for oneself. Thus, such a badly habituated agent would develop into a person who tends to act unjustly, and who values such actions for themselves, as the ends of his activity.

If one transposes this picture into the domain of bodily pleasure, it looks as if the *akratês* is in a relation to the *akolastos* which is analogous to the relation between the naturally just and the fully unjust person. The *akolastos* differs from the *akratês* precisely in that the former had had a more complete moral development. Due to his bad habituation the *akolastos* has come to *value* wrong ends. By contrast, the *akratês* would be closer to the naturally virtuous. He would probably have started his moral development, but would be on his way to full virtue. Typical behaviour for such an individual would be that he has the propensity to value things that cause bodily pleasure, such as food and drink (and maybe sex, depending on his age). However, he would not have benefited from the right habituation, thanks to which he would come to feel this kind of desire appropriately, that is, moderately. Or at least, he would not have benefited fully from such a habituation. The consequence of this would be that this agent would be on his way to valuing the right principles and the correct ends, contrary to the *akolastos*. Yet, because of his incomplete moral development, he would still be prone to feeling attraction for pleasurable things.

To sum up, when one considers the desiderative part of the soul, *akrasia* is a disposition of character which tends to excessive appetite for necessary pleasures. I consider that *enkrateia* is not different in this respect. However, they both differ from *akolasia*. As I have shown, *akrasia* and *akolasia* do not involve the same kind of desire. This difference seems to be due to the cognitive aspect of such kinds of desire. The *akratês*' appetite does not include a description of the end at stake. It appears to be a rather low-order and primitive kind of appetite, whereas the appetite of the *akolastos* has a more specific content, which includes a description of the end. The cognitive side of the *akolastos* is in agreement with his desire, or appetite. Correspondingly, he *decides* what he does and is convinced of it. By contrast, *akrasia* involves a tension between the cognitive side of the soul of the akratic agent and the desiderative side. *Akrasia* differs from *akolasia* precisely in this respect, insofar as in the case of *akolasia*, the agent does not suffer from such a discrepancy between his desire and his cognition. Hence, he does not decide what he does and is not convinced of it. Note that this account also concerns *enkrateia*. The *enkratês* suffers from the same kind of discrepancy between desire and reason and so *enkrateia* does not differ from *akrasia* in this respect (more on the *enkratês* at §6.4.3).

The akratic agent does not feel an episode of appetite whose content is definite. Such *epithumia* is not directed towards a higher order end. Rather, the *akratês* seems to entertain a notion of a correct end. Even though his action turns out ultimately to be wrong, he is aware of what he should have done. He knows what was the right end to pursue. Why then did he not stick to the correct end? What happened to drive him to perform a wrong action? In order to answer this question, Aristotle turns to the cognitive side of akratic behaviour. He makes this worry explicit by raising the first *aporia*. In the next section, I treat the cognitive side of *akrasia*.

6.3 The cognitive side of practical thought

Aristotle's discussion on the cognitive side of *akrasia* turns almost exclusively on the first *aporia*. The first statement of the *aporia* goes as follows:

> 69) "But one might raise the problem: how is it possible that someone when having a correct grasp acts akratically?" [292] *EN* VII.2 1145b21-22

[292] There are two ways of understanding the *aporia*. The first reading insists on the very possibility of *akrasia* by connecting the *pôs* to *akrateuetai*: how is it possible for someone to act akratically although he has a correct grasp of what he should do (Gauthier & Jolif, Kenny 1966: 164; Inwood & Woolf). This is the reading I have favoured. The other possible inter-

Ἀπορήσειε δ' ἄν τις πῶς ὑπολαμβάνων ὀρθῶς ἀκρατεύεταί τις.

Akrasia is indeed regarded by common opinion as performing an action *knowingly* (*eidôs*) following one's affective state, in spite of knowing that such an action is a bad thing to do (*EN* VII.1 1145b11-13). This phenomenon is problematic, for it is at odds with another reputable opinion, represented primarily by Socrates that "no one acts contrary to what is best while grasping that he is doing so, but only because of ignorance".[293] So, according to Socrates – at least, Socrates as understood by Aristotle – if I grasp correctly what is best to do, it is impossible that I act against what I have judged being best. Correspondingly, if I have acted not following what is best to do, then either I don't know what is best to do or I have an incorrect grasp of it.

Aristotle's answer to the first *aporia* will be that the *akratês* has a cognitive state different from knowledge, which is less strong than knowledge, but which still implies that he is aware of what he is doing and that his action goes contrary to the *orthos logos*. Such an answer is the object of the whole *EN* VII.3. The main steps of Aristotle's argument are the following. Aristotle first introduces various ways to

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pretation has it that '*pôs*' bears on '*hupolambanôn orthôs*', thus reading "in what sense does a person have a correct grasp when he behaves akratically?" According to that reading, Aristotle grants that *aporia* is a fact and attempts then to account for speaking of the *akratês* as knowing and not knowing at the same time without contradiction by focusing on the cognitive state of the *akratês*. This is a less natural reading than if *pôs* bears on 'someone acts akratically', yet many scholars accept it (Broadie and Rowe, Irwin, Crisp, Cooper 2009: 33).
My view is that Inwood and Woolf's reading is the right one, although the interrogation Aristotle is ultimately aiming at is the one highlighted by Broadie. In other words, Aristotle restates an interrogation on the possibility of *akrasia* into an interrogation about the cognitive state that characterizes it. That Aristotle is eventually interested in the cognitive state is shown in what follows text (69). First, the statement of the *aporia* is followed by a short investigation on the kind of epistemic state at work in *akrasia* (exploring the horns of the dilemma). Aristotle first seems to grant Socrates that nothing can overwhelm *epistêmê* (*EN* VII.2 1145b22-31). So, he investigates other possible states the *akratês* might entertain, namely *doxa* and *phronêsis* (although it turns out that neither *doxa* nor *phronêsis* will do as the cognitive state of the *akratês*, 1145b31-1146a9). Moreover, the first lines of chapter 3, which undoubtedly is the chapter devoted to solve the first *aporia*, attest that Aristotle is interested in the cognitive state of the *akratês*: "First, then, we must investigate whether or not an akratic agent acts knowingly, and if so in what sense it is knowledge" – Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν σκεπτέον πότερον εἰδότες ἢ οὔ, καὶ πῶς εἰδότες· 1146b8-9). Reading the first statement of the first *aporia* as questioning the possibility of *akrasia* is not incompatible with the second reading questioning its cognitive state. Indeed, raising the issue of the cognitive state of the *akratês* goes along challenging the very possibility of akratic behaviour. If there would not be another kind of epistemic state than *epistêmê*, it would be true that *akrasia* is impossible.

[293] *EN* VII.2 1145b26-27: οὐθένα γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνοντα πράττειν παρὰ τὸ βέλτιστον, ἀλλὰ δι' ἄγνοιαν; See Plato *Prot.* 354c-7e; *Leg.* 860c-e, 751c.

speak of knowledge in order to show that in some definite way it is possible to speak of someone who 'acts against his knowledge' (1146b31-1147a10). The result of this part is the development of the logical structure of the practical argument similar to that introduced in *EN* VI. Aristotle then offers a description of the cognitive state proper to the *akratês* by comparing it to that of different kinds of people: someone drunk, someone asleep, etc. (1147a10-24). Aristotle's claim is that the *akratês* is in such a cognitive state that he knows and at the same time does not know what he should do. Finally, he gives a second description of the *akratês*' cognitive state on the basis of the first two steps (1147a24-35). He applies the practical argument on the kind of quasi-knowledge introduced in the second part in order to offer a rigorous description of the *akratês*' cognitive state. It is hard to see what this description is because Aristotle's argument is pretty compact. However, I offer a reconstruction of it. In my view, the *akratês*' cognitive state suffers from a deficient knowledge of particulars. This fault is due to the sensitivity of the *akratês* to appetite, which impairs his view of what is going on. As a result, the *akratês* is incapable of adequately connecting his knowledge of the end with his awareness of the situation.

This chapter has received much scholarship.[294] The various interpretations of Aristotle's notion of *akrasia* are so much in conflict with one another that before I give my own interpretation of the *akratês'* cognitive state, I first want to settle the textual issues by giving a careful reading of the chapter. I shall then come back to the most significant passages in order to give my interpretation of the cognitive state of the *akratês*.

6.3.1 Knowledge as an argument

Aristotle tackles the question of the cognitive state of the *akratês* at 1146b24 and following. In order to come to an account of the *akratês*' cognitive state, the first step is to recall the structure of the practical argument developed in *EN* VI. In order to do so, Aristotle explores various ways in which it is possible to say that someone acts contrary to how he knows he should act.

His first move, at 1146b24-31, is to settle the question whether the cognitive state of the *akratês* can be related to specific states such as *epistêmê* or *doxa*. He discusses and refutes the position of those who explain *akrasia* by alleging that the state opposing desire for pleasurable things is not *epistêmê* but true *doxa* (a position first mentioned at 1145b31-35). Aristotle's argument relies on the fact that a *doxa* can

[294] See e.g. Robinson 1955; Santas 1969; Hardie 1968; Dahl 1984, part II; Bostock 2000, chap. 6; Moss 2008; Pickavé and Whiting 2008; Charles 2009.

be held with more or less confidence. He observes that some people have so much confidence in their *doxa* (although they are obviously wrong) that they will not act against it, exactly as in the case of *epistêmê*. Therefore, distinguishing between *doxa* and *epistêmê* in order to account for the cognitive state of the *akratês* is of no use. This shows that the state Aristotle is after cannot simply be the common notions of *doxa* or *epistêmê*. He needs to inquire further into the matter.

Then, at 1146b31-35, Aristotle tackles *epistêmê*. He introduces a distinction between two meanings of knowing which puts him on the track to a sense of knowing compatible with *akrasia*.

> 70) "But since we speak of knowing (*epistasthai*) in two ways – for knowing can be said either of the one who has knowledge without using it, or of the one who uses it – there will be, on the one hand, the one who has what one should not do but does not attend to it, and, on the other hand, the one who attends to it[295]. For this latter case seems strange, while if one does not attend to it, it is not strange." *EN* VII.3 1146b31-35
>
> ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ διχῶς λέγομεν τὸ ἐπίστασθαι (καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἔχων μὲν οὐ χρώμενος δὲ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ καὶ ὁ χρώμενος λέγεται ἐπίστασθαι), διοίσει τὸ ἔχοντα μὲν μὴ θεωροῦντα δὲ καὶ τὸ θεωροῦντα ἃ μὴ δεῖ πράττειν [τοῦ ἔχοντα καὶ θεωροῦντα]· (35) τοῦτο γὰρ δοκεῖ δεινόν, ἀλλ' οὐκ εἰ μὴ θεωρῶν.

There are two ways of having *epistêmê*: having it while using it, and having it without using it. This distinction corresponds to the potential/actual distinction of the *DA* between knowledge one potentially has, and knowledge that one is actually using. Indeed, *'theôrein'* is the term Aristotle uses when he contrasts actual use of intellectual cognition with potential use (*DA* II.1 412a10; 417a28-29; see also *Meta.* IX.6 1048a34-35; *Phys*. VIII.4 255a34, b2).[296] Besides, Aristotle has already drawn such a distinction in the Eudemian treatment of voluntary action (*EE* 1225b11-12). Aristotle then reformulates this distinction by applying it to a practical or moral case. There are two ways of speaking of someone who knows *what he should not do* (*ha mê dei prattein*): either he has this knowledge of what he should not do without 'attending' (*theôrounta*) to it, or he has it while attending to it. Aristotle remarks that only one case is strange (*deinos*): the case where the agent is indeed attending to what he should not do. Obviously, the strange case implies that the agent both has

[295] Omitting τοῦ ἔχοντα καὶ θεωροῦντα, along with the OCT.

[296] See also Bostock 2000: 126 and Charles 2009: 45, who refer to the same distinction in Plato's *Theaetetus* as the source for Aristotle's distinction.

and attends to what he should not do but nevertheless acts contrary to his knowledge.

In this passage, Aristotle has shown a simple case in which one might act against one's knowledge. This shows that it would not be strange at all for someone to act against one's knowledge if he 'knows' in this passive sense, i.e. when he is not paying attention. In general, I know how to spell the word 'Socrates', but in this case I have spelled it wrong because I was not paying attention. Yet, apparently this case of acting against one's knowledge is not what Aristotle is looking for. A significant feature of the *akratês* is that he acts knowingly. It would be strange then if *akrasia* were explained by a cognitive state which corresponds to absent-mindedness.[297] Hence, Aristotle continues his investigation.

In the passage immediately following, Aristotle refines the case where it is possible to act against one's knowledge.

> 71) "Further, since there are two modes of propositions, having both will not prevent acting against one's knowledge when using the universal one, but not the particular. For things we act on (*prakta*) are the particulars. But there is also a difference with the universal. One is about oneself [i.e. the subject]; the other is about the object (*pragma*). E.g., 'dry food is healthy for every men', and 'one is oneself a man', or 'such and such is dry food'. But that 'this is such-and-such', either he does not have it or does not use it. Then, considering these ways of knowing, it makes such an important difference that knowing in one way seems not strange [i.e. when the agent is acting counter to his knowledge], but amazing in the other way." *EN* VII.3 1146b35-1147a10
>
> (35) ἔτι ἐπεὶ δύο (1147a) τρόποι τῶν προτάσεων, ἔχοντα μὲν ἀμφοτέρας οὐδὲν κωλύει πράττειν παρὰ τὴν ἐπιστήμην, χρώμενον μέντοι τῇ καθόλου ἀλλὰ μὴ τῇ κατὰ μέρος· πρακτὰ

[297] Some commentators deny that Aristotle is here alluding to the same contrast as the potential/actual one because it seems to involve that the agent is not consciously aware of what he is doing, and this would go against the presumption that the *akratês* experiences a genuine conflict of motives. Instead, another way to make sense of the distinction is between merely having knowledge and *acting* on this knowledge (Broadie 1991: 292-297). However, this interpretation is not convincing. Aristotle's terminology is clear enough (see Bostock 2000: 126, Charles 2009: 45) and there is no need to attribute him a more tortuous reading when this straightforward one will do. Another way to deal with this worry would be to claim that when Aristotle speaks of having but not using knowledge he refers to the impetuous *akratês*, not to the weak *akratês*, i.e. the one who properly suffers from a genuine conflict of motives (Dahl 1984: 203). I do not agree with this later explanation. As I shall argue below, this passage is just a preparatory step towards the account of the cognitive state of the *akratês*. It does not deal with *akrasia* itself. Thus, the objection that here the contrast is not about the potential/actual distinction does not hold.

