

# Virtue Education and Deliberation: an Aristotelian Account

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## **Abstract**

Building on a philosophical reconstruction of Aristotle, this dissertation argues for a non-intellectualist account of virtue education and practical deliberation. This dissertation will first examine the notion of habituation. It argues that habituation consists in immersing into a certain cultural context, through which one will develop one's unique ethical sense and will know what is noble and fine. This rules out two intellectualist positions: that habituation gives us a firm understanding of *eudaimonia*, and that habituation itself involves the exercise of the practical intellect.

The non-intellectualised account of habituation is further supported by a topic-specific study of Aristotle's conception of children. In cultivating the seeds of virtues that are accessible even to children, one forms evaluative appearances about what is and what is not worth-pursuing by generalising from particular evaluative experiences. These experiences may come from early private education, perceptions, emotions, imitation of others' attitudes and behaviour, and understanding one's friends' decisions. These experiences help shape one's ethical sense.

Developing friendship (*philia*) appears to be ethically important, since we learn about values through friendship, and since practical deliberation is more like imagining conversations between individuals we are familiar with. This is in stark contrast to the intellectualist account of excellent deliberation, which consists in deliberating through a comprehensive conception of human values. But ultimately, friendship is ethically indispensable because, as a form of intimate relationship between agents of equal status, it epitomises an Aristotelian ideal: an egalitarian ethical community. Arguably, this community constitutes the context for habituation (immersion).

This dissertation shows how opposing positions concerning a variety of particular issues become an opposition between two philosophical packages, one of intellectualist and one of non-intellectualist, and why the non-intellectualist one is closer to the truth.

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## General Introduction

What is the nature of virtues? How is it originated - how do we come to have virtues? What is the relation between nature and virtues? What role does our intellect play in shaping and expressing our character? How does the environment or the community we embedded in influence our character? How does our character influence our practical deliberation? At a very general level, these are the questions that I will be asking in this dissertation.

More pertinently, I think we can say, the whole project is motivated by one question: just how intellectualised virtues are? Does being virtuous involve, as some philosophers suggest, grasping the underlying *raison d'etre* of virtue - the ultimate reason why we should be virtuous in the first place - basing one's deliberation on such understanding, and *becoming* virtuous is to set oneself on this path? Or is being virtuous more like having the right ends, living in a good community, having virtuous friends, and making the right decision here and now? Although this contrast may somewhat oversimplify a lot of issues, in this dissertation I find that there are indeed two camps - intellectualised and non-intellectualised - opposing to each other, and each of them brings with it a "philosophical package": a whole set of specific positions each responsible for tackling different particular issue related to the general contention. I will argue that a rather non-intellectualised camp is closer to the truth.

Throughout this dissertation I will focus on Aristotle's account of these issues. Not only because he is "the" champion of virtue ethics (I know there

are many different versions of virtue ethics in contemporary philosophy), but also because in my view he had a lot of illuminating and interesting things to say on these matter. Further, there is also an opposition between the intellectualised and the non-intellectualised interpretation of Aristotle's ethics. Consequently, sorting out and assessing his texts and arguments will keep us busy enough.

However, in many places I do not simply "reveal" what the "true" Aristotle had say. I prefer to think of it as some kind of "philosophical reconstruction" of the text. I will quote and comment on the selected passages, and I will pay attention to the overall context of the texts. But in several places, should I find more elaboration needed, I will not hesitate to provide my own understanding despite that Aristotle had say relatively few on it. That's why I believe "an Aristotelian" account is perhaps a better title for the dissertation. I will try my best to point out which parts of the discussions are my own, and which parts can be attributed to Aristotle. My only hope is that I have done enough to separate the two and that the overall approach is still within Aristotle's basic contention.

I now proceed to briefly introducing each chapter. I begin by exploring the notion of "habituation", which, as we know, is the core of Aristotle's virtue ethics. After explaining some basic notions surrounding the notion of "habituation" - "ends", "purpose", "deliberation", "noble", etc., I proceed to argue against the single most influential (and rather intellectualised, I might add) theory in interpreting Aristotle's notion of "habituation", namely, the so-called critical practice model.

Then in chapter 2 I will explore Aristotle's conception of children. If habituation is the starting-point of virtue education, then "children" is the subject who undergo this process of education. I believe this is a rather new topic in the study of Aristotle's (or Aristotelian) ethics. I explore the philosophical significance of a theory of children (that it tells us something about how virtues relate to human nature), and I discuss the ethical importance of the nuclear family, which is one area where Aristotle explicitly argued against Plato. In general, revealing the ethical significance of the study of children helps counter the trend to over-intellectualised virtue education.

Chapter 3 is devoted to "practical induction", a method according to Aristotle we use to grasp the indemonstrable "starting-point" of syllogistic reasoning. I contrast an outright intellectualised theory according to which such "starting-point" is our intuition into the essence of virtues and *eudaimonia*, with a non-intellectualised theory according to which the "starting-point" is our evaluative appearances as to what is valuable. I realise that the stalemate between the two is an extension of the debate in Chapter 1 and have no way to resolve the matter.

The final chapter tries to confront the issue on another front: practical reasoning. I argue for a theory of practical deliberation that emphasises on the influence of friends, emotions and the ethical community. I argue that although we need different intellectual skills to deliberate, deliberation is not of ends after all. This is a victory of the non-intellectualised camp over the intellectualised one, since according to the latter to deliberate excellently

we have to deliberate through a comprehensive conception of human values, and it is through this conception that we establish the ends by deliberation.