> γὰρ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα. διαφέρει δὲ καὶ τὸ καθόλου· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ (5) τὸ δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ πράγματός ἐστιν· οἷον ὅτι παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ συμφέρει τὰ ξηρά, καὶ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος, ἢ ὅτι ξηρὸν τὸ τοιόνδε· ἀλλ' εἰ τόδε τοιόνδε, ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἢ οὐκ ἐνεργεῖ· κατά τε δὴ τούτους διοίσει τοὺς τρόπους ἀμήχανον ὅσον, ὥστε δοκεῖν οὕτω μὲν εἰδέναι μηδὲν ἄτοπον, ἄλλως δὲ (10) θαυμαστόν.

Aristotle distinguishes between two 'modes' of propositions (*duo tropoi tôn protaseôn*): the universal and the particular.[298] The syntax compels to consider that the agent is concerned with both the universal and the particular proposition at the same time. Aristotle does not consider one case when the agent is entertaining only a universal proposition and a distinct case when the agent is entertaining a particular one. Aristotle's point then is that it is possible to act against one's knowledge in the case when two conditions are met: (1) one has both the universal and the particular *protaseis*, and (2) one is using the universal but *not* the particular. Had the agent been attending to the particular proposition, he would not have acted against his knowledge. If he had, this would have been a strange, or even an amazing (*thaumaston*) case. Aristotle does not consider the case where the agent does not have (or does not use) the universal proposition; rather, he specifies that what varies is the awareness one can have of the particular proposition (*tode toionde*).

Aristotle then gives an example to clarify his point. He summons a universal principle: 'Dry food benefits all men'. He notes that two different kinds of universal can be distinguished, one concerning the subject (one is oneself a man), the other concerning the object (dry is such and such). Both these propositions are specifications of the original one. Charles notes that from these three the agent can infer the following propositions: 'Dry food benefits me', and 'Things of such and such quality benefit me' (Charles 2009: 47). By contrast, the reference to the particular proposition is very brief. This proposition should be of the form 'this is such and such' (probably implicating 'this thing here is of such quality as dry things are'). I understand the occurrence of many universal propositions as Aristotle's explanation of what it is to *have and to use* the universal (*echein kai energein*). Using the universal proposition means that he can insert it into a set of propositions by making inferences. The agent does not consider a single proposition without further thought, but is actively considering it, namely by thinking of it and of its implications.

[298] 'Modes' of propositions refer to the way propositions can be presented. They can be presented depending on their grammatical form or according to their function. In this case, the two kinds of proposition differ grammatically and according to their function in the argument (See Charles 2009: 47).

Aristotle's point here is that '*epistêmê*' in this context consists of two *types* of propositions, a universal one and a particular one. What Aristotle is developing is a notion of knowledge as an argument. To *know* what one should do does not depend merely on grasping the truth of a proposition. Rather, it depends on making the right connections between the various beliefs one has about a subject matter. And Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of such beliefs that enter in an episode of knowledge, a universal and a particular one. This kind of knowledge can be evaluated according to this framework. This structure is very similar to what I have developed in my analysis of *EN* VI.7 (§3.3.2.3). There I have argued that Aristotle sets up a logical device similar to a syllogism in order to have a framework for the evaluation of practical thought, an evaluation which can be moral or epistemic. Here Aristotle recalls the same device, having in view the evaluation of practical thought in the case of *akrasia*. Aristotle is therefore introducing a further way to evaluate practical thought. In the case of the *phronimos*, the agent is said to have both universal and particular knowledge. I have also argued that an agent may fall short of having practical knowledge in various ways. He might lack the correct universal proposition, as in the case of the vicious agent who entertains a principle which is morally wrong. He might also have the correct moral principle, while lacking an appropriate particular proposition which ties this principle adequately to the situation (for instance the case of the simple deliberator at 1142b17-26, §3.3.2.1). Here by contrast, the agent does not altogether lack either of these components. Rather, he does not fully have the particular component.

One reason to see a reference to the structure of practical knowledge of *EN* VI.7 is the terminological proximity. Aristotle recalls that "what we act on (*ta prakta*) is the particular". This assertion is very close to *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23, where he argued that "one should also know the particulars, for *phronêsis* is practical (*praktikê*) and action (*praxis*) is about particulars" (1141b14-16, text 27). There Aristotle made the point that knowledge of particular is necessary for efficient action or for successful action. The point Aristotle is making here is not exactly the same, but it relies on the same logical structure. The explanation of an action will also depend on the way in which the agent is aware of the particulars.

It is by the way puzzling that Aristotle keeps talking of *epistêmê* even though he has made clear in Book VI that *epistêmê* is not concerned with the practical. But it is clear from the context that one should not understand *epistêmê* in its technical Aristotelian sense. Here Aristotle is explicitly connecting *epistêmê* and other normally theoretical terms with *praxis*: He speaks of 'considering what one should not do' (*to theôrounta ha mê dei prattein*). A reason for the use of the term *epistêmê* could be that in this chapter Aristotle is answering the Socratic position about *akrasia*, and is

therefore using the same terminology as Socrates (or Plato in the *Theaetetus*). Another explanation could be that Aristotle has not come to a fixed terminology in order to account for the cognitive state of the *akratês*. We can see this at 1146b24-31, commented on above, when Aristotle is dealing with the contrast *doxa*/*epistêmê*. It makes no difference whether one attributes strong *doxa* or *epistêmê* to the *akratês*, since strong *doxa* behaves in the same way as *epistêmê*. In both cases, it seems that it is impossible to act *akratically*. Hence, Aristotle needs to account for the akratic cognitive state in a different way. This is what he will do in the rest of *EN* VII.3. He is looking for a cognitive state which is weaker than *epistêmê*, and which is a kind of weak *doxa*. This would explain why in this chapter he uses *epistêmê* and *doxa* indifferently. Aristotle looks for an approximation of such a state starting from *epistêmê* used in a generic way (1146b31-1147a24) and then connects this state to *doxa* (1147a24-b19).[299]

The specification of the alternative at a7 '*ouk echei ê ouk energei*' could be taken as a sign that here Aristotle already considers that there are two distinct types of *akratês*. A first case would be that the agent has the universal proposition, but does not have the particular one altogether (*ouk echei*), and acts against the principle specified in the universal one. There would be a second case in which the agent has the major premise and is using it, and also has the minor proposition but does not use it (*ouk energei*). Scholars have sometimes identified these two cases with the two different kinds of akratic agent, the weak and the impulsive *akratês* (see note 259).[300]

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[299] Charles understand *epistêmê* here to refer to "grasping some specific truth within a body of knowledge" (Charles 2009: 45-46). According to him, Aristotle is already conceiving 'knowledge' as involving reasoning, i.e. an argumentative structure. This reading of *epistêmê* makes it possible to distinguish between 'knowing' in a simple sense as entertaining a single proposition (which Charles connects with *eidenai*) and 'knowing' in a strong sense as entertaining a proposition as part of a body of knowledge (*epistêmê*). Thus, an akratic agent might still *eidenai* that P, while he does not *epistasthai* that P (see Charles 2009: 48-49). However, this suggestion does not take in account the fact that here Aristotle is starting his inquiry from the Socratic point of view. Why would Aristotle have such a technical understanding of *epistêmê* from the outset? I take it rather that in this passage the meaning of *epistêmê* is simply 'knowing' in general as a generic name for any kind of cognitive state. Charles' motivation for such an interpretation is that in his view this passage is already about the *akratês*' knowledge. Thus, Charles wants to make the point on the basis of text (71) that the *akratês* acts knowingly at the very moment of action, which has been denied since Albert the Great. Still, if one considers that in this section Aristotle is not dealing with *akrasia*, nothing prompts us to adopt this view. The way the *akratês* has and does not have knowledge at the same time, i.e. the kind of knowledge that shows that the *akratês* is acting consciously, is introduced later at 1147a10ff.

[300] E.g., Robinson 1955: 263; Hardie 1968: 277; Bostock 2000: 129 holds that the account at 1146b35-1147a10 is the same as that given at 1147a24-35.

The two kinds differ in that the latter has not deliberated and acts on his raw impulsion, whereas the former has deliberated about what he should do but does not stick to the conclusion of his deliberation (*EN* VII.7 1150a19-28). The weak *akratês* would correspond to the agent who has but does not use the minor premise, while the impulsive *akratês* would be the one who lacks the minor proposition altogether. If one considers that at 1147a10 Aristotle is introducing something new, as I shall argue below, the impulsive *akratês* corresponds rather to having the particular proposition without using it, while the weak *akratês* is the one who has the particular proposition without really knowing it, i.e. without tying it to the principle. The agent who does not have the minor proposition altogether does not match any case of *akrasia*, and is not even relevant for action. Thus only one type of *akratês*, the impulsive type, is acting unknowingly. This also preserves in part Aristotle's claims on the conflict of motives in the *akratês*' soul insofar as only the weak *akratês* is subject to such a conflict.[301]

So, how far advanced are we in the determination of the akratic cognitive state? My assumption is that at 1146b31-1147a10 Aristotle is merely preparing the ground for his treatment of *akrasia*. He imports the framework of *EN* VI.7 in order to show under which conditions one might act against one's knowledge. However, this framework concerns practical thought as a whole and is not specific to *akrasia*. Interpreting 1146b31-1147a10 as a first account of *akrasia* saddles Aristotle with a disappointing conception because it does not account for the *akratês* internal conflict of motives. The contrast between having vs. having *and* using knowledge in terms of potential and actual knowledge cannot account for the akratic cognitive state. It would mean that the *akratês* is not consciously aware of what he is doing. The *akratês* would act as he does because he would not be paying attention to the particular circumstances of the situation. Moreover, in this passage, Aristotle does not go into the details of what kind of cognitive defect the *akratês* specifically is suffering from. He does not even mention the *akratês*. The first explicit occurrence of *akrasia* is at 1147a17. Rather, I contend that at 1147a10ff. Aristotle introduces a further way of knowing without knowing, and that his kind of half-knowledge is that of the *akratês*.

[301] Charles has argued for an even more optimistic view about *akrasia*. According to him, even the impulsive *akratês* is conscious of the object of his action and what he is doing. He identifies passage 1146b35-1141a10 with a first account of *akrasia*, concerning impulsive *akrasia* (Charles 2009: 49).

6.3.2 Akratic knowledge revealed

Practical knowledge depends on making the right connection between various beliefs about a subject matter. In the previous section, I argued that Aristotle introduces different ways in which the agent might fall short of establishing these connections. At 1147a10-24, Aristotle introduces a further way of lacking full knowledge, expressed by the phrase 'somehow having and not having knowledge'. This way of having knowledge in my view is the one that the *akratês* also has.

> 72) "Furthermore, there is another way to have knowledge for human beings than those just mentioned. For by having <knowledge> while not using it we see a distinct state which is like having and not having <knowledge>, like the man asleep, the madman or the drunk. But thus disposed are those affected by passions. Episodes of spirit and erotic desires and some other things of the same sort manifestly change even the body, and even drive some people mad. So obviously we must say of the *akratês* people that they are disposed in a similar way as they [i.e. passionate people] are." 1147a10-18
>
> (10) ἔτι τὸ ἔχειν τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἄλλον τρόπον τῶν νῦν ῥηθέντων ὑπάρχει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἐν τῷ γὰρ ἔχειν μὲν μὴ χρῆσθαι δὲ διαφέρουσαν ὁρῶμεν τὴν ἕξιν, ὥστε καὶ ἔχειν πως καὶ μὴ ἔχειν, οἷον τὸν καθεύδοντα καὶ μαινόμενον καὶ οἰνωμένον. ἀλλὰ μὴν οὕτω διατίθενται οἵ γε ἐν (15) τοῖς πάθεσιν ὄντες· θυμοὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐπιθυμίαι ἀφροδισίων καὶ ἔνια τῶν τοιούτων ἐπιδήλως καὶ τὸ σῶμα μεθιστᾶσιν, ἐνίοις δὲ καὶ μανίας ποιοῦσιν. δῆλον οὖν ὅτι ὁμοίως ἔχειν λεκτέον τοὺς ἀκρατεῖς τούτοις.

Aristotle introduces a further way to have knowledge. In my view, the *eti* marks off a new step in the development which has not yet been treated.[302] This new way of knowing seems to be a special case of the kinds of knowing which have been introduced so far, which Aristotle has called 'having knowledge without using it'. This seems to be shown by the preposition *en* at 1147a11: the new way of knowing is 'in' the category of having without using knowledge (*en tô gar echein men chrêsthai*). Aristotle tries to frame this new way of knowing by describing the behaviour of some kinds of person. Having knowledge without using it, which Aristotle calls 'somehow having and not having knowledge' (*echein pôs kai mê echein*), is the kind of awareness displayed by someone asleep or someone mad or someone

[302] This is also Charles' reading (2009: 49), along with many translators: Ross, Irwin, Rowe, Crisp, and Inwood & Woolf. According to Dahl (1984: 203 with n. 27), however, this kind of knowledge corresponds to the previous description of having knowledge without using it. Aristotle would not be introducing a different way of having knowledge without having it.

drunk. He then groups in the same kind of cognitive state people who are affected by passions (*en tois pathesin ontes*), i.e. *thumos* or erotic appetites, and he ends up associating them with akratic people. The kind of cognitive state of the *akratês* would thus be a sort of half-knowing similar to that of people sleeping, mad or drunk.

Aristotle then adds what could appear as the answer to a possible objection:

> 73) "The fact that <the *akrateis*> say arguments which flow from knowledge is not even a mark <that they are in their right mind>, for people under the influence of passions, too, can utter demonstrations and verses of Empedocles, and beginners in learning can connect the arguments together, yet they know nothing. They must have made these second nature to themselves, but this requires time. So we must suppose that the akratic people utter words the way actors do." *EN* VII.3 1147a18-24
>
> τὸ δὲ λέγειν τοὺς λόγους τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιστήμης οὐδὲν σημεῖον· καὶ γὰρ οἱ ἐν τοῖς πά(20) θεσι τούτοις ὄντες ἀποδείξεις καὶ ἔπη λέγουσιν Ἐμπεδοκλέους, καὶ οἱ πρῶτον μαθόντες συνείρουσι μὲν τοὺς λόγους, ἴσασι δ' οὔπω· δεῖ γὰρ συμφυῆναι, τοῦτο δὲ χρόνου δεῖται· ὥστε καθάπερ τοὺς ὑποκρινομένους, οὕτως ὑποληπτέον λέγειν καὶ τοὺς ἀκρατευομένους.

The objection seems to be that in some cases akratic people do indeed show something like knowledge in a strong sense (*epistêmê*) in spite of being in their condition, because they are able to speak the kind of reasoning proper to various areas of knowledge or science. Aristotle compares them to people subject to passion who can nevertheless perform demonstrations or recite verses of Empedocles, or to young students who can remember arguments and repeat them. Aristotle answers that this appearance is deceptive because even though they seem to be able of such performances, they do not in fact know. The reason is that genuinely knowing such things requires having made such demonstrations or arguments one's own and this takes a lot of time. Aristotle seems then to assimilate the apparent knowledge of *akratês* people and of other kinds of people with mindless recitation, with uttering words without really understanding their meaning. Eventually, he compares the situation of akratic people to that of actors, implying that they are like people reciting a text that they have learned by heart without much understanding of its meaning.

One might feel somewhat uneasy with this passage. Indeed, it groups people together who exhibit quite different kinds of behaviour. People such as the man asleep, the madman or the drunk are put in the same group as people subject to passions and akratic people, and even young students and actors. Against this, one could attribute to each of these kinds of people a different way of knowing. Appar-

ently, one cannot say that people asleep or mad know in the same way as people subject to their passions. One could say convincingly that the latter know 'better' than the former, not even mentioning young students who seem to have come to a certain degree of expertise of their subject matter even if they do not understand every implication of it.

I contend that here Aristotle is not that clear about the kind of awareness required for each kind of people: being asleep is a simple case of knowing potentially (and even of knowing according to first potentiality if one applies the distinction between first and second actuality of *DA* 417a21-b2), whereas the young student's lack of knowledge seems quite different. Aristotle's point here is merely that there is a different way of having and not having knowledge than that of knowing in potentiality. However, he has not determined what this kind of knowledge precisely consists in yet (he will do this in the next section of *EN* VII.3). A sign of this is the mention of the mad person and of the drunk one. Concerning the mad person, Aristotle does not specify what kind of madness he is referring to, whether a deep infatuation or straightforward insanity. The phrase that *thumos* and erotic *epithumia* can "even drive some people mad" (*eniois de kai manias poiousin* 1147a 16-17) suggests that madness allows of degrees. According to one's level of madness, one could then tend to associate someone who is deeply infatuated with the case of the young student, while one would rather group someone who is totally beside himself with the person asleep. The same holds for being drunk. Charles argues that Aristotle's choice of word is not arbitrary and that by *oinômenos*, he means someone lightly drunk, 'tipsy drunk' (Charles 2009: 50). But one could also very well consider the case of someone dead drunk (*methuon*), who would be closer to the man asleep (cognitively, but also physically...).

In my view, the crucial point of 1147a10-24 is that there are people like the drunk, the young student, or even to some extent the sleeper (think of cases of sleep talking), who show marks of knowledge but who fall short of having genuine knowledge because they do not really understand what they say. People affected by passions do not really attend to the *logoi* they are saying. Beginners do not really understand the demonstrations they make, because really making such demonstrations one's own takes time. Even actors do not really believe in what they say.

The kind of knowledge alluded to is always a chain of propositions, in other words, an argument (*logos*). What people in passion cannot do is attend closely to their *logoi*, whether they are demonstrations or verses of Empedocles. In both cases, these are not bare propositions, but complex *logoi*. This confirms that 'acting against one's knowledge' involves a complex piece of knowledge, and that Aristotle is go-

ing to use this when he finally attempts a description of the cognitive state of the *akratês*.

Hence, the *akratês* will similarly hold various propositions, either universal or particular, but not in a strong way. This passage is the first explicit reference to the *akratês*. Thus, in this passage, Aristotle develops the kind of knowledge of *akratês* people. It is 'having and not having' knowledge. This means that the person who shows such knowledge is – at the very least – potentially knowing that P (the sleeper, the dead drunk). He is aware of what he is saying (like the young student or the tipsy-drunk), but in any case he does not understand what he is saying.[303]

6.3.3 The physical account

So far in *EN* VII.3, Aristotle has been interested in different cognitive states and in how it is possible to have knowledge partially and to act against it. At 1147a10-24 he also offered a description of the kind of cognitive state the *akratês* is in. But then the tone changes. Aristotle announces an account from a 'physical' point of view (*phusikôs*).

What characterizes this 'physical' approach is first of all a terminology more proper to Aristotle's psychology. The universal *protasis* is called a *doxa*, whereas what provides the particular *protasis* is sense-perception (*aisthêsis*). Next, there is an occurrence of *epithumia* in the account of akratic behaviour (1147a33). Apparently, then, the physical point of view (*phusikôs*) is an account that connects knowledge to psychological notions as they appear in the *De Anima*. Indeed, the *DA* is a part of Aristotle's treatises on natural science (*phusikê epistêmê*). Moreover, the term *phusikôs* refers to a kind of account which appeals to an explanatory principle (or cause, *aition* 1147a25), which should be specific or appropriate to the subject matter. Commentators agree that this principle is the cause of movement in rational animals.[304] Pickavé and Whiting have observed in addition that one sometimes find 'physical explanations' in other areas of Aristotle's thought than the natural sciences. The point of the explanation would then be not the area of knowledge concerned, but the degree of appropriateness of the principle. Sometimes, an explana-

[303] See Dahl 1984: 210 for a similar interpretation of the kind of knowledge displayed by the *akratês*.

[304] Bostock 2000: 127; Pickavé & Whiting 2008: 347-348; Charles 2009: 51-52. From the mention of the physical point of view, Pickavé and Whiting see a sign that one should fill in the feminine pronouns *hê* at 1147a24ff. with *doxa* instead of *protasis* (see note 287). However, it seems to me that even without this, the change towards a more naturalist tone is sufficiently perceptible.

tion can be too 'logical' because it is too abstract, and sometimes the explanation is too specific (see Pickavé & Whiting 2008: 347-348).[305]

In my view, Aristotle is here developing his technical account of the cognitive state of the *akratês*. He makes use of the practical argument and applies it to the kind of 'knowing without knowing' he has sketched in the previous lines of *EN* VII.3. Correspondingly, the former section of *EN* VII.3 stands in opposition to this physical account as the 'logical' account, which omits the mention of an appropriate explanatory principle.

In the physical account, Aristotle first presents a standard case of practical reasoning:

> 74) "Further, one can also look at the cause in the way of natural philosophy. One <proposition> is a universal opinion[306]; the other is about the particulars, which are themselves given by sense-perception. When one <proposition>[307] comes about from these, then necessarily the soul there speaks the conclusion, while in the productive case it acts immediately. For instance, if 'one should eat everything sweet', and 'this is sweet' is one of the particulars, necessarily someone who is able and not prevented will perform this at the same time." *EN* VII.3 1147a24-31
>
> ἔτι καὶ ὧδε φυσικῶς ἄν τις ἐπιβλέψειε (25) τὴν αἰτίαν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ καθόλου δόξα, ἡ δ' ἑτέρα περὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστά ἐστιν, ὧν αἴσθησις ἤδη κυρία· ὅταν δὲ μία γένηται ἐξ αὐτῶν, ἀνάγκη τὸ συμπερανθὲν ἔνθα μὲν φάναι τὴν ψυχήν, ἐν δὲ ταῖς ποιητικαῖς πράττειν εὐθύς· οἷον, εἰ παντὸς γλυκέος γεύεσθαι δεῖ, τουτὶ δὲ γλυκὺ ὡς (30) ἕν τι τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον, ἀνάγκη τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ μὴ κωλυόμενον ἅμα τοῦτο καὶ πράττειν.

The details of the text are difficult. I assume as a basic methodological principle that Aristotle has remained sketchy in his text and that one should not expect

[305] What cause is Aristotle speaking of? My contention is that the cause he is alluding to here is non-rational desire (*epithumia*), as indicated in §6.2.

[306] I read the pronoun *hê* as referring to an implicit *protasis*, as favoured by Burnet 1900: 302, and Gauthier & Jolif 1970: 610, instead of 'the opinion on the one hand is universal'. See note 288.

[307] Literally, there is one thing (feminine) that comes from two other things (feminine). Here and in the rest of 1147a24-35, we find many feminine pronouns with no clear reference. I follow Charles in seeing references to *protasis*. The last feminine noun relevant for this context was *protasis* at 1147a1. Indeed, there in the first case when Aristotle speaks of the practical argument, *protasis* is always implied. It would be natural to expect the same in the present context, where Aristotle applies the practical argument to his moral psychology (see Charles 2009: 55-56). This is also consistent with my reading of 1143a35 at §5.2.2.2. Against this reading some commentators supplement *mia* with *doxa* (Ross , Irwin, see Bostock 2000, 128, n. 17; Pickavé & Whiting 2008: 350ff.).

too much from the terminology. This will be helpful in arriving at a natural reading of the rest of the passage. Here, the example offers a basic understanding of the passage. The case seems to be this: a subject considers a universal proposition describing a type of action; he also considers a particular proposition which instantiates what is described by the universal proposition. And the result of this kind of reasoning is an action (*prattein*) the content of which consists in the application of the universal proposition to the particular one. One can summarize this content in the form of an argument:

> One should taste every sweet thing.
> This is sweet.
> Therefore, I taste this (where 'I taste this' is allegedly the action of tasting the particular sweet).

Aristotle then considers a different case:

75) "When a first universal proposition prevents from tasting, while another one has it that every sweet thing is pleasant; this is sweet (and this one [i.e. 'every sweet thing is pleasant'] is active), and there happens to be appetite, the first <universal premise> says to avoid this thing, whereas appetite acts. For both parts <of the soul> are able to cause motion.[308]" 1147a31-35

> ὅταν οὖν ἡ μὲν καθόλου ἐνῇ κωλύουσα γεύεσθαι, ἡ δέ, ὅτι πᾶν γλυκὺ ἡδύ, τουτὶ δὲ γλυκύ (αὕτη δὲ ἐνεργεῖ), τύχῃ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἐνοῦσα, ἡ μὲν οὖν λέγει φεύγειν τοῦτο, ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἄγει· (35) κινεῖν γὰρ ἕκαστον δύναται τῶν μορίων·

In this situation, there are two universal propositions that are in conflict with one another. The one proposition states that one should refrain from tasting sweet things (the object is suggested by the context given by the preceding example), whereas the other states that all sweet things are pleasant.[309] The two propositions conflict insofar as we are usually prone to desire pleasant things, which entails that if sweet things are pleasant, we desire to taste sweet things, which is what

[308] The last claim of this passage (κινεῖν γὰρ ἕκαστον δύναται τῶν μορίων) can be read in two ways. Either it means, as Irwin and Ross have it: "For it (i.e. desire) can move each of the parts [of the body]", or it means: "For both parts [of the soul] are able to cause motion". I favour the latter translation, as do Kenny 1979: 159, Wiggins 1978-1979: 260, Charles 1984: 130; Bostock 2000: 129 n. 20; Pickavé & Whiting 2008: 349, n. 36; and Charles 2009: 59-60, who offers a convincing argumentation in favour of it.

[309] That these two feminine pronouns denote propositions (*protaseis*) follows from the string of feminine pronouns from the previous passage (text 74). That the second of these propositions is a universal one is clear from the opposition with the first one, and matches with the given example 'every sweet thing is pleasant'. For a fuller defence of this reading, see §6.4.2.

the first proposition forbids. So the situation seems to be this: when the agent is presented with a sweet thing, the following happens: the agent considers a proposition which tells him to avoid the actual sweet thing, but at the same time, he feels an appetite (*epithumia*) for that thing. The result is that appetite prevails (*hê epithumia agei*), and the agent ends up getting the sweet.

This, then, is the akratic case: confronted with a sweet, the agent entertains both the proposition that he should not go for the sweet and the proposition that sweet things are pleasant (hence, desirable), and he ends up following the latter. This indeed corresponds to Aristotle's description of *akrasia* (see the *endoxa* on *akrasia*: 1145b10-12; 1145b12-14; see as well the presumed definition of *akrasia* 1148a4-11). The agent finds himself in a practical (if not moral) dilemma, and this dilemma is solved by following irrational desire. Note that in this context Aristotle does not even evoke *why* the agent ends up choosing the sweet.[310]

Before offering my interpretation of the two passages, I want first to resolve some textual difficulties. I shall first discuss text (74), and then, in §6.4.1, I shall offer an interpretation of its function in the argumentative progression of the chapter. Finally, in §6.4.2, I shall turn to text (75) and give a proper interpretation of the account of *akrasia* of *EN* VII.3.

At 1147a24ff. Aristotle explains what happens when both *protaseis* are put together: on the one hand (*entha men*), the soul asserts the conclusion, while "in a productive case" it acts immediately. Scholars have often linked this phrase with the account in *De Motu Animalium* chapter 7, where Aristotle compares practical reasoning with theoretical reasoning (701a8-13) (Burnet 1900; Gauthier & Jolif 1970; Bostock 2000: 128, n. 15; Pickavé & Whiting 2008: 351). When two propositions are put together, in the theoretical case, a proposition obtains, whereas in the practical case, an action occurs. Lines a27-28 have therefore often been taken as a contrast between practical and theoretical reason. This interpretation assumes that the *entha men* refers to the theoretical case and that the '*en tais poiêtikais*' refers to the practical case.[311] Similarly, in *De Motu* 701a23 Aristotle speaks of 'productive premises' (*hai protaseis hai poiêtikai*). Thus, Aristotle would be contrasting, on the one hand, a theoretical syllogism, in which a conclusion, i.e. a proposition, follows from a universal

[310] This situation does even apply most properly to the *weak akratês*, who is distinct from the impulsive *akratês*. Indeed, the latter has not deliberated prior to act. Consequently, it seems that he does not have a notion of what he should do according to the correct *logos* at the moment of action. By contrast, the one who is confronted with a moral dilemma at the moment of action is the weak *akratês*.

[311] That *poiêtikais* refers to *praxis* is not a problem. Aristotle often uses *poiein* in book VII in order to express action: e.g. 1148a20; 1150a30.

and a particular premise, and, on the other hand, a practical kind of syllogism, in which from a universal and a particular premise an *action* follows. This interpretation also suggests that the conclusion of the argument on the practical side is an action. The contrast between theoretical and practical thought would be that, in the former case, the outcome of a piece of reasoning is a conclusion, that is, a proposition, whereas in the latter, the outcome is an action. Indeed, at *MA* 7 Aristotle explicitly says that the conclusion of an instance of practical reasoning is an action.[312] This line of interpretation also holds that what Aristotle refers to in the practical case are not propositions but mental states (*epithumia* and *doxa*).

This line of interpretation suffers from different problems. First, if one holds that at *EN* VII.3 Aristotle is opposing a theoretical piece of reasoning and a practical one, this means that the theoretical argument is composed of a universal and a particular premise. However, Aristotle nowhere defines theoretical arguments as having a particular minor premise. Another problem concerns the interpretation of *mia* at 1147a26. If the conclusion in the practical case is an action, then it entails that *mia* has two different referents: a proposition in the theoretical case (or even a *doxa*, since many proponents of this interpretation hold that the feminine pronouns refer to *doxa* rather than *protasis*) and a *praxis* in the practical one (this is indeed Bostock's interpretation Bostock 2000: 128, n. 17).