Much is at stake and this is certainly not the only way to approach the issues. You may not be convinced by my arguments, but I hope you do understand the philosophical pressure that is pushing me to address the different particular questions in the ways I did. And I certainly hope we all learn something from (my philosophical reconstruction of) Aristotle.

# Chapter 1 Habituation

## Introduction

Aristotle famously remarked that our character (*ethos*) is a product of constant practice or habituation (*ethismos*) (e.g. NE 1103a16-17), and therefore the study of ethics (*ethikos*) concerns more about action - really being a virtuous person - than the purely theoretical truth (e.g. NE 1103b27-31). Indeed, habituation is of paramount importance in Aristotle's ethics. For instance, in NE 1103b25-26, it is said that having the right kinds of habits "from our very youth ...makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference" (also 1104b10). But how important is habituation? What role does the intellect play in the habituation process? And what is the relation between nature and habits? In section 1.1, I will discuss the sense in which natural or habituated virtues "preserve the first principle". I will explain how our character influences our evaluation of ends and our process of reasoning. I will also discuss Aristotle's famous remark that those who attend ethical lectures must have a proper upbringing. In section 1.2, I proceed to give an account of the nature of habituation. I will argue against the influential account according to which habituation is "critical practice". I propose instead that habituation is immersion into a cultural context. I end by noting a potential worry: how far should we acknowledge the relevancy of *innate* predispositions in discussing virtue education? But it will have to wait until the next chapter to sketch an answer.

## 1.1 The importance of habituation

We might as well begin with an account of the importance of habituation, or more precisely, the effects it has in the course of moral education. Consider the follow passage (for later reference, let's call it The Key Passage):

(a) For excellence and vice respectively preserve and destroy the first principle (*arche*), and in actions that for the sake of which is the first principle, as the hypotheses are in mathematics; (b) neither in that case is it reason that teaches the first principles, nor is it so here —excellence either natural or produced by habituation is what teaches right opinion about the first principle.<sup>1</sup> (1151a15-19; 1144a29-36; 1113a25-b2; 1104b32-4)

Here, natural or habituated virtues are said to preserve or “teach right opinion about” the *arche*, which is also the purpose (“that for the sake of which”) of action. In Aristotle, “starting-points (*archai*)” is a protean notion, so let's ponder on this for a while.

In ethics, *eudaimonia* (happiness, flourishing) “is a first principle; for it is for the sake of this that we all do everything else” (NE 1102a1-4). As such, it is the highest good humans can attain, and it is the source of desirability of other less perfect human goods (NE 1098a16-18; Meta. 1021b12-17). But what does it mean to say virtues preserve the right opinions about this highest good?

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the *The Revised Oxford Translation*, unless otherwise indicated.

### 1.1.1 The epistemic reading

It cannot mean that those who have good upbringing (habituated virtues) will thereby have an indubitable understanding about the foundation of a system of ends such that they can rely on this foundation to make their particular choices and perform particular actions. This reading might be encouraged by the following passage:

Hence any one who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just and, generally, about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits. For “the that” are the starting-point, and if they are sufficiently plain to him, he will not need “the because” as well; and the man who has been well brought up has or can easily get starting-points. (1095b3-8).

One might have thought that since those who are well brought up already have or can easily get “the that”, which *are* the starting-point, and therefore don’t need “the because” (roughly, the explanation why of “the that”), they must already have a firm grasp of what is most foundational. And since *eudaimonia* is the most foundational, they must already possess the right conception of *eudaimonia*. Consequently, proper habituation has the great effect of securing one’s understanding of the foundation of values.

But this cannot be true. For one thing, it would make the entire Book I of the *Nicomachean ethics* superfluous. For this book is devoted to investigating the nature of *eudaimonia*. As Aristotle remarked, while everyone agrees that *eudaimonia* is the highest good achievable by action, “with regard to what *eudaimonia* is they differ” (NE1095a14-1095a30). One has to steer one’s way amid the different common conceptions of

*eudaimonia*, say, amid those that identify *eudaimonia* with pleasure, those with wealth, or those with honour (NE I. 5). For having our conception of this highest good clarified we will “be more likely to hit upon what we should”, just as archers can better hit the target when they know what to aim at (1094a23; EE 1214b7-11).

But, then, maybe only those who do not have the prerequisite proper upbringing *need* such clarification? But this makes it hard to even guess who would Aristotle’s intended audiences be. For on the one hand, those who have proper upbringing do not need the theory of *eudaimonia*, and on the other, there are those who “have not even a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have never tasted it” (NE 1179b22-26). These do not *care* about the theory of *eudaimonia*. But then what’s the point of remarking that those who attend ethical lectures must be well brought up? But these worries aside, I think there is a deeper problem related to this interpretation (that those who are well brought up will have a firm grasp of the nature of *eudaimonia*) .