A general thought against this interpretation is that if Aristotle were speaking here about the contrast between theoretical and practical reason, it would be difficult to understand exactly what his point is. Why would he turn from a search for the cognitive state of the *akratês* to a contrast between practical and theoretical thought? Some interpreters argue that at *EN* VII.3 Aristotle uses the practical syllogism for the same purpose as at *MA* 7, namely stating the sufficient conditions for the causation of action (Cooper 1975: 54-55; Nussbaum 1978: 174-175; Corcilius 2008a: 286-287). The contrast with the theoretical syllogism would serve to illustrate the kind of necessity which characterizes the causation of action. Similarly to the theoretical syllogism, in which the conclusion in the practical case follows necessarily from two premises, the practical case would hold that the action follows necessarily from the agent's mental states. If the appropriate mental states are present, namely a doxastic component and a desiderative one, then the action follows necessarily.[313]

If one holds that the point of *EN* VII.3 is the same as that of *MA* 7, it is hard to fit the passage into the context. Proponents of this interpretation must assert that

[312] *MA* 7 701a11-13: ἐνταῦθα δ' ἐκ τῶν δύο προτάσεων τὸ συμπέρασμα γίνεται ἡ πρᾶξις.
[313] Corcilius calls this 'nomological necessity' (Corcilius 2008b: 176)

Aristotle somehow wants to explain how akratic action is caused. But this is not Aristotle's purpose in this chapter, as the context makes clear. Aristotle is looking for the cognitive state of the *akratês*. Allegedly, then, he would at some point in the argument switch to a different issue, namely what the sufficient conditions for the causation of action are. But in the first account of 1147a24-31, Aristotle does not mention desire, which is strange in an account that is supposed to yield the sufficient conditions for action. This interpretation does not explain why Aristotle then turns to the akratic case. Besides, if the point of the passage were to explain the causation of akratic action, this account would be a poor one, for there is no further comment on the efficient cause of the action (the *epithumia*). In the akratic case, the conditions for action are the same as in the normal case (since action occurs): thought and desire. What changes is the cognitive state of the *akratês*. He considers two different principles, one of which active, while the other is not.[314]

An alternative interpretation understands *en tais poiêtikais* as 'when action is possible', i.e. when nothing prevents the action. This interpretation is based on the assumption that once one has reached a decision to act, one might still refrain from acting because of various reasons.[315] The contrast brought by the *entha men* does not then refer to the case of the theoretical syllogism; rather, it refers to the 'logical' account preceding the physical account of the second case.[316] In theoretical activities such as making demonstrations, what happens when two premises are considered together is the inference of a conclusion. In practical cases, the situation is similar. In deliberation, several propositions are considered and lead to a conclusion in the form of a decision. But a further thing happens: an action is performed on the basis

[314] I do not go as far as to claim that *EN* VII.3 has absolutely nothing to do with *MA* 7. Such a claim would be bold. Rather, I contend that Aristotle uses the same conceptual device for two different purposes, and those different applications entail characteristics of the practical argument in each context that are not compatible together. More on this below.

[315] Kenny 1966: 177, 1979: 157, n. 2; McDowell 2009: 63; Charles 2009: 53, n. 21. Kenny and McDowell go further by spotting of an opposition between practical and productive reason in the contrast *entha men ... en de tais poiêtikais* at 1147a28. Kenny assumes that the opposition Aristotle wants to denote is that between a 'poietic' case where one acts immediately and a practical case where it is possible first to assert the conclusion and then to act on this conclusion or not. Charles has broadly speaking the same understanding of *poiêtikos*, but he rejects Kenny's identification of *entha men* with the practical as opposed to the poietical.

[316] Charles 2009: 52, who speaks of a 'theoretical' case, i.e. when the subjects under consideration are engaged in theoretical activities such as studying or reciting verses, but not in practical activities.

of the conclusion.[317] The *en tais poiêtikais* clause would then be a logical equivalent for the *ceteris paribus* clause in the example: "someone who is able and not prevented" (*ton dunamenon kai mê kôluomenon* 1147a30-31). When the agent has reached a practical conclusion (i.e. a decision), if he is able to act and is not prevented from doing so, then he will act.[318]

This interpretation then does not see an opposition between a theoretical syllogism, the conclusion of which is a proposition, and with a practical syllogism, on the other, the outcome of which is an action. Rather, the point of Aristotle in text (74) is that at the outcome of an instance of practical reasoning two things happen: the agent asserts the conclusion, i.e. the decision to act, and, if nothing prevents him, the agent acts immediately. Thus, the conclusion of a practical argument is a proposition, not an action. There is a conclusion as an intermediary step between the premises and the action.[319]

My reading of 1147a24-31 implies that in this passage there is no account of the conditions for the causation of action. Aristotle merely applies his notion of practical thought as an argument about the psychology of the agent. This structure of practical thought is the same as that of the first case at 1146b35-1147a10, where Aristotle was looking for a relevant sense of 'acting against one's knowledge of what one should do'. Only here he applies this structure to the mental states of the agent. The propositions in play are the contents of *doxai* and perception.

Now, the task is to connect the description of *akrasia* at 1147a31-35 (text 75) with the elements given by Aristotle in the chapter so far. We must see how his description of akratic knowledge as 'knowing without knowing' is expressed here. We must see if we can identify an instance of a state of knowledge where the agent *has* knowledge but does not *use* it. In order to do so, I turn to the logical account of 1146b35-1147a10 one more time in order to provide a complete interpretation of it. This case can be read together with 1147a24-31 as the 'normal case'. Then, I'll provide a second, complete, reading of 1147a24-35, where I shall highlight the akratic case introduced at 1147a31-35.

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[317] Also I wonder if the burden on the particle *entha* is not too heavy. Could *entha* simply mean 'there on the one hand', just as a contrast with poietical cases where action occurs? Thus, *entha* would not refer to anything external to the passage.

[318] Thus, the referent of *en tais poiêtikais* could be *dianoiais*: in cases of thought that are able to produce action. It would be the same referent as with the '*en tais praktikais*' of 1143b1, according to my reading of the passage (§5.2.2.2 text 46).

[319] For a full defence of this claim, see Charles 2009: 54-55.

6.4 Akratic knowledge

6.4.1 The normal case

If one turns back to 1146b35-1147a10, the following interpretation is possible. The example Aristotle is considering in this passage, in spite of being unclear, resembles an argument composed of the following premises: 'dry food is healthy for human beings', 'dry is such and such', 'I am a man', plus an extra particular premise 'this is such and such'. One can reasonably expect a conclusion like 'I should eat this thing', although Aristotle does not mention it. Indeed, one can build up the following argument:

> 'Dry food benefits all human beings.'
> 'Dry is of such and such quality.'
> 'I am a man.'
> 'This here is of such and such quality.'
> Therefore, 'I should eat this thing'

The argument is not strictly valid, for the conclusion does not follow necessarily from the premises. One would need to add some premises such as 'one ought to eat food that benefits one', or 'I ought to eat things of such and such quality'. One would also have to account for the transition between values and norms (i.e. the transition between 'this is beneficial to me' and 'I should eat this'). Nevertheless, intuitively, this is the kind of conclusion one would tend to hold when considering the premises. Aristotle seems then to presuppose that the kind of knowledge at stake here has as its immediate content a proposition which is inferred from a couple of premises.

In my view, Aristotle's point here is that if the agent does not consider attentively the particular proposition, it is not surprising that the agent acts contrary to his knowledge (knowledge in this case having as its content something like 'I ought to eat this, because of argument XYZ). This seems to imply the converse principle that if the agent is considering attentively each parts of the argument, then it would be amazing if he acted contrary to his knowledge. My contention here is that Aristotle is giving an outline of a notion of practical necessity on the model of the logical necessity at work in the theoretical syllogism. If the agent is considering attentively this argument when confronted with a sample of dry food, then he *ought* to act in going for the sample. It would be irrational of him not to go for it. Or at least, in case some external obstacle prevents him from acting at once, he ought to believe the supposed conclusion of this argument. This kind of practical necessity is not as

strong as the necessity in play in an instance of theoretical reasoning. Yet, as I try to explain it below, it is an important feature of practical rationality.[320]

One discerns this function of the practical argument better if one attends to the normal case of the 'physical account' at 1147a24-31 (text 74). The agent is considering two propositions: 'one should eat everything sweet' and 'this thing here is sweet'. The expected conclusion then is 'I should eat this'. The argument again is not strictly valid. One would want to supply extra premises in the same way as Aristotle has done at 1146b35-1147a10. Yet, this is the conclusion that we would reasonably expect to follow from such premises. This would give us the following argument:

> One should eat everything sweet
> Sweet is such and such
> I am a man
> This thing here is such and such
> Therefore: I should eat this.

In my view, what matters here is that according to Aristotle, when an agent is engaged in a piece of practical reasoning that states that in such and such circumstances he ought to do such and such, the agent has all the reasons he needs to act; not acting – or acting in a different way – would therefore be irrational. If S believes that one should taste every sweet thing, and this is sweet, then it would be irrational not to taste this. There is a tight connection between the agent holding such and such propositions and the agent performing the action. Aristotle seems to think that once the agent has come to the conclusion, he is compelled to act as the conclusion prescribes. One can put this idea of practical necessity and practical inference more generally in the following way.

> S believes that if F then he should ϕ
> S believes that this *x* is F
> Therefore, S *ought to believe* that he should ϕ
> Therefore, *ceteris paribus*, S does ϕ.

The connection between the premises and the conclusion is explanatory, not causal. Stating the premises does not establish the sufficient conditions for the causation of action. Rather, holding the major and minor premises is a sufficient *justification* to explain why the agent has performed the action.

[320] The notion of practical necessity hints at deontic logic. Although it would be a mistake to see in these lines of *EN* VII.3 an Aristotelian account of deontic logic, I believe that Aristotle has basic insights that could be developed in this direction. On the relation between the practical syllogism and deontic logic, see Gourinat 2004.

I believe that the use of syllogistic terminology in this passage is explained by the attractiveness of the notion of necessity. Aristotle makes use of his notion of logical necessity as it appears in the theoretical syllogism and applies it to practical reasoning. He does this in order to show the strength of the connection between, on the one hand, holding a couple of premises and, on the other, being led to act in conformity with what these premises indicate. In his account of the theoretical syllogism, Aristotle also uses a notion of necessity in order to account for the logical relation between the premises and the conclusion. In a valid syllogism, the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises (See *APr*. I.1 24b18-22; *Top*. I.1 100a25-30; *Meta.* V.5 1015b6-9). Similarly, if a practical argument is valid, the conclusion follows necessarily from the conclusion. This is expressed by the occurrence of *anankê* at 1147a27.

But in the practical case, something more happens: if action is possible, then the agent acts immediately. As already mentioned, I understand the phrase *en de tais poiêtikais prattein euthus* as adding a *ceteris paribus* clause. What is crucial, however, is that the clause does not specify whether it concerns only external preventing factors or also includes factors internal to the soul. External impediments would intervene between the conclusion and the execution of the action. In spite of his determination, an agent might be prevented from acting because of any occurring contingency (e.g., a power failure occurs in a volleyball game on a match point service). However, an internal factor will disrupt the route from the premises to the conclusion. If a disturbance in the soul occurs, it might prevent the agent from coming to the right conclusion, or from holding the conclusion adequately. Charles argues convincingly that the *ceteris paribus* clause does not exclude internal factors.[321] Yet, what is crucial is that although Aristotle leaves open the possibility of an impediment to action due to an internal factor, this does not prevent the agent from holding the correct conclusion. While the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises, the agent does not act accordingly, because of an internal disturbance. The account of *akrasia* which follows the normal case aims precisely at identifying this disturbing factor.

The reference to action is not here for the sake of stating the sufficient conditions of the causation of action. If it were, it would be incomplete, as I have already argued, for there is no reference to any desire. The reason why Aristotle does not limit his account to a prescriptive conclusion lies elsewhere. Holding a conclusion in itself does not insure that one is in the right cognitive state to perform this action. As I have suggested, there might be factors internal to the agent's psyche that pre-

[321] See Charles 2009: 54-55, who refers to the medieval commentator Walter Burley.

vent him from following the prescription of the conclusion. The context of *EN* VII.3 is thus different from that of *MA* 7.

The accounts of *MA* 7 and *EN* VII.3 look so similar, in my view, because Aristotle is attracted by the notion of necessity present in both contexts. In both contexts, Aristotle contrasts practical and theoretical reason (though not explicitly in the *EN*). The notion of logical necessity has been defined clearly. Aristotle develops a notion of practical necessity by analogy to this model and applies it in both contexts. However, the role of practical necessity is not the same in both treatises. Aristotle seems to use a core property of the practical argument in order to account for two distinct features proper to each context. In the *De Motu*, Aristotle gives sufficient conditions for the causation of action, whereas in the *Ethics*, he wants to give conditions for the *explanation* of a moral action (or for the decision). Another way to put it is that in *MA* 7 Aristotle is interested in the *external* relation between propositional attitudes (what Corcilius calls *efficient-causal* relation), but in the *EN* VII he is interested in the internal relation between propositions.

However, the terminological proximity between the two passages should not mislead us about Aristotle's intention in *EN* VII. That his accounts of the practical syllogism at *MA* 7 and *EN* VII.3 are so succinct shows that either he was not interested in spending more time on this notion, or he was planning to tackle the subject for its own sake in another treatise.[322] All in all, he does not have a unified notion of the practical syllogism. All he wants to do is to point out the kind of necessity at work in practical reason, which is displayed in two different ways. As Natali points out:

> "But just as a plant or an animal species, when transplanted to a new environment, undergoes modifications that adapt it to its new situation, and differentiate it from the original model, so too the practical syllogism is an adaptation of the scheme of the syllogism to different tasks and needs." Natali 2001: 99

Thus, I reckon that the notion of practical necessity is also in play in the first 'logical' statement of the structure at 1146b31-1147a10. The logical account, however, states a deficiency in cognitive terms. This would therefore provide a case where practical necessity is precisely absent.

In the logical case, Aristotle adds a further point. There is a case in which the agent will not act (or not act as expected), in spite of the agent somehow 'knowing' what he ought to do. This case, as Aristotle puts it, is when the agent has

[322] However, a quick look at the ancient list of works by Aristotle in Diogenes Laërtius does not reveal whether Aristotle ever wrote such a treatise.

knowledge of the particulars but does not use it. In other words, he is not attending actively to the particular proposition. When confronted with a sample of dry food, the agent considers an argument like 'dry food is healthy for human beings, dry is such and such', 'I am a man'. But in this case, there still is something that the agent is missing, and thus the justification for acting in such or such way is incomplete. The conditions of practical necessity are not met. The agent does not act as expected because he does not hold the relevant premises *actively*.