The problem is that it does not fit quite well with Aristotle’s methodology. As is often remarked, Aristotle seeks to establish the correctness of a certain position by confirming it with common opinions and/or the most authoritative ones, “for with a true view all the facts harmonize, but with a false one they soon clash” (1098b9-11). We must “first go through the puzzles,...for if the difficulties are solved and the reputable opinions remain, adequate proof has been given.” (NE 1145b2–7; Top. I.1-2) The inquiry into the first principle of ethics is no exception. It is only through this



“aporematic” (puzzles-concerning) process that one can gain sufficient understanding of the subject-matter in question. More pertinently, we must also know “the cause of error—for this contributes towards producing conviction, since when a reasonable explanation is given of why the false view appears true, this tends to produce belief in the true view” (NE 1154a22-25). To gain firm understanding of *eudaimonia*, then, one must also explain why, say, hedonism (or the view that identifies *eudaimonia* with pleasure), though false, might appear true from some perspective. But this aporematic process requires open-minded and even sympathetic investigation of the opponents’ views, highly intellectual skills to examine the merits and defects of those views, and good judgment to draw the right conclusion from these investigations. Now *these*, it seems, cannot be gained merely through a proper upbringing. So, the effect of habituation cannot be that of securing one’s understanding of *eudaimonia*, the foundation of values. That, it seems, is done through *philosophy*.

### **1.1.2 Virtues and purpose**

However, I think this approach is right about one thing, namely, that habituation secures the agent’s relation with the first principle, and thus puts him, somehow, on the right track. What I have done until now is to argue against the *epistemic reading* of this point. I now propose my own suggestion: habituated virtues preserve the starting-point (of choices and actions) in the sense that they provide one the morally secure - that is, incorruptible to a certain extent - supposition about the right purpose of one’s choices and actions.

Sentence (a) in The Key Passage links first principle with the purpose (that for the sake of which) of actions. This suggests that “purpose” here must refer to something ultimate or fundamental, as first principle is fundamental. Further, Aristotle often remarked that syllogizing or demonstration must always begin from something indemonstrable, which then serves as the starting-point of the syllogism (NE 1094a18-21, VI.6; Meta. I. 1, APo. ii. 19). This explains the contrast between virtues and reason in sentence (b) of The Key Passage. So, the purpose is fundamental in a further sense that it is indemonstrable. Habituation, accordingly, is supposed to instil in us the indemonstrable fundamental purpose of actions and choices.

I will say more about the indemonstrable character of the starting-point in ch.3. For now, let’s ask: what is the purpose that is fundamental in the relevant sense? The most plausible candidate, I think, is those value commitments that define one’s moral character. In the case of the fully virtuous agent, this refers to “the fine (*kalon*)”; the fully virtuous agent aims at the fine throughout all his choices and actions. So proper habituation enables the agent to have the right value commitments (i.e. aiming at the fine), which is the indemonstrable starting-point of his choices and actions.

There is an intimate connection between practices or activities - habituation being a kind of practice - and one’s notion of the right purpose of particular choices and actions. This should not be surprising. For instance, Aristotle once remarked that “the many and most vulgar seem not unreasonably to suppose *on the basis of their lives* that the good, that is,

*eudaimonia*, is pleasure (NE 1095b14–19, emphasis added<sup>2</sup>). Here, living a certain life - a life of pleasure - naturally leads one to have the corresponding conception of *eudaimonia*. Moreover, in the process of arguing that we are responsible for our character, Aristotle explicitly connects leading a certain kind of life and the effects such life has on one's character: "Still they are themselves by their slack lives responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men are themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in that they cheat or spend their time in drinking bouts and the like" (NE 1114a3-7). The point is that even if one might not be able to exercise one's willpower to control one's impulses at a particular moment, one is still responsible for leading such a self-indulgent life for it puts one in the position of having to fight against one's impulses<sup>3</sup>.

Habituation, then, has a *cognitive* aspect in the sense that, throughout the process of internalisation, it enables the subject to *come to see* the reasonableness of the activities he is constantly performing. Those who constantly pursue physical pleasure will, as a result of this process, come to see pleasure-seeking as reasonable; he is habituated into living a life of pleasure. Those who constantly pursue what is noble and fine, will, by contrast, come to see noble and fine things as reasonable<sup>4</sup>.

This should be the place to discuss the difference between this cognitive aspect of habituation (which, I think, is very plausible on its own) and the

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<sup>2</sup> This point is acutely noted in Moss (2014, 226).

<sup>3</sup> Sherman (1997, 77-8).

<sup>4</sup> I will say more about how this process takes place in section 3.3.

epistemic approach I have rejected above. For one might wonder, certainly if proper habituation enables the agent to have the right value commitments (i.e. aiming at the fine), and this process has a cognitive aspect, then the agent must end up with having a firm, though maybe vague, grasp of the first principle, i.e. *eudaimonia*? Does not this lead us back to the epistemic reading of sentence (a) in The Key Passage?

### **1.1.3 Character shapes deliberation**

In reply, let me elaborate on the notion of “having the right value commitments”. I claimed that this is what proper habituation brings. The main theme of my reply is to articulate the effects of habituation at a more practical or concrete level. That is, habituation influences first-order decision-making, actions, feelings, etc., rather than gives us a unique vantage point to conduct a topic-specific study of *eudaimonia*<sup>5</sup>.

We can think of the significance of one’s character in terms of the roles it plays in any given episode of practical deliberation. In Chapter 4, I will discuss in details whether deliberation is of ends and whether one needs to have a theory of *eudaimonia* in order to deliberate excellently. For now, given the purpose of illustrating the effects of habituation, it suffices to highlight two roles character can play in practical deliberation.