Now, I contend that Aristotle injects this structure at 1147a31-35 into the case of the *akratês*. As in the absent-minded agent who does not attend to the particular premise actively, the *akratês* suffers from a cognitive defect that prevents him from holding the conclusion according to practical necessity. So it remains to explain how the cognitive state of the *akratês* is weakened.

6.4.2 The akratic case

With this notion of practical necessity in mind, we are ready to confront the central account of *akrasia* one more time. I quote passage 1147a31-35 again for the sake of convenience:

> 76) "When a first universal proposition forbids tasting, while another one has it that every sweet thing is pleasant; this is sweet (and this one [i.e. 'every sweet thing is pleasant'] is active), and there happens to be appetite, the first <universal premise> says to avoid this thing, whereas appetite acts. For both parts <of the soul> are able to cause motion. " *EN* VII.3 1147a31-35 (same as text 75)
>
> ὅταν οὖν ἡ μὲν καθόλου ἐνῇ κωλύουσα γεύεσθαι, ἡ δέ, ὅτι πᾶν γλυκὺ ἡδύ, τουτὶ δὲ γλυκύ (αὕτη δὲ ἐνεργεῖ), τύχῃ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἐνοῦσα, ἡ μὲν οὖν λέγει φεύγειν τοῦτο, ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἄγει· (35) κινεῖν γὰρ ἕκαστον δύναται τῶν μορίων·

In this case, there are two propositions (*protaseis*) entertained by the agent. The first one says "one should avoid all sweet things", the second "every sweet thing is pleasant". The tension between these two beliefs is patent, as I have explained earlier. The agent also considers the particular proposition that 'this thing is sweet'. Aristotle then adds a series of assertions: the latter universal proposition mentioned (*hautê de*) is active (*energei*); there is appetite (*epithumia*) present; the former universal proposition (*hê men*) still maintains its point 'avoid this'; and eventually appetite acts (*agei*). When Aristotle says that 'appetite acts', one ought naturally to understand this as saying that the agent goes for the sweet. Since we are dealing with a case of *akrasia*, the outcome is not surprising.

That the proposition said to be active is the one stating that 'every sweet thing is pleasant' is clear because the nearest referent for *hautê* is the *hê de* at 1147a32 (see Grant , Stewart, and Gauthier and Jolif 1970). I call it the 'epithumetic premise', for it states the same thing as what the *epithumia* at 1147a33 pursues. Against this, Charles argues that the *hautê* refers to the minor premise 'this is sweet'. On his interpretation, one needs this minor premise to be active (Charles 2009: 58, n. 28). Against Charles' reading, one can argue that if the particular proposition is active, then the text is heavily underdetermined. Either it means that the akratic agent is considering both arguments – against eating the sweet and in favour of it – with the same strength, but then it is not clear why one argument wins over the other; or it means that the particular proposition is connected with one universal premise, but not with the other, and Aristotle does not offer any explanation why this is the case. By contrast, my reading does not entail those further issues, and is thereby more economical.

One of Charles' arguments is that if the epithumetic universal premise is active, then the other universal premise is not. But in his view, we need this other universal premise, the 'rational one', to be active as well. I want to show that by 'being active' (*energei*) Aristotle means in fact a notion which is not binary. It is possible to be active, but also to be less active, without being merely potential. Thus, that the rational universal premise is passive does not follow from the epithumetic universal premise being active. This notion of 'being active' (*energein*) has been already sketched out earlier (see 1146b35-1147a10). In my view, then, being active does not just mean 'being actually considered', but 'considering a proposition together with its implications'.

Another one of Charles' argument relies on the assumption that *pheugein touto* is the conclusion of the practical argument. Thus, if one is to have the conclusion consciously, one needs an active minor premise. By contrast, I argue that the assertion 'avoiding this' (*pheugein touto*) should be connected with the universal principle that forbids tasting. This seems to be the most natural reading. One could contest this on the ground that the proposition 'avoid this' is particular. However, we should understand '*pheugein touto*' as what is asserted by the universal premise, in the sense that *pheugein touto* is inferred from the universal premise. Aristotle is merely summing up the argument 'one ought to avoid every thing sweet'; 'this is sweet'; 'I should avoid this'. In a sense, the universal principle itself 'says' "avoid this". My interpretation of 'being active' supports this reading. If the epithumetic universal premise is active, this means that the agent considers other propositions which are implied by this premise.

Now, given my reading of text (76), the situation is this: the agent finds himself in a practical dilemma. Two distinct arguments are offered to him. Either he goes for the sweet, because 'every sweet thing is pleasant, and this is sweet', or he avoids the sweet, because 'one ought to avoid every sweet thing, and this is sweet'. Also, the agent is experiencing an appetite (*epithumia*) for the sweet thing. That the agent is prone to experience such a desire is not surprising given my account of *akrasia* as a disposition to feel appetite, as developed in §6.2.1. The *akratês* is precisely disposed to respond to a pleasurable object in this way. Hence, although the first universal belief urges the agent to avoid the sweet, the appetite *acts*. Aristotle adds that the akratic agent has the conclusion 'avoid this'. It seems that the same happens as in the previous, normal, case: the agent has the universal premise 'one ought to avoid every sweet thing'; he has the particular premise 'this is sweet', and he has the conclusion 'avoid this', which he doubtlessly has drawn from the former premises. (Once again, the *akratês* in question here seems to be the weak *akratês* rather than the impulsive one.) So why does the agent not act according to the principle that forbids eating sweet things? In other words, why does the epithumetic principle wins over?

Invoking the desiderative state of the agent is of limited help here, since it does not explain why appetite is stronger than reason. Besides, in the enkratic case, the exact opposite happens. In spite of strong *epithumia*, reason prevails. I believe that the answer lies in the cognitive state of the *akratês*. He has the minor premise, but he does not connect it appropriately to the moral principle.[323] It is true that Aristotle does not elaborate this kind of connection. However, I argue that this cognitive relation can be reconstructed from the material that precedes, at 1146b35-1147a10 and at 1147a10-24.

The only clue in the text is that the epithumetic universal proposition is active (*energei*). I have shown in the 'logical' exposition of the normal case that 'being active' for the universal proposition is correlated with being derived into more specific universal propositions. If one applies this correlation here as well, the result is that the agent entertains a universal proposition together with its implications and therefore it is easier for the agent to connect this proposition with the particular one. By contrast, the forbidding universal proposition is not active, at least not in this sense. That it is not active does not mean that it is only potential, as in the case of the absent-minded agent of 1146b35-1147a10. If it were the case, the agent would

[323] For similar interpretations, see Charles 1984, ch. 3, sect. B; Dahl 1984, ch. 11, see esp. p. 208ff. This kind of interpretation is outlined by Bostock, who ultimately rejects it (Bostock's "second interpretation"; Bostock 2000: 131-132).

not be able to infer the conclusion *pheugein touto*.[324] Rather, the akratic agent is in a cognitive state similar to the young learner or the drunk mathematician. He has the particular premise and acts on it as well, at least to the extent that he is able to infer the logically correct conclusion. However, he does not act on it enough so that he does not consider the universal proposition together with its implications.

Consider the example of the sweet. The akratic agent holds both premises that one ought to avoid sweet things and that this is sweet. He therefore also holds the conclusion 'I should avoid this'. However, what he lacks is a more complete understanding of why he ought to avoid this very thing here. He lacks extra considerations which would guide his deliberation better, such as 'sweet things are bad for teeth', 'my teeth are in bad shape', 'I just had a coke', etc. Since the rational universal premise 'one ought to avoid this' is not active, the agent does not derive from it the additional considerations that would help guide his deliberation. Thus, the *akratês* does not see *why* he ought to stand back from that very sweet, except because of the very general rule he considers. His conclusion is not properly motivated. In other words, the conclusion 'does not follow *necessarily*', that is, according to practical necessity.

This interpretation also accounts for the structure of passage 1147a24-35. First, Aristotle shows how practical necessity works. If an agent holds a couple of propositions actively, then, *ceteris paribus*, the conclusion follows *necessarily*, according to practical necessity. In other words, the agent is compelled to act according to what his reasoning prescribes. It is easier to abide by this prescription if one has guiding rules of applications such as 'sweet is such and such' and 'I am a man'. The argument has a stronger compelling force. Aristotle then introduces the akratic case, which is not a case of practical necessity. The akratic agent holds the same propositions as in the normal case. However, his appetite disrupts the logical connection between the premises and the conclusion. The conclusion does follow from the premises, but not necessarily. The agent is not compelled to act according to what reason prescribes.

Now I want to show that this interpretation of *akrasia* is compatible with the notion of practical thought I have developed in this work. A way of elaborating this description of akratic behaviour is suggested at the end of *EN* VII, where Aristotle asserts that unlike the *phronimos*, the *akratês* is not '*praktikos*':

> 77) "Moreover, one is practically wise (*phronimos*) not only in virtue of knowledge, but also in virtue of being able to act. And the unself-controlled is not able to act." *EN* VII.10 1152a8-9

[324] This case would rather correspond to the situation of the impulsive *akratês*, who is not aware of the correct conclusion at the moment of action.

> ἔτι οὐ τῷ εἰδέναι μόνον φρόνιμος ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ πρακτικός· ὁ δ' ἀκρατὴς οὐ πρακτικός.

In chapter 4, I have offered a technical interpretation of 'being *praktikos*'. Being *praktikos* is a skill the *phronimos* agent has in virtue of his knowledge of particulars. At *EN* VI.13 1144b4-14 (§4.4.2, text 42), Aristotle has opposed the fully virtuous agent to the agent who is only naturally virtuous. The latter has not achieved full virtue (*aretê haplôs*) because he lacks *phronêsis*. As I have argued, Aristotle shows that possessing *phronêsis* enables the fully virtuous person to apply adequately the moral principles he considers in action. By contrast, the naturally virtuous agent, even though he has a correct notion of such or such moral principle, is not able to apply it adequately in a situation because he lacks knowledge of the relevant features of the situation. He does not attend to the features which would enable him to apply the principle correctly, but rather attends to other features which distract him from a correct application. The claim of my §4.4.2 is that particular knowledge provides one with knowledge that is appropriate to the situation. Once I am in possession of this piece of knowledge, I am better able to infer a virtuous decision (i.e. what I should do). If I am not actively aware of this particular state of affairs, I might not act according to what would be reasonable to do. If I am not actively aware that this is heavy, i.e. heavy water, given that I am very thirsty, I might go and drink it, although heavy water is actually harmful. If I am not actively aware that fried turkey is not a sample of healthy poultry, I shall eat it, although when considering this fact actively I would restrain myself. This is not the case with universals, for knowledge of universals does not make one more or less *praktikos*. It is possible to entertain one's knowledge of a universal state of affairs without being compelled to act in any particular way. If we take *'praktikos*' in this technical sense, the passage shows that Aristotle attributes the same fault to the *akratês*.

At this point it seems useful to recall the distinction between impulsive and weak *akrasia*. Only the weak *akratês* has deliberated before his action. The impulsive *akratês* is carried away by the violence of his passion. The impulsive *akratês* has the rational universal premise, because after he has done his deed, he feels remorse, yet it seems that he does not attend to particulars actively. His passion obliterates momentarily his notion of what is the case and how to connect the particulars with the moral notion of what to do. By contrast, the weak *akratês* is aware of the particulars and has come to the correct conclusion. He is the proper subject of *EN* VII.3 1147a31-35.

What happens in the case of the weak *akratês* is similar to the case of the 'simple deliberator' introduced earlier (§3.3.2). The simple deliberator does not have an adequate understanding of moral notions, such as justice. This means that he

does not spot appropriately instances of being just or of being unjust. He might therefore come to the conclusion that he should punish his friend on the ground that punishing one's friends is just (and it sometimes is, as in the phrase 'hard, but fair'), in spite of the situation in which the friend hasn't committed any fault. Likewise, the *akratês* agent does not have an appropriate notion of the properties he perceives in the situation. He does not have an appropriate notion of the pleasant, namely when it is good and when it is bad. He knows in general that one ought to avoid sweet things, but he does not have further guiding rules to help him to determine when it is acceptable to eat a sweet and when it is not.

What distinguishes the simple deliberator from the weak *akratês* is that Aristotle does not specify the cause of why the simple deliberator is mistaken. Actually, the simple deliberator could be akratic (in spite of the text, as I have argued). Some cases of simple deliberation are weak *akrasia*, while some cases are simply errors of judgement. Similarly, not all cases of weak *akrasia* are cases of simple deliberation. But in the case of the *akratês*, Aristotle provides the efficient cause of akratic behaviour, namely *epithumia*. In other words, that an agent at a specific time *t* behaves akratically is caused by a particular episode of *epithumia*. Appetite is responsible for two things. First, it causes the agent's cognitive state to weaken; then, it is also the efficient cause of the action. When Aristotle speaks of the *cause* (*aitian*) at 1147a24, he means the cause of the weakening of the cognitive state.

Because of his excessive appetite for an object present in his immediate surroundings, the *akratês* is unable to focus on the correct features of the situation which would enable him to stand by his moral principle. The question, then, is why the *akratês* succumbs to the drive of appetite, whereas the *enkratês* holds firm. I think Aristotle does not answer the question explicitly. But my interpretation of practical thought does answer it.

6.4.3 *Akrasia* vs. *enkrateia*

Ultimately, a full account of practical thought ought to include self-control (*enkrateia*). What essentially distinguishes the self-controlled person (*enkratês*) from the *akratês* lies in their respective behaviour. The *akratês* departs from what he thinks he should do and ends up acting contrary to it, whereas the *enkratês* sticks to what he thinks he should do, thereby acting in accordance to it. What then explains this difference?

As already noted, *akrasia* and *enkrateia* seem very similar in terms of their psychology: both agents have a notion of what one should do, and both experience

a desire which is bad and is against one's notion of what one ought to do (1145b10-14).[325]

One cannot explain the difference between the two kinds of behaviour by referring to a difference in the intensity of desire, according to which the *akratês* would be prone to more intense desires than the *enkratês*. On the contrary, it even seems that the *enkratês* might sometimes be subject to more intense appetites than the *akratês*. At the beginning of VII.7, the *akratês* and the *enkratês* (along with the soft and the resistant types) are described as follows:

> 78) "As for pleasures, pains, appetites and avoidances through touch and taste, [i.e. those things we have previously determined self-indulgence and temperance to be about], it is possible to be so disposed as to give in even to those that most people master; and it is possible to master even those that most people give in to. Of these types, the ones relating to pleasures are un-self-controlled and self-controlled respectively, while those relating to pains are soft and resistant. In-between is the disposition of most people, even if most people do incline towards the worse ones." *EN* VII.7 1150a9-16; see also 1150a32-b14
>
> Περὶ δὲ τὰς δι' ἁφῆς καὶ γεύσεως ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας (10) καὶ ἐπιθυμίας καὶ φυγάς, περὶ ἃς ἥ τε ἀκολασία καὶ ἡ σωφροσύνη διωρίσθη πρότερον, ἔστι μὲν οὕτως ἔχειν ὥστε ἡττᾶσθαι καὶ ὧν οἱ πολλοὶ κρείττους, ἔστι δὲ κρατεῖν καὶ ὧν οἱ πολλοὶ ἥττους· τούτων δ' ὁ μὲν περὶ ἡδονὰς ἀκρατὴς ὁ δ' ἐγκρατής, ὁ δὲ περὶ λύπας μαλακὸς ὁ δὲ (15) καρτερικός. μεταξὺ δ' ἡ τῶν πλείστων ἕξις, κἂν εἰ ῥέπουσι μᾶλλον πρὸς τὰς χείρους.

The *akratês* is so disposed that he gives in to appetites for pleasure easily, that is, more easily than most people, whereas the *enkratês* is able to resist pleasures and appetites that most people are not able to resist. Also, people conceive the *enkratês* as someone who is prone to appetites that are strong and bad; otherwise being able to resist them, as the *enkratês* is, would not be a fine thing (1146a9-16). Thus, the behaviour of the *enkratês* cannot be accounted for by his character. He tends to respond instinctively to pleasurable or painful objects in the same way as the *akratês* or even the *akolastos*. Could it be a difference in the quality of desire, somewhat like the difference between the *akratês* and the *akolastos*, where the latter has a more sophisticated kind of desire? Here, the *enkratês* would differ from the *akratês* in that his appetites are somehow qualitatively different from those of the *akratês*. However, I do not think this is the case. The *epithumia* seems to be the same in both the *akratês* and the *enkratês*. The *enkratês* is subject to the same discrepancy

[325] For another occurrence of the *enkratês* experiencing bad appetites: 1151b34-1152a3.

between his reason and his desire. The *enkratês* cannot have a description of the end of his *epithumia* available. This would make a vicious person of him.

Rather, the *enkratês* seems to differ from the *akratês* regarding his cognitive state. This is suggested at *EN* IX.8: "Also, *enkratês* and *akratês* are said in virtue of our intellect having control or not."[326] The most obvious difference between the *enkratês* and the *akratês* is that in the former his intellect is ruling (*kratein*), whereas in the latter it is not. The resistance of the *enkratês* would then be due solely to rational factors (notwithstanding the desire which possibly accompanies one's practical opinion, as suggested at *EN* VI.2). This assumption would be confirmed by the fact that Aristotle devotes quite a lot of effort to accounting for the *akratês*' peculiar cognitive state, whereas he does not do so for the *enkratês*. This difference of treatment would show that there is a major contrast in their respective cognitive states, and maybe also that the cognitive state of the *enkratês* does not differ so much from that of the *phronimos*.

In virtue of what is the rational part of the soul able to rule over appetite in the enkratic case but not in the akratic one? In the akratic case, appetite disturbs the agent's perception of the situation. The *akratês* does not focus on the relevant features of the situation. He is certainly aware of the situation in general and of the most salient features, since he is able to come to the right conclusion in his deliberation. Yet his deliberation is not sufficiently supported by other considerations about the circumstances (the conclusion does not follow 'necessarily'). The *akratês* cannot connect efficiently his notion of the moral principle he wishes to promote (the end) with the relevant features of the situation. In other words, the *akratês* is not *praktikos*, because he cannot refine his notion of the end into proposition that is directly applicable to the situation. We can understand this defect in the *akratês* as a lack of conviction in what he should do (i.e. the conclusion of the practical argument). He does not hold this conclusion with sufficient strength because he does not have the appropriate additional justification of why he should follow the conclusion.

On the contrary, the *enkratês*' conviction would not be so undermined. His cognitive state is apparently less affected by *pathos* than that of the *akratês*. His reasons for acting are sufficiently strong to resist the appeal of appetite and to stand by the *orthos logos*. There are two passages that suggest that the *enkratês* has a rational justification strong enough for sticking to his decision.

In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle states a clear connection between rational persuasion and enkratic behaviour. In a passage at *EE* II.8, Aristotle evokes a con-

[326] *EN* IX.8 1168b34-35: καὶ ἐγκρατὴς δὲ καὶ ἀκρατὴς λέγεται τῷ κρατεῖν τὸν νοῦν ἢ μή. Here νοῦς has the general sense of the faculty of thinking.

troversy whether the *akratês* and the *enkratês* act voluntarily (*hekôn*) or not (*akôn*). This passage treats an aspect of the Eudemian inquiry on the involuntary by force, and has no Nicomachean equivalent. Concerning the *akratês*, Aristotle argues that insofar as the *akratês* enjoys following his appetites, he acts voluntarily (1224a36-38). He then turns to the *enkratês*. Does the *enkratês* act voluntarily or by force? On the one hand, one can consider him as acting by constraint, since he forces himself not to follow what he has appetite for; on the other hand, one can consider that he acts voluntarily, since he follows his reason (1224a32-36). Indeed, in the *EE*, Aristotle defines the *hekousion* as what is done in accordance with thought: *en tô dianooumenon pôs prattein einai to hekousion* (1224a7-8). This is the option chosen by Aristotle:

> 79) "But persuasion (*peithô*) is opposed to force and necessity (*anankê*). The *enkratês* goes towards what he is persuaded of, that is, he proceeds not by force but voluntarily. Appetite leads without persuading, for it does not take part in reason." *EE* II.8 1224a31-b1
>
> ἡ
> δὲ πειθὼ τῇ βίᾳ καὶ ἀνάγκῃ ἀντιτίθεται. ὁ δ' ἐγκρατὴς (1224b)
> ἐφ' ἃ πέπεισται ἄγει, καὶ πορεύεται οὐ βίᾳ, ἀλλ' ἑκών. ἡ δὲ
> ἐπιθυμία οὐ πείσασα ἄγει· οὐ γὰρ μετέχει λόγου.

In order to show that the *enkratês* does not act under constraint, Aristotle adds a reference to persuasion (*peithô*) to the argument. Persuasion, along with the *hekousion*, is set in opposition to force (*bia*) and necessity (*anankê*) (1224a14). The *enkratês* agent is said to act voluntarily in virtue of being persuaded of what he does. The crucial presupposition here is implicit, but it is made clear by the last sentence of the passage. Aristotle contrasts the case of the *enkratês* to that of when appetites rule the agent. Appetite does not lead by persuasion, because appetite is not a rational kind of desire. That is to say, Aristotle connects persuasion closely with reason (*logos*). The *enkratês* agent acts voluntarily *because* he acts out of persuasion, and being persuaded in this context is a rational state.

The other piece of evidence in favour of rational justification for the *enkratês* goes as follows:

> 80) "There are people who do stick to their opinion, whom we call stubborn, and who are hard to persuade, that is, it is not easy to change their mind (*ouk eumetapeistoi*). These have something similar to the *enkratês*, just as the wasteful person does to the open-handed and the bold to the courageous[327]; however, they are dif-

[327] *asôtos* and *elephtherios* are the terms used to denote respectively the excess and the virtue concerning small expenses. *thrasus* is the term Aristotle uses to call the excessive character

> ferent in many respects. For the *enkratês* does not change because of affection or appetite, since on occasion he will be easy to persuade. But the stubborn ones do not change by way of reason (*hupo logou*), since they do have appetites and many of them are led by pleasures." *EN* VII.9 1151b4-12

> εἰσὶ δέ τινες οἳ (5) ἐμμενετικοὶ τῇ δόξῃ εἰσίν, οὓς καλοῦσιν ἰσχυρογνώμονας, οἱ δύσπειστοι καὶ οὐκ εὐμετάπειστοι· οἳ ὅμοιον μέν τι ἔχουσι τῷ ἐγκρατεῖ, ὥσπερ ὁ ἄσωτος τῷ ἐλευθερίῳ καὶ ὁ θρασὺς τῷ θαρραλέῳ, εἰσὶ δ' ἕτεροι κατὰ πολλά. ὁ μὲν γὰρ διὰ πάθος καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐ μεταβάλλει [ὁ ἐγκρατής], ἐπεὶ (10) εὔπειστος, ὅταν τύχῃ, ἔσται ὁ ἐγκρατής· οἳ δὲ οὐχ ὑπὸ λόγου, ἐπεὶ ἐπιθυμίας γε λαμβάνουσι, καὶ ἄγονται πολλοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἡδονῶν.

The *enkratês* and the stubborn man are similar in that they hold firm to their opinion and are not easy to convince of something else. Their difference lies in the cause of their persuasion. The stubborn differs from the *enkratês* insofar as he holds firm to an opinion due to irrational impulses such as appetites for pleasurable things. The *enkratês* by contrast does not surrender to such impulses but holds firm to his opinion. However, on other occasions (*hotan tuchê*) the *enkratês* is easy to convince. The text seems to presuppose that the persuasion of the *enkratês* is caused by reasoning. The case of the *enkratês* seems to be the converse of the stubborn one. One will not convince the stubborn person to change his mind by arguments, since his persuasion depends on *epithumia*. Conversely, the *enkratês* does not change his mind because of *epithumia*. The cause of his persuasion seems then to be *logos*. Moreover, according to Aristotle, rational persuasion depends on an argument (see *Rhet.* I.2 1356a1-21). (Note that this kind of rational persuasion must be opposed to the persuasion of the *akolastos*, which is due to his character; see 1151a11-14, text 67).

These two texts show that the *enkratês* holds his belief with a certain conviction and that such conviction is responsible for the *enkratês* sticking to his decision (*emmenein*). Aristotle then also suggests that the persuasion proper to the *enkratês* is *rational*, i.e. caused by a piece of reasoning. Hence, the *enkratês* has a sufficiently good justification for his decision that he withstands the call of appetite and sticks to what he thinks is best to do.

The resolution of the *enkratês* would not be altered by his desiderative impulses. This requires an explanation, for if the desiderative aspect of his soul is dis-

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corresponding to the means of courage (*andreia*). Here *tharaleos* should then be taken as synonymous for *andreios*.

posed in the same way as that of the *akratês*, he ought to suffer from the same impairment concerning his knowledge of particulars.

My claim is that the *enkratês* can overcome his desiderative impulse thanks to his *empeiria*. Experience would be the key feature distinguishing the *akratês* from the *enkratês*. In chap. 5, I introduced experience as a capacity to recognize features of a situation as instances of universal types, more specifically moral types. The experienced person is able to tie the moral notions that he is considering as an end to the relevant features of the situation. In doing so, he obtains a refined idea of these notions. Conversely, he is able to identify reliably certain features as instances of the moral types he is considering. The example of the experienced soldier considered in §5.3.3 illustrates well this capacity. The experienced soldier is fearless when facing danger because his experience provides him with a better knowledge of how dangerous the situation really is (see *EN* III.6 1115a32-1115b4 (text 56) and *EN* III.8 1116b3-15 (57)). Similarly, the *enkratês*, thanks to his experience, is able to better assess the situation in which he is confronted with pleasurable things.

Does this mean that the *enkratês* is just an experienced person? The *enkratês* would be the kind of character in the domain of temperance equivalent to the experienced soldier in the domain of courage. However, Aristotle adds that when the experienced soldier faces extreme danger, he turns cowardly and is the first to run away (*EN* III.8 1116b15-23 (text 60)). By contrast, the *enkratês* is able to resist even the most intense appetite. It is worth specifying that in *EN* III Aristotle has not yet discussed the cognitive and the desiderative parts of the soul. He does not specify in virtue of what the experienced soldier is unable to resist great danger. My guess is that in addition to being experienced, the agent must have been well habituated in order to have a correct grasp of the end. The *enkratês* has that grasp, whereas the trained soldier has not. He fights only because he is paid for, not for the sake of a greater cause.

However, this does not undermine my claim about *empeiria*. Without experience, the *enkratês* would not be able to resist his desire and would act akratically. The reason why he is able to resist his desire is that his experience provides him with an ability to assess correctly the circumstances of the situation.

Correspondingly, this means that the *enkratês* agent has a sort of double view on a particular situation. On the one hand, he is sensitive to features arousing excessive appetites for a course of action that would be incompatible with the *orthos logos*. On the other hand, he will keep a clear view on aspects of the situation that he can relate to his notion of the *orthos logos*. This sort of double sensitivity to a situation is plausible if one assumes that *empeiria* does not develop together with char-

acter and that both traits of the agent involve distinct characteristics, as I have argued at §5.3.3.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has been quite long. It required an extensive reading of *EN* VII, in particular of *EN* VII.3, because of the difficulty of the text and of the accompanying controversies. I am now in a position to reaffirm the main point.

Akrasia, as well as *enkrateia*, are behavioural dispositions which depend primarily on the desiderative part of the soul. They can be generically described as dispositions for excessive appetite for non-necessary pleasures. In both cases, appetite disturbs the agent's overall assessment of the situation. Although he is able to understand what is the best thing to do and what he should do in the circumstances, he is also attracted to other aspects of the situation which are incompatible with the best thing to do. However, they essentially differ in that the *enkratês* is resistant to appetite. Although he suffers from acute *epithumia* for pleasurable things, his conclusion about what ought to be done remains firm. By contrast, the *akratês* does not have this confidence in what he ought to do and he succumbs to appetite. The reason for this discrepancy is that the *enkratês* has better experience of practical matters than the *akratês*. I have defined experience as the capacity to recognize features of a situation as instances of moral types (cf. §5.3.3, p. 191). The *enkratês* is thus better at recognizing instances of moral notions in the situations than the *akratês*. In other words, he has a better grasp of moral notions and is better at telling when such or such notion applies to the situation or not.

The consequence of this cognitive trait in the *enkratês* is a stronger conviction in what appears to him as good to do. Since he can evaluate the various circumstances better than the *akratês*, he has more reasons to believe that he ought to do such and such. By contrast, the *akratês* does not have as much confidence. His conviction in the practical conclusion he has come to is not supported by extra considerations. This explains why in the akratic case appetite wins over.

This conclusions on *akrasia* and *enkrateia* supports my interpretation of practical thought and practical knowledge. The practical argument as a tool to evaluating the epistemic strength of a decision provides a sensible interpretation of *akrasia* and *enkrateia*.

CHAPTER 7

7 Conclusion

7.1 Recapitulation of the main results

The main claim of this work is that Aristotle is committed to a strong notion of practical knowledge. In other words, when an agent makes a decision, it is possible under certain conditions that he genuinely knows what he should do. This kind of knowledge is characteristic of a virtuous agent. By contrast, an akratic agent does not possess such knowledge of what he should do.