First, character, once maturely formed, shapes or structures our deliberation in the sense that it provides reliable, active and up-to-date evaluation and reevaluation of one’s choices and actions given one’s

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<sup>5</sup> There is a general contrast between Aristotle’s and Socrates’ approaches to ethics. For Aristotle, ethical inquiry aims at becoming good, rather than having theoretical knowledge (NE 1103b27-31); but for Socrates, as he said in the *Protagoras*, one has to know what virtue *is* before one can be truly virtuous.

ongoing perception of the salient features (and their changes) of the current situation<sup>6</sup>. All sorts of practical factors can figure in this process: the means available, the costs involved, the short-term and/or long-term consequences, the pragmatic or symbolic implications of the actions, others' rights, emotional ties, etc. In NE II-V, when Aristotle gave detailed analyses of different specific virtues, it is quite clear that different virtues are partly encapsulated by their characteristic attention to different salient features of the situation. Let's look at the most vivid example. In the analyses of the "greatness of soul", Aristotle showed clearly how the virtue is associated with a certain pattern of reasoning (one may even say a certain mindset):

It is a mark of the great-souled man also to ask for nothing or scarcely anything, but to give help readily .....He must also be open in his hate and in his love (for to conceal one's feelings is a mark of timidity), and must care more for truth than for what people will think, and must speak and act openly; for he is free of speech because he is contemptuous.....Nor is he given to admiration; for nothing to him is great. Nor is he mindful of wrongs; for it is not the part of a great-souled man to have a long memory, especially for wrongs, but rather to overlook them. Nor is he a gossip; for he will speak neither about himself nor about another, since he cares not to be praised nor for others to be blamed.....He is one who will possess beautiful and profitless things rather than profitable and useful ones; for this is more proper to a character that suffices to itself (NE 1124b7-1125a12).

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<sup>6</sup> Broadie (1991, 245)

Now, Aristotle had a very neat way to capture this “deliberation-shaping” feature of character traits: he drew a distinction between action (*praxis*) and production (*poiesis*) (and correspondingly between virtue and craft):

What is true of crafts is not true of virtues. For the products of a craft determine by their own qualities whether they have been produced well; and so it suffices that they have the right qualities when they have been produced. But for actions in accord with the virtues to have done temperately or justly it does not suffice that they themselves have the right qualities.<sup>7</sup> (NE 1105a26-b5)

The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. (b6-9)

Those who fulfilled all three conditions are said to be not just doing the virtuous acts (just acts, temperate acts, etc.), but doing them as the virtuous agent would do it (do just acts justly, etc.). Let’s focus on the second condition first. “Choose the actions for their own sake” is said to be one of the conditions that distinguishes virtues from craft. What does it mean? This has generated a considerable amount of commentary, but the basic idea is not difficult to explain. The intuitive idea seems to be that in assessing one’s virtue, unlike assessing the product of one’s craft, one has to focus not just on the external behaviour (as the *product* of one’s decision or at any rate activation of one’s states), but also *the way* how one arrives at or ends up doing such action, i.e. the reasoning that leads one to such

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<sup>7</sup> These three sentences are the translation found in Irwin (1999, 22), for it brings out the point in a sharper way.

action or the character states that dispose one to it.<sup>8</sup> This, clearly, captures the idea that virtues have a very specific “profile” (and different virtues have different profiles): they are associated with a certain pattern of reasoning or mindset.

It is natural to call the mindset characteristically associated with virtues the cognitive-cum-perceptual aspect of virtues. This is a first step towards explaining how habituation can be cognitive without being straightforwardly epistemic (in the sense of giving the agent the vantage point to grasp *eudaimonia*): instilling in the agent these various virtuous states may make him more fully aware of the different mindset characteristic of different virtues, it does not automatically give him some kind of understanding about the first principle (*eudaimonia*).

So the claim is that the “deliberation-shaping” feature of virtues partly explains the notion of “having the right value commitments”. Value commitments are expressed in one’s process of reasoning, and are expressed in a way that makes one closer to (in the case of virtues) or farther from (in the case of vices) hitting the intermediate. In this connection, let’s look at the third condition of acting virtuously stated in 1105b6-9: the action “must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character”. One must be able to hit the mark in a reliable way, as opposed to only accidentally, and this is guaranteed by having the firm and unchangeable dispositions. In other words, the second and the third condition are interrelated: the former

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<sup>8</sup> Annas (2011, 74) notes that judging a product in isolation from the way it is produced is true only of “production skills” such as house-building, but not so for “performance skills” such as dancing and sporting. She concludes that the latter class of skills gives a more illuminating analogy.

captures the “deliberation-shaping” feature of character, the latter captures the psychological stability of this very feature. Surely, the value commitments that *define* one’s character must be stable and psychologically fundamental in this way. To relate all these to the topic of habituation now, we can make the following short summary: a proper upbringing (acquisition of good habits) instils in one the firm and unchangeable virtuous dispositions (viz. the virtuous states or fundamental value commitments) that will eventually shape or structure one’s deliberation.

#### **1.1.4 Character informs the evaluation of specific ends**

What about the first condition, that in order to act virtuously one must have knowledge? This leads us to the second role character plays in any given episode of practical deliberation. This will also be a further elaboration of the cognitive aspect of habituation. Character informs one’s evaluative supposition of one’s specific or narrow ends in such a way that the actions one *chooses to perform* can be regarded as an expression of one’s conception of goodness, or equivalently, one’s idea of what is the best thing to do in the particular circumstances.

According to this reading, then, the knowledge condition of acting virtuously must refer to having the right evaluative supposition of one’s specific ends<sup>9</sup>. It is only with the right (virtuous) conception of goodness that one can act virtuously. While this may sound like a tautology, there are

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<sup>9</sup> I concede that this is a fairly ambitious reading not everyone would automatically accept. Minimally, the knowledge condition merely says the agent must know what he is doing in the sense that he is doing the action under the description when that description itself is a description of a virtuous action. I will explain more in section 3.3, 3.4, and section 4.2, 4.3.



some interesting remarks related to this idea. First, acting virtuously is not simply a matter of promoting the best consequences. For one can promote such consequences without intending to do so, that is, without counting them as instantiating one's conception of goodness, or without even knowing that one has promoted such results. In other words, in order to act virtuously one must act *from* one's conception of goodness. So "acting virtuously" should really be characterised as "acting on one's judgment of what is the most virtuous thing to do in this particular situation" (and, to repeat, the deliberation that leads to such evaluation is also shaped by one's character).

Let me elaborate. This gives us some of the recourses we need to have a taxonomy of the type of ethical agents. For it is precisely through this knowledge condition that the virtuous agent is distinguished from the vicious ones. To be vicious is to act on false evaluation of one's specific ends: to be intemperate, for instance, is to have the false evaluation that says excessive consumption of alcohol is the most desirable thing to do in the particular situation, to be cowardly is to have the false evaluation that says it is better to live shamefully than to sacrifice honourably in the particular situation.

The most problematic case concerns incontinence. On the one hand it is neither vice nor virtue *per se*, yet on the other hand it is connected to both of them. It approximates virtues insofar as the incontinent man is closer to

being virtuous than the vicious man, for in *some* sense<sup>10</sup> he knows he is acting wrongly, (which presupposes that he knows, like the virtuous, what is right) yet it also resembles vices for the incontinent and the vicious exhibit the same external behaviour.

Completing the taxonomy of the ethical types allows us to understand better the nature of each type, and therefore the nature of the virtuous. Witnessing the problematic nature of incontinence, one might have thought the virtuous man is the one who has both the right evaluation (so to separate him from the vicious) and the right actions (so to separate him from the incontinent). But while this may as well be necessary, it is not sufficient to characterise the virtuous agent. This brings us to the last ethical type in the taxonomy. For the continent man also has right judgment and right action, but he is not thereby virtuous. The most common way to capture the difference between continence and being virtuous is to say that only the latter, not the former, *enjoys* choosing to do the virtuous acts. Sufficient degree of self-control ensures the continent man to do he right thing, but he has to fight against contrary impulses in order to do so. Now,

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<sup>10</sup> In The Key Passage, Aristotle discussed how the incontinent can be “easily persuaded to change his mind”, but the vicious man cannot (1151a14). The incontinent man does not pursue excessive bodily pleasures “on conviction”, he just lacks self-control; but the self-indulgent man “is convinced because he is the sort of man to pursue them” (a11-13). It is in this context that the natural or habituated virtues are said to preserve the first principle. However, the incontinent man is clearly not virtuous. So no matter in what ways he shares the same knowledge with the virtuous concerning what is valuable (so as to explain how he knows he is acting against his own judgment), it is not a case of having the virtues to preserve the first principles (of his deliberation and action). So it is not exactly clear how to account for the nature of incontinence. The standard account is to say while both the virtuous and the incontinent grasp the major premise of the practical syllogism, the incontinent failed to grasp the second/minor premise: his perceptions are led astray by some immediate temptation. But this does not help much since the major premise can also be construed as the “first principles” (see ch.3).

Aristotle has a way to analyse the difference: the continent man fulfilled his rational desire (or “wish”; *boulesis*) or desire that is based on his better judgment, but his non-rational desire (appetites) are not perfectly in tune with his rational choices. The incontinent man has the opposite problem: his appetites are satisfied but not his rational desires. Accordingly, the virtuous agent should be characterised as the one who has the right rational desire (grounded on right judgement) and right (well-educated) appetites. This combination brings him to choose virtuous acts willingly and wholeheartedly<sup>11</sup>.

According to this picture, then, it is not just the motivational efficacy of one’s judgment that distinguishes the virtuous man from the incontinent one. Rather, it is about whether one’s appetites are in tune with *the right object*. In the case of the virtuous man, the appetites desire what one judges one should desire. But we have seen what the virtuous agent aims at: the fine and the noble. It follows that in the case of the virtuous agent, the appetites desire the fine and the noble. This fits Aristotle’s detailed discussion of education program in Pol. VIII: “It is evident, then, that there is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful or necessary, but because it is liberal or noble” (1338a31-2). This is also the reason why Aristotle paid so much attention to music education (see this chapter below).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Reeve (2013, 160).

<sup>12</sup> I will have something more to say about how habituation shapes our character in ch. 3.3.2.

So it matters whether one *aspires* to the truly valuable things. This should be included in the program of proper education, too. It is this feature of proper habituation that separates the Aristotelian virtuous agent from those who are *merely* “good citizens”, i.e. those who follow the laws, have a disciplined life and maybe even a respectable career. But all the same this good citizen can be vulnerable to all sorts of temptations and emotional disorder. This is not a trivial claim, for imagine when one’s non-rational desires go rogue. Notably many of the character flaws concern or are traceable to the condition of one’s *pathe*. Greed blinds one’s sense of fairness, jealous blinds one’s appreciation of others’ merits, anger motivates one’s desire to take revenge, and so on.

I want to emphasise how non-intellectualised this view is. Recall, according to sentence (b) in The Key Passage, it is virtue rather than reason that teaches us about the indemonstrable starting-point. Let me now explain how I interpret the indemonstrable character of the starting-point.