My reading of the first part of *EN* VI shows that Aristotle has indeed a notion of practical knowledge as knowledge in decision (chap. 2). Aristotle has a sense of *phronêsis* which means practical knowledge as a disposition to make virtuous decisions. Correspondingly, practical knowledge as a cognitive state can be understood as the knowledge that an agent entertains when making a decision. Practical knowledge is in fact the excellent actualization of practical thought. A decision is the normal outcome of the process of practical thinking. When practical thinking is excellent, the result is an excellent decision, and one can say of the deciding agent that he knows what he should do. Thus, the challenge in this work was to determine how one can speak of 'excellent' practical thought.

I have argued that the second part of *EN* VI includes a discussion about the epistemology of *phronêsis*. The crucial passage is *EN* VI.7 1141b14-23, where Aristotle writes that *phronêsis* depends on knowledge of both universals and particulars. In chapter 3, I have argued that practical thought and practical knowledge can be evaluated in terms of the practical syllogism. The use of the practical syllogism is legitimate if its purpose is to provide an evaluation of practical thought. Aristotle conceives implicitly practical thought in a way similar to theoretical rationality. As the traditional syllogism is a tool for the evaluation of theoretical thought and for determining the conditions of scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*), the practical syllogism can and should be reconstructed from *EN* VI in order to provide a tool for the evaluation of practical thought and for determining the conditions of practical knowledge. However, the practical syllogism should not be interpreted as describing the form of practical thinking. The main form of practical thought, namely de-

liberation, does not have a deductive structure. Also, the practical syllogism in the context of the *Ethics* should not be used in order to account for the causation of action, even though this is what Aristotle actually does in a different context, namely in his physical treatises of the *De Anima* and of the *De Motu Animalium*.

Practical thought can be evaluated using the practical syllogism. However, I have distinguished between moral evaluation, i.e. whether a decision is morally good, and epistemic evaluation, i.e. whether a decision is known as being the right one. The practical syllogism serves as a guide for both kinds of evaluation. Regarding moral evaluation, the major premise as well as the minor premise must be correct. The major premise describes the moral end pursued by the agent and this end must be virtuous. The minor premise contains a description of the features which connects the agent's intention to the situation. It states the condition of success of the agent's intention. If the agent does not spot the relevant feature of the situation, he will not perform a virtuous action, even if he is well intended. He might perform a good action only by accident, or he might fail to apply the moral principle that he was considering.

Concerning epistemic evaluation, I have shown in chap. 5 that practical knowledge is achieved when the agent has a virtuous character and when he has sufficient experience in practical matters. Virtuous character ensures that the agent obtains a morally good major premise in the course of his deliberation. From a non-rational feeling of what is good, the agent comes to express a rational proposition of what one should do or what is good. The specific content of this prescriptive proposition is provided by the present situation. However, the general orientation of the specification process is given by one's character. Experience in moral matters enables one to spot the relevant features of a situation and to identify them correctly as instances of moral notions. Experience works on the basis of perception and consists in ordering and classifying particulars in groups. The more experienced one is, the finer distinctions one can make about particulars.

Practical knowledge consists in the strong connection between the premises and the conclusion. The agent must be able to connect the relevant features of the situation as adequately as possible with the general end he is pursuing. On the one hand, he must come to the most specific description of a moral notion, i.e. what one should do, or what is good or beneficial. On the other hand, he must spot features of the situation which are the closest to these moral notions. Remember the example of chapter 4 of the friend in need who accidentally meets his creditors on the market place (p. 151). One of his creditor friends is a strict believer that one ought to punish injustice, whereas the other has a more nuanced view about this rule. The former believes that his debtor ought to be punished if he does not honour his debt,

whereas the latter understands that the situation requires them not to punish but to help the friend in need. He arrives at a more refined moral rule than the punishing friend. He does not just believe, as does the punishing friend, that 'one should punish one's friend when they have done a bad deed'. He believes in addition that 'one should forgive one's friend if they are in such a position that they are not able to avoid doing a bad action'. Moreover, the understanding friend does not merely consider the particular fact that 'this friend has not honoured his debt'. He has a wider set of beliefs about the circumstances of the situation. He knows as well that 'this friend has not eaten for three days', and that 'this friend has a wife and three children'. There is more proximity between the general consideration of what the agent ought to do and his beliefs about what is the case. Thanks to this, his argument of why he ought to do a particular action (e.g. inviting his friend at his house and talk over the situation) is more accurate. The premises fit better together. The more accurate the argument supporting one's conclusion, the stronger one's belief about what one should do.

This aspect of the accuracy of a practical argument is at work in chapter 6, where I gave an account of *akrasia* and *enkrateia*. The akratic and enkratic agents have similar psychological profiles. In both the akratic and enkratic cases, the agent faces a motivational conflict between a wish for a good course of action and an irrational desire for a pleasurable one. However, on the cognitive side, the *enkratês* shows greater experience in practical matters than the *akratês*. Thanks to his experience, he is better at recognizing features of the situation that are concerned by the moral principle he considers. He can account more accurately for the relation between moral universals and the particular circumstances of the situation. From this experience, he is able to build up a strong justification of why he ought to stick to his moral principle and not give in to pleasure. By contrast, the *akratês* is not able to spot the relevant circumstances in this way and to connect them with his moral principle. Although he comes up with reasons why he ought to abide by his moral principle, these reasons are not strong enough. So he eventually opts for the object of his appetite.

In the introduction, I have restricted the object of this inquiry to moral actions. This entails that productive actions or actions in general are not concerned by my account of practical knowledge, at least not primarily. Now it appears possible to extend my account of practical knowledge to these actions so that decisions about such actions can be evaluated epistemically according to the same model. The definition of practical knowledge I give does not depend on a strong moral notion of the good and of other normative concepts. An everyday action could be

evaluated in the same way, even though for Aristotle the model of action is moral action performed for its own sake.

Now that the reconstruction of practical knowledge from the Aristotelian corpus is complete, I wish to discuss this notion from a more general point of view.

7.2 The plausibility of practical knowledge

The practical/theoretical distinction about knowledge seems to be important, because there are phenomena in the world that a purely theoretical notion of knowledge cannot account for. For instance, theoretical knowledge cannot account for what makes our actions successful. The success of our actions seems to depend on the knowledge we have in the fields of these actions, but not any kind of knowledge. I can be very knowledgeable about planes and about plane piloting, being aware of matters on atmospheric pressures, of physical principles of how a wing shape can generate lift, etc. but still be unable to actually fly a plane. There is a need for procedures in order to implement some knowledge in a practical situation. Evaluation of success depends therefore on practical knowledge rather than on theoretical knowledge. Moreover, successful actions seem to have a large share in one's own personal satisfaction, larger than the kind of satisfaction that theoretical knowledge can provide. Proficiency in a certain body of knowledge may of course give me a certain intellectual satisfaction, but it seems pale in comparison with practical achievements such as obtaining one's driving license, winning a sport competition, writing up one's PhD dissertation, etc. These observations have led to common beliefs in education or sciences that knowledge or theoretical intelligence does not warrant superiority or authority, that practice should prevail over theory, or, at a more existential level, that the meaning of life or of the human condition is not exhausted by science.[328]

However, it is disputable that there is such a thing as practical knowledge. One could put the plausibility of practical knowledge in doubt because it is not possible to predict reliably what the best thing to do is. There are at least three reasons that prevents us from foreseeing what one should do. First, it seems reasonable to admit that it is not possible to be perfectly informed. One cannot exclude that an agent might be unaware of a crucial aspect of the situation. He might therefore make a decision with unwanted or regrettable consequences, because of his igno-

[328] This emphasis on the practical side of life goes against the famous Aristotelian claim that happiness (*eudaimonia*) consists mainly in the activity of contemplating eternal truths, which pertains to theoretical activities (*EN* X.7 1177a12-1178a8). However, at this stage of the dissertation, I aim at accounting for the autonomy of practical knowledge rather than subsuming it under theoretical knowledge. For literature on the relation between practical and theoretical knowledge, see e.g. Kraut 1991; Natali 2001 chap. 4; Richardson Lear 2004.

rance of this crucial aspect. Such a situation is that of Queen Merope who orders to kill the stranger in front of her, while being unaware that this person is in fact her son (see p. 138). A reasonable agent must therefore assume that he might be ignorant of some crucial fact in his deliberation. From this, one can infer that knowing what one should do in a strong sense is impossible.

Also, the agent might be facing a moral dilemma, in which he has to choose between two incompatible courses of action. In such situations, it seems impossible to determine what the best thing to do is. The agent's decision is inevitably tainted with hesitation, because he cannot predict what course of action is the best to go for. The action he opts for will be accompanied by uncertainty and regrets that the alternative course of action was perhaps a better option.

An extra reason to put the plausibility of practical knowledge into question lies in the following requirement for practical knowledge: An action resulting from a decision with practical knowledge is a virtuous action. However, the best thing to do depends on how things turn out and the agent cannot possibly predict reliably what is going to happen. Even in an ideal case in which the agent is perfectly informed and in which there is no doubt as to which moral value he should promote, an unexpected event might occur while the agent is implementing his decision. In this case, the intended action will not be successful. The result of the situation is not what was intended by the agent. In such a case, one cannot attribute practical knowledge to the agent, because there is no virtuous action which follows his decision. This case is similar to the first one. Similarly to the first situation, the agent has to admit that he might be ignorant of what is going to happen. Again, this concession ruins the expectation regarding the possibility of knowing what one should do.

In fact, any situation is concerned by these problems. In spite of the various strategies for minimizing risks in decision-making, one never really knows what one should do. One's choice appears as the object of mere guess rather than of knowledge. These issues for the plausibility of practical knowledge are real and it would be counter-intuitive to argue for the possibility of practical knowledge in cases of moral dilemmas or cases of ignorance of the crucial circumstances. In order to preserve the significance of practical knowledge one has to make an important qualification to this notion.

Aristotle's conception of practical knowledge does not amount to predicting what the best action is. It is not a method or guideline for decision-making. Rather, it is the description of the agent's decision in epistemic terms. Of course, it is possible to elaborate such a method from this description of decision, but this is not what Aristotle does. The remarks against the plausibility of practical knowledge entail

that practical knowledge is possible only if certain conditions are met. First, the agent must be aware of all the significant circumstances of the situation, or at least of the most significant ones. Practical knowledge is possible only insofar as the agent is not missing a crucial piece of information about the situation. Second, there must be no external event that prevents the agent from implementing the intended action. Third, the present situation cannot be a situation of dilemma. These conditions introduce external limitations on practical knowledge, on which the agent has no power.[329] Still, they also entail that the agent is responsible for determining whether a situation is problematic or not, whether it is possible to clear out the difficulties or not.

Provided that the external conditions are met, it is possible for an agent to achieve practical knowledge about what to do. What counts as practical knowledge in a strong sense is the kind of knowledge exemplified in decision when the latter is justified by reasons. By contrast, holding a prescriptive proposition without such reasons is mere belief. For instance, if I hold that I ought to vote against the restrictions on Swiss immigration policy, I have practical knowledge if this belief is accompanied with a correct moral justification and if this justification is epistemically strong. If I hold this belief only because I believe simply that foreigners are good people, I do not have practical knowledge. Although my justification is morally good, it is not a strong one. But if I hold this belief on the additional grounds that foreigners constitute a valuable working force for Switzerland, and that the State and society are able to cope with possible undesirable effects of immigration, then my belief has a stronger justification and is thereby closer to practical knowledge.[330] Practical knowledge in decision can be considered as knowledge in a strong sense in virtue of being part of a rational structure of justification. In this

[329] These conditions show that practical knowledge is not possible in every situation. In some situations, there are problematic circumstances in which the agent cannot come to a firm decision regarding what he should do. In a situation of genuine moral dilemma, there is no way that the agent arrives at a decision where he *knows* what he should do. Consider the example of the young man and his mother in Sartre's speech "L'existentialisme est un humanisme" (1946). During WWII, this young man is hesitant between staying by his mother and conforting her and leaving France to join the Free French Forces. In such a situation, the agent cannot come to a satisfying solution, but has to choose one course of action over the other. He cannot know what he should do.

[330] Of course, in this example, one can easily imagine someone with a justification for the opposite claim, viz. in favour of restrictions on immigration policy, which is as strong as my justification. Maybe this example belongs to the category of situation which are unsolvable. The task of the wise citizen would then be to deliberate about the situation in order to come to a satisfying conclusion as close to practical knowledge as possible. The truth is that in such political issues, some people vote on better grounds than others.

respect, it is similar to *epistêmê*. What constitutes *epistêmê* is the relation between the conclusion and the premises of an *apodeixis*. In the same vein, practical knowledge depends on the relation between the major and the minor premises and the conclusion of a practical syllogism.

Consequently, I suggest the following definition of practical knowledge:

> I know that I should do ϕ, *ceteris paribus*, *iff*
> 1) ϕ is *actually* the right thing to do
> 2) I believe that (1) is true
> 3) I am *strongly* justified in believing that (1) is true

The *ceteris paribus* clause takes the external conditions mentioned above in consideration. Practical knowledge can be achieved only insofar as the agent is in a situation which allows a reliable decision process.

Then, clause (1) is a condition of success. It states that what the agent intends to do is actually the right thing to do. I mean 'right' in a prudential as well as in a moral way: ϕ must be a successful as well as morally good action. In other words, practical knowledge results in virtuous action, necessarily. The agent must be right regarding what he thinks is the right thing to do. Even if he is strongly convinced of the rightness of his conclusion, it might happen that the intended action ends up having harmful consequences. In that case, one cannot attribute practical knowledge to the agent.

Concerning clause (2), it is worth mentioning that the agent only *believes* the truth of clause (1). Clause (2) does not require that the agent *knows* it. Knowing the truth of the success of one's future action would amount to indubitable prediction. However, as already argued, this kind of prediction is impossible because of the contingency of the domain of actions. That what I intend to do brings about a morally good state of affairs is a proposition about the future and this kind of proposition is neither true nor false. Consequently, I cannot *know* such a proposition.

Clause (3) refers to the appropriate justification provided by the practical syllogism. Here is an account of what an appropriate justification of decision is. Knowledge of particulars depends on my experience of moral matters, i.e. whether I spot the relevant features of the situation. Knowledge of universals depends on whether I have adequate concepts of moral values. Moreover, I must be able to connect the features of the situation appropriately to my concepts of moral values. It has appeared that this kind of justification allows of degrees. I can be more or less justified in deciding to ϕ. The strength of the justification depends on both components of practical thought, knowledge of universals and of particulars. The particulars under consideration must be relevant to the situation, that is, they should enable the agent to determine whether his moral principle applies or not. Strong justifi-

cation occurs when the proposition describing the relevant particular is close to the proposition describing the universal principle. In other words, the agent is able to deduce the conclusion from both propositions without having to supply many extra steps.