The starting-point for any process of reasoning is indemonstrable insofar as it ends the series of regress, this by itself should be familiar to anyone who knows the argument from infinite regress. But the unfamiliar point is that it is virtues rather than reason that give us the starting-point. What does this mean? In a given episode of practical reasoning, one cannot *both* deliberate about *whether* to adopt a certain end *and* adopt it as an end that effectively guides one’s reasoning and action. For any end to be *grasped as an end*, that is, for that end to be the *purpose*, the “that-for-the-sake-of-which”, or that which is *expressed* in one’s chosen action, one has to stop

the series of asking for its further rationale<sup>13</sup>. In other words, if practical reasoning is to lead to concrete actions at all, one's end is such that it cannot be the topic of one's deliberation about whether to adopt that end or not. It follows that whenever one is deliberating about whether to pursue certain object or state-of-affairs X, this X cannot be the end or purpose of one's action<sup>14</sup>.

In other words, the starting-point is *that which one can find oneself accept as what guides one's reasoning and action*. For it is not surprising to say what one accepts as the indemonstrable end that guides one's reasoning and action can reflect one's character. The virtuous man accepts the fine and noble as the end that guides his reasoning and action, the vicious man accepts the base and shameful. We can imagine a wide range of ethical personalities expressed in similar ways.

So in saying that it matters whether one *aspires* to the truly valuable things, I mean it matters what one accepts as the indemonstrable end that guides one's reasoning and actions. This is the way to educate one's non-rational part of the soul: to go beyond mere continence, we need the appetites to be in tune with what is truly valuable, namely, that which expresses the excellence of the rational part of the soul, a.k.a. the fine and the noble.

To summarise: virtuous character informs one's evaluative judgment of the specific ends to the effect that what one chooses to perform is an

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<sup>13</sup> Russell (2009, 10) made the same point.

<sup>14</sup> This point will be further elaborated in ch.3.3.1 and 3.3.2, using Jessica Moss' account of practical induction.

expression of one's conception of what is noble and fine. This concludes our discussion of the knowledge condition of acting virtuously (in 1105b6-9).

### **1.1.5 Recap**

Let's recap. Character has two roles in a given episode of practical deliberation. It shapes our deliberation, and it informs our evaluative judgements about the specific ends. The two roles are clearly interrelated. Cases about how untrained emotions can distort our judgment and reasoning are only one kind of cases. Maybe the clearest way to articulate the interrelation of the two roles is to use the schema of practical syllogism. The second role concerns how character fixes the major premise, or the premise about one's ends (1144b31), and the first role concerns how one formulates the minor premise, or the premise about one's means. As we have seen, different virtues are associated with different specific ways to attend to the salient features of the situation. The conclusion - choice or action - follows from the premise insofar as one's judgment expresses one's conception of goodness. The two roles of character are interrelated insofar as to *be* virtuous requires having a sound (true and valid) practical syllogism: one has to have the right ends, the right reasoning (inferences), and the right conclusion.

I have explained the two roles of character in practical reasoning through discussing the three conditions of "acting virtuously (as the virtuous agent would act)" as they are articulated in NE 1105b6-9. Together they explain the effects of habituation or one's upbringing. To have a *proper* upbringing

(have good habits), accordingly, is to have in one the firm and unchangeable virtuous dispositions (viz. the virtuous states or fundamental value commitments) that inform one's judgement and shape one's deliberation about what is and how to realise the noble and the fine.

Let's return to the argument against the epistemic reading of sentence (a) in The Key Passage. According to this reading, good upbringing allows one to have a firm grasp of the nature of the ultimate goal, *eudaimonia*. By contrast, I argued that habituation has a cognitive aspect insofar as the character that it brings about has cognitive functions. Character, as we have seen, brings focus to our perception of the salient features of the situation (which then shapes the way we deliberate), and it informs our evaluative judgement. But all the same those who have formed their respective character do not thereby gain a sufficiently firm grasp of the nature of the first principle or *eudaimonia*. They may not have any determinate reflective idea about, say, the relative importance of external goods, friendships, leisure, and luck. But these are the topics that one needs to discuss and clarify in talking reflectively and philosophically about *eudaimonia*, if only to know whether they are the constituents of *eudaimonia* or not. All that one is in a position to know, according to my account, are those issues related to particular virtues (friendliness, courage, temperance, etc.)<sup>15</sup>, how they influence first-order concrete actions, maybe

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<sup>15</sup> On this I am in agreement with Vasiliou (1996, 784).

how to observe and assess others' characters, what counts as noble, and so on.

But then what about passage 1095b3-8, which is cited initially as an evidence for the epistemic reading? Recall, according to this passage, the man who had proper upbringing has “the that” sufficiently plain to him, and therefore “he will not need ‘the because’”. According to the epistemic reading, since the passage said “the that” is the first principle, this means the first principle or *eudaimonia* is sufficiently plain to those who had a proper upbringing.

But I think what Aristotle meant to say here is just that having a proper upbringing gives one the “entry ticket” for attending ethical lectures. Whether one has a correct understanding of the first principle or not is something that has to be assessed independently and *after* one earned this entry ticket. Consistent with the idea that habituation equips the agent with some understanding about issues related to the particular virtues, Aristotle explained, a few paragraphs before 1095b3-8, that “a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these (1094b27-32)”. Here, what is required in order to attend the lectures of political science is a certain grasp of the *materials* of the subject-matter. For otherwise one cannot even discuss what is taught.

The reference to “good judge” in NE 1140a23-30, then, cannot mean having good judgments as in being practically wise. Presumably, if one is already practically wise (which is itself unlikely to be a product of good



habits only), one does not even need the ethical lectures. Rather, it must refer to something like “being sensible” or “being commonsensical” with respect to ethical issues. Let’s say, then, good habits develop one’s *basic moral sense*. We will say a bit more about this when we discuss music education below.

## **1.2 The nature of habituation**

But *what* is habituation? More specifically, how should it be understood in the context of virtue education? In ancient Greek philosophy this question is further specified as whether virtues arise from nature, habits or teaching (*didaxis*). In the *Meno*<sup>16</sup>, for example, Socrates once argued that virtues cannot be taught, since we cannot identify the teachers, i.e. the “moral experts”. Correlatively, in NE X. 9 Aristotle pointed out that some people are insensitive to nobility and goodness, in which case, therefore, arguments are by themselves particularly inept in rehabilitating their characters. Virtues do not arise from teachings, then, not because of a failure to find someone to fulfil the role of teaching, but because of a failure on the part of those who are supposed to learn.

### **1.2.1 Habituation as critical practice**

In this section, I will argue against what seems to be the single most influential theory when it comes to interpreting Aristotle’s notion of habituation: the theory of “critical practice”.

Aristotle started to discuss the nature of habituation in NE II. 1. In 1103a26-b27, Aristotle began the discussion of how practices can lead to

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<sup>16</sup> See also *Republic* Book II and III (e.g. 401c7–d3, 402a1–4) and *Protagoras*.

the formation of states by introducing examples concerning skills-acquisition. Notably, the examples suggested are various *kinds* of activities, singled out one by one: lyre-playing, acts of justice, house-building, etc. It is said that “states arise out of like activities”: by being habituated to do or feel something - to have a certain response - we are thereby acquainted with the sorts of mentality in question. The analogy with skills-acquisition is supposed to render more intelligible and persuasive this suggestion. For insofar as skills-acquisition is concerned, as the saying goes, “practice makes perfect”.

As is often pointed out, the process of practice need not be blind or mechanical; as Nancy Sherman puts it, habituation concerns “critical practices” or “critical activities”. Let me just focus on two hallmarks of this theory.<sup>17</sup> Firstly, the process is not sheer repetition of the same set of responses, but is a series of “successive trials”<sup>18</sup> trying to approximate an ideal action-type. Secondly, it is only through the continual and indispensable contributions from the intellect that we can improve ourselves through constant practice. For example, the intellect is responsible for specifying the ideal action-type and identifying mistakes. With an acceptably clear view of the determinate goal in question, and with the industrious efforts to correct one error each time, we can thereby adapt

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<sup>17</sup> Sherman (1989, 176-183). Cooper (1975, 8), Irwin (1975, 571). suggested also this view.

<sup>18</sup> Sherman (1989, 179).

ourselves to the model and use such model to measure our own progress<sup>19</sup>.

As Sorabji puts it:

Habituation involves *assessing* the situation and seeing what is called for.....the learner must get into the habit of avoiding anger, or feeling it, in accordance with his intuitive perception of *what the occasion demands* (emphasise mine).

This picture of “critical practice” is surely right and illuminating if we have in mind the cases of improving and refining our character. We might have a general good will towards others, but it would be of no use if we failed to know what the virtue of friendliness amounts to. For example, the intellect is required to tell that we have to be more observant in noticing others’ needs. We might even be guilty of moral complacency if, already failing to fulfil the demands of virtues, we also failed to register our own place along the scale of improvement. We must learn from past mistakes and put real efforts to adjust our mentality accordingly.

However, it is not clear how useful this model of “critical practice” can be in the case of virtues-acquisition, as opposed to virtues-improvement. I should mention three doubts.

First, virtue education does not seem to begin with critical activities. in Pol. 1334b6-1334b28, Aristotle once argued that there should be a certain *order* in education or care: first there is the “care of the body”, then “training of the appetites”, and finally the education of reason and understanding. Training the appetites comes prior to exercising one’s intellect. In general, the model of critical practice presupposes that the agent does have some

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<sup>19</sup> Sorabji (1980, 216):

natural qualities, and the intellect is supposed to refine them. In order to acquire the virtue of friendliness, for example, one must already have the relevant positive attitudes and trust toward others. These natural qualities, these “quasi-virtues”, seem to be part of the concern of virtue education. If so, there are some natural qualities that are the precursors of virtues and yet are not acquired through the works of the intellect. (I will discuss more about this notion of “quasi-virtues” in section 1.3 and I will officially introduce a technical definition of it in the next chapter). The contributions of the intellect come later in the development process. Yet 1103b25-26 and 1104b10 quoted earlier did emphasise the right education in “youth”. The model of critical practice, which emphasises so much the works of the intellect, then, is at best secondary. Indeed, when Sorabji said that the *instruction* “this is what courage requires of us now” can be the starting-point of moral education, Hursthouse rightly asked: “but what has mother been doing with the boy hitherto - just letting him run wild?”.<sup>20</sup>

Second, there is a series of problems related to emotions. Emotions are notoriously recalcitrant to the instructions coming from the intellect. As is pointed out by Olfert (2017), the virtuous and the less-than-virtuous agent may find different objects pleasurable. For instance, Aristotle once remarked that “we are ourselves naturally more inclined towards [physical] pleasures, which is why we are more easily drawn in the direction of self-indulgence than of orderliness” (1108b35-1109a19). And children, he also said, enjoy physical pleasure, because they “live according to

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<sup>20</sup> Hursthouse (1988, 213).

appetite” (1119a33-b6). By contrast, the virtuous agent takes pleasure in the fine and noble things.<sup>21</sup> But it does not seem that we can simply bring ourselves into enjoying the right objects by identifying the goals intellectually and measuring our progress in achieving this goal. Critical practices do not seem to have much efficacy in these areas.