These aspects give rise to at least two issues. First, it seems plausible to admit that the relevant features of the situation depend on which moral end I pursue. If agent 1 pursues courage as the good, and if agent 2 pursues the accumulation of riches, the same situation will not appear in the same way to each agent. Agent 1 will be struck by features different from those that agent 2 attends to. This would entail a circular account of the development of practical knowledge. I have addressed this issue in chapter 5 already. There I have argued that forging character and acquiring experience of particular facts are two distinct processes which do not merge (p. 197). One's experience in practical matters, i.e. sensibility to the relevant features of a situation, can be acquired independently from one's development of one's character. Consequently, the ability to connect features of a situation with one's notion of what one should do is not conditioned by this notion.

The second issue concerns the notion of adequate concept of a moral value. Having an adequate concept of a moral value seems to amount to knowledge of the good as a rational cognitive state. However, I have argued that moral ends are determined by character, which is a non-rational disposition. This last issue leads to the question of the reflexivity of practical knowledge. Does practical knowledge imply that *one knows that one knows* what one should do? Does the agent need to be aware of the special epistemic strength of his belief? Reflexivity is a property usually attributed to knowledge: when one knows, one also knows that one knows.[331] However, in chapters 4 and 5, I have argued that what determines one's knowledge of universals is not a rational capacity, but that it is character, and that non-rational representation (*phantasia*) provides its content. If this interpretation is correct, I cannot have a fully rational justification of why I pursue such or such moral value. At some point, this justification ends up referring to a non-rational hunch of what is the good. This entails that practical knowledge is not reflexive. The *phronimos* person does not have a privileged access to the good. One should therefore abandon reflexivity.

To conclude this work, I want to go back to the issue of the foundation of moral principles, brought about by getting rid of reflexivity. That the grasp of moral principles depends ultimately on character, which is a non-rational disposition,

[331] This feature is at the basis of internalist conceptions of knowledge (Engel 2007: 33-34).

seems to imply that the rational foundation of ethics as well as practical knowledge in a strong sense are impossible.

7.3 The point of practical knowledge

How does one's character contribute to the foundation of practical knowledge? My general answer has been that habituation of character is sufficient for a reliable moral response of the virtuous man. The moral orientation of my responses depends on the habituation of the non-rational part of the soul. A grasp of the major premise is possible on the basis of character alone, since the capacity of non-rational representation Aristotle calls *phantasia* is sufficient for the cognition of moral values. The moral notions I manipulate in my deliberations are provided by my *phantasia* of the good. As soon as I consider them in deliberation, they enter a network of propositions which are connected to one another rationally. At this point, my representation of the good is expressed rationally. Nevertheless, the cognitive basis for this representation of the good is non-rational.

However, my *phantasia* of the good can be wrong. Motivations to act in animals, including humans, are caused by desire and the object of desire is primarily not the good, but the pleasant. I tend to desire what is pleasant. I also tend to identify what is pleasant with what is good. In this case, what warrants that my *phantasia* of the pleasant coincide with the real good, i.e. that I have a *phantasia* of the real good? Is a representation of the good enough to ensure that I am not liable to error of judgement? How can one avoid the possibility of error? Rationalists have it that the truthful grasp of the end is warranted by reason. Without a genuine rational grasp of the good, it seems that I can be deceived by appearances.

A crucial element of answer to this problem is found in Aristotle's account of the criterion of good action. Aristotle affirms on various occasions that the virtuous man, or *phronimos*, is the measure of the correctness of an action. The virtuous man is the rule and measure for discriminating the real good (*kanôn kai metron EN* III.4 1113a33; see also EN II.6 1106b36-1107a2; VI.12 1144a34; IX.4 1166a12; X.5 1176a15-19). Aristotle holds that in the case of the virtuous man, his *phantasia* of the good coincides with the real good. The object of his wish appears good to him, and turns out to be really good (See my interpretation of *EN* III.4 at §5.2.3). This claim relies on the fact that Aristotle speaks of the object of *boulêsis* as being *in truth* the good (*kat'alêtheian* 1113a23-24).

What explains the moral superiority of the virtuous person, then? A look at a passage of *EE* II.10, which is the Eudemian equivalent of *EN* III.4, completes the above account. Aristotle seems to have a naturalist explanation of the cognitive

superiority of the *phronimos*. According to *EE* II.10 1227a28-30, the good is the *natural* object of *boulêsis*:

> 81) "Similarly, wish, too, is by nature for the good, but against nature it is also for the bad. And by nature one wishes for the good, but against nature and by perversion one can also wish for the bad." *EE* II.10 1227a28-30
>
> ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ βούλησις φύσει μὲν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐστί, παρὰ φύσιν δὲ καὶ τοῦ κακοῦ, καὶ βούλεται (30) φύσει μὲν τὸ ἀγαθόν, παρὰ φύσιν δὲ καὶ διαστροφὴν καὶ τὸ κακόν.

The natural object of wish is the real good. It might happen that someone wishes for something bad, yet this would be against nature, because of the perversion of his character.[332] Thus, someone who grows up according to the human essence naturally wishes for the good (see Woods 1992: 149). If I have not been perverted, the object of my wish is the good. The virtuous person is the one who actualizes human essence at its best, so what appears to him as good is the real good.[333] Again, the kind of cognition responsible for his representation of the good does not need to be rational. There is no need for a kind of strong knowledge of the good that would distinguish the virtuous man from other people.

If the authority of the virtuous man's *phantasia* of the good is ultimately grounded in nature, it means that the notion of the good can be explained in natural terms. However, such straightforward naturalist position is open to the fallacy that no moral concept can be reduced to non-moral ones (Moore 1903). This has been pointed at by many commentators concerning Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* (see Heinaman 1995: 2-3 for references).

It is possible that Aristotle accepted naturalism and that he was not sensitive to the natural fallacy argument. More probably, however, he was aware that the equation of *eudaimonia* with virtuous activity (in a moral sense) did not hold. He was probably aware that the notion of moral virtue in a moral sense could not be derived from the notion of the excellent activity of human being's natural function. In fact, Aristotle does not provide a strictly natural foundation for his definition of

[332] The context is not the same here than in *EN* III.4. In the Nicomachean version of the passage, Aristotle wants to answer the question whether the object of wish is the good or the apparent good. In the Eudemian case Aristotle wants to answer the question how it is possible to wish for something bad.

[333] Aristotle seems to have a similar naturalist conception of knowledge in general. At *Rhet.* I.1 1355a15-17, he writes: "At the same time, human beings are by nature sufficiently disposed towards truth and most of the time do attain truth." (ἅμα δὲ καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι πρὸς τὸ ἀληθὲς πεφύκασιν ἱκανῶς καὶ τὰ πλείω τυγχάνουσι τῆς ἀληθείας).

happiness. There is a gap between saying that happiness consists in the excellent exercise of reason and that 'excellent' here means virtuous according to the various moral virtues detailed in books III and IV of the *EN*, and book III of the *EE* (Chappell 2005: 248-249, citing McDowell).[334] A similar comment can be made concerning the virtuous man as best achieving the essence of human beings. The activity of the virtuous includes political activities. He lives in a Greek city, has relations with other citizens, makes contracts with them, etc. This means that the human essence is not just confined to natural functions, but includes non-natural ones as well.[335]

An important aspect of my account of practical knowledge is that it involves the contribution of a social community. The young learner does not acquire a sense of the good and the bad on his own. What is developed naturally in the first place, is an ability to desire pleasant things, not things which are good or bad. By nature, he has no cognition of objects as being morally good or bad. He cognizes them as merely pleasant or painful. A sense of being good or bad is acquired later when he is first told that such or such an action is good or bad. Correct habituation consists in getting pleasure from what is good and what is bad. Unless the young learner is guided by his peers, he will remain at the level of pleasure and pain and will not achieve the higher task of distinguishing between what is immediately pleasant and what is not immediately beneficial but nonetheless good. In other words, the young learner acquires a sense of the good and the bad thanks to the community he lives in, that is, thanks to the encouragement or disapproval of mature moral agents around him, like his parents or teachers.

This does not entail that the foundation of morality through character collapses into moral relativism. I rather think that as long as the surroundings of the young learner is sane, his character will not be perverted. Similarly, as long as he is not impeded in his exercise of thought, the young learner will develop his intelligence normally. The average notion of the good shared by the community is a reliable approximation of the real good.[336]

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[334] Aristotle just does not feel compelled to answer a moral sceptic argument. Indeed, it might be true that the well-functioning of human beings does not analytically entail happiness as flourishing. However, this also holds for other candidates to the good life at the time of Aristotle. You cannot derive analytically from a description of the human function that the good life consists in a life of pleasure or a life of pursuing honours. These alternative definitions of happiness also commit the naturalist fallacy (Broadie 2007: 117-118).

[335] Maybe the famous description 'Man is by nature a political animal' also expresses this feature. (φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος 1097b11; see also 1169b18–19).

[336] The position I am closest to is the one called 'response-dependent', according to which moral facts are not dependent on our agreements, but rather on our non-rational responses

More importantly, the contribution of the community is to secure the grasp of moral values. The young learner acquires a sense of the good and the bad by confronting his preconceptions to the judgement of his peers. These are occasions for the young learner to probe his representations of moral values and to learn through a process of trial and error. Once the agent has become a fully grown up moral agent, he has acquired the ability to judge moral actions by himself. Yet, the process of trial and error does not stop here. The grown up moral agent goes on learning about moral values. His successes and failures contribute to refine his conception of these notions. At some point, he has acquired sufficient experience (*empeiria*) in order to avoid mistakes in decision.

The point of practical knowledge is thus not the foundation of moral principles. Rather, it is the appropriateness of justification, i.e. the way the agent can connect the situation with his idea of the good and express it rationally. Moreover, practical thought based on justification enables communication among human beings about morals and the evaluation of the correctness of the moral views of others.

(emotions, desires). The fact that a given group of people will react in a similar way to a situation demanding a moral response shows that moral facts exist and that one can speak of them truly or falsely. This position has been developed by McDowell 1985 and 1995. In the latter contribution, McDowell attributes this position to Aristotle. For useful qualifications of this attribution to Aristotle, see Charles 1995.

Annex: Types of circumstance in *EN* III.6-12 and *EN* IV

Domain	**Fear**	**Pleasure and pains**	**Money (small amounts)**	**Money (large amounts)**	**Great honours**	**Small honours**	**Anger**	**Social relations**		
Associated virtue	**Courage**	**Temperance**	**Generosity**	**Magnificence**	**Magnanimity**	**Anonymous (Ambition)**	**Softness**	**Amiability**	**Truthfulness**	**Wit**
Subject				αὐτός						
Object	ἁ δεῖ	ὧν δεῖ	ὅσα δεῖ			ὅθεν δεῖ		ἅ δεῖ		οἷα δεῖ
Patient			οἷς δεῖ				οἷς δεῖ			
Domain				πέρι ὁ			ἐφ'οἷς δεῖ			
Domain				ἐν ᾧ						
Means										
End / consequence	οὑ ἕνεκα δεῖ									
Manner	ὥς δεῖ	ὡς δεῖ				ὡς δεῖ	ὥς δεῖ	ὥς δεῖ		ὥς δεῖ
Moment	ὅτε δεῖ	ὅτε δεῖ	ὅτε δεῖ				ὅτε δεῖ			
Length							ὅσον δεῖ			
Quantity						τὸ μάλλον ἢ δεῖ καὶ ἧττον				

Glossary

Cognition: A cognition, or cognitive state, is a mental event with a representational content. The term denotes all kinds of grasping of information by the mind. There are three distinct kinds of cognitive states in Aristotle: perception (*aisthêsis*), representation (*phantasia*), and intellect (*nous*) or thought (*dianoia*).

Disposition (*hexis*): A disposition is a tendency to actualize a certain capacity in a definite way.

Opinion (*doxa*), **doxastic**: An opinion (*doxa*) is a cognitive state with a propositional content. In this work, I oppose doxastic states to phantastic ones on the ground that the former have a propositional content, while the latter have not.

Epistemic strength: I call 'epistemic strength' the degree of conviction with which a subject endorse a proposition. Knowledge entails a strong degree of conviction, whereas belief, or opinion, entails a weaker degree of conviction. A decision which is the result of practical knowledge is held with epistemic strength.

Evaluation: An evaluation is the act of attributing a value to something. A proposition is evaluative if its content refers to a value. There are various kinds of evaluation, depending on the kinds of value one considers. Moral evaluation attributes moral values to something (being good, being bad, etc.), whereas epistemic evaluation attributes a degree of epistemic strength to something.

Explanation: An explanation is the act of giving reasons in order to justify something. For instance, if I explain why I have carried out action ϕ, I give the reasons why I have done ϕ. An explanation can be sufficient or not depending on whether or not I have justified my action.

Intellect (*nous*): In Aristotle's psychology, the intellect is the capacity proper for rational cognitive states. In its broadest sense, the intellect is the capacity for thought in general. In this sense, it also includes states such as *doxa* or *hupolêpsis*. In a more narrow and technical sense, the intellect is the state which grasps the first principles of a science.

Justification: A justification is the act of giving sufficient reasons for doing something. A justification can be moral or epistemic. Moral justification gives sufficient reasons for a moral action, whereas epistemic justification gives sufficient reasons for believing something. Epistemic justification is closely connected to evaluation: I evaluate the epistemic strength of a claim by inquiring into its justification.

Knowledge: Knowledge is the disposition to know something. Knowing something (having a piece of knowledge) is a cognitive state with a propositional content, which necessarily describes something true. This is what I call knowing in a strong sense. Knowing in a weak sense amounts to grasping information about the world, without worrying about the truth of the information.

Moral: Something is 'moral' if it is morally appraisable, that is, if it can be evaluated in terms of being good or bad.

Normative: Something is normative if it can be evaluated according to any given norm or measure. It is opposed to being descriptive. An action, or proposition, can be normative, if it can be evaluated in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, pleasant or unpleasant, beneficial or harmful etc.

Practical argument or **practical syllogism**: A practical argument is the formal representation of a process of deliberation. It summarizes the crucial points of this piece of deliberation. The tradition has called this kind of argument 'practical syllogism' by reference to Aristotle's doctrine of the syllogism in his logical works. The practical argument aims at the justification of one's actions. It also makes possible the epistemic evaluation of one's decision to act.

Prescription, prescriptive: A prescription is an assertion which orders or compels someone to do something. A rule or a law is a prescription. A prescriptive proposition contains an 'ought' clause.

Representation (*phantasia*), **phantastic**: Representation (*phantasia*) is a cognitive state that has no propositional content, but an appearance, or an image. It differs from opinion in that respect, since opinion has a propositional content. Representation also differs from perception in that its object is not necessarily present physically when it is cognized. A phantastic state is a state with a representational content and is thereby opposed to a doxastic state.

Rational: A rational state is a state which is held on the basis of appropriate reasons.

Thought (*dianoia*): Thought is the cognitive process of connecting propositional contents together. Thought is a typically rational process.

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