Further, emotions are elusive to the works of the intellect: over-emphases on the self-conscious attempts to improve oneself, which might seem appropriate for skills acquisition, can be counter-productive when it comes to emotions. It is precisely because I am fixated on the need to control my anger that I cannot help keep thinking about the things that trigger my fury in the first place, which just makes it even harder to remain calm. Also, our intellect can get in the way by asking us to think in an overly abstract and disengaged manner.<sup>22</sup> And yet habituation is supposed to help us with the desiderative parts of our soul: “both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought” (NE 1104b12).

Third, there are some pleasures so complex (in their content) that in the early stage of virtue development the agent simply cannot appreciate their attractiveness. For instance, a just person may take pleasure in seeing that a fair policy is finally taking effect. But this kind of appreciation requires some understanding about political structure, the political climate, criteria for fairness, maybe even the history of the development of a particular socio-political movement. While these complex pleasures maybe enjoyable to the mature agent whose intellect is well-developed, they are simply not

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<sup>21</sup> Olfert (2017, 218).

<sup>22</sup> Nussbaum, (1992, 81-2).

available to the child. This illustrates how the critical practice model can be regarded as over-intellectualising (early) virtue education<sup>23</sup>.

Before I proceed, I should briefly explain the relation between the critical practice model and the “epistemic reading” of the importance of habituation as it is discussed in section 1.1 (esp. 1.1.1). I suspect the critical practice model is motivated by some version of the epistemic reading. That is, although the critical practice model is at first formulated as a model for practicing specific kinds of activities, such that the intellect is only specifying an action-type, all the same one might think the ultimate aim that the intellect is approaching can be a correct conception of *eudaimonia*. Critically conducted habituation eventually gives one the firm understanding of the first principle in ethics. Maybe one can say the intellect contributes to the practice of critical activities by “translating” some theoretical discoveries about ethical matters into practice. Perhaps one will adjust one’s attitudes toward friendship and try to look for virtuous friends after one has studied Aristotle’s theory of character-friendship (NE IX.). With respect to the tripartite distinction between nature, habits and teaching, the enhanced critical practice model now sees a very close relation between habits and teaching.

I am not sure what to say about this enhanced critical practice model. On the face of it, the critical practice model might provide some resources for one to answer the objections pertaining to the epistemic reading. One can,

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<sup>23</sup> Olfert (2017, 219).

for example, reserve a place for aporetic philosophy in the process of habituation by arguing that this is what the intellect is supposed to do. Critical practice, then, does not just include identifying past and potential mistakes, but also confronting theoretical perplexities.

But what I want to emphasise at the moment is just that different philosophical positions seem to constitute a *package*. The critical practice model is motivated by some version of the epistemic reading. I will say more about the alternative package below. And we will come to see more clearly how the packages are formed in ch.3.

### **1.2.2 Habituation as immersion**

The doubts related to the critical practice model invite us to consider a different picture. Instead of theorising habituation in terms of critical practice, we might instead think of it as immersing oneself into certain cultural contexts or ways of life. Here is a first step towards such a picture.

#### **Habituation as a holistic process**

Considered as critical practice, habituation is arguably activities-specific. Naturally, one can try to improve many different character traits at a time, but then one will need many different specific kinds of practices and one will need to mobilise the corresponding psychological resources. To deal with one's intemperance, one needs to control one's appetites; but to deal with one's cowardliness, one has to channel one's temper to fight against harm and danger<sup>24</sup>, and so on.

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<sup>24</sup> Broadie & Rowe (2002, 26).

By contrast, when it is one's whole character that is in question, habituation is more likely a holistic process. By immersing themselves into rich and fine-grained cultural contexts, the students are more exposed to and therefore are more familiar with different practical scenarios. Habituation enables one to be liberal or civilised (*eleutherios*).

I have in mind the role Aristotle gave to *mousike* (music) education in Politics VIII. *Mousike* education was one of the major components in the traditional Ancient Greek education system, along side with "reading and writing, gymnastic exercises" and drawing (1337b23-24; see also *Republic* 376e). It involves not just melody and rhythm, but a whole set of mimetic arrangements of poetry, dance, drama, and songs. Through performing those conventionalised modes (*harmoniai*), one is thereby encouraged to engage in the specific "emulative and empathetic kind of identification"<sup>25</sup> with the character. As different modes are associated with different moods and character, one then gains the first-hand experiences of the nuances and rich diversities of the emotions and personalities. No surprise that *mousike* is said to have great educational power:

The habit of feeling pleasure or pain at mere representations is not far removed from the same feeling about realities...music has a power of forming the character, and should therefore be introduced into the education of the young..... There seems to be in us a sort of affinity to musical modes and rhythms.... (Pol. 1340a17-b19)<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Sherman (1989, 182). See also Lord (1982).

<sup>26</sup>Burnyeat's claim that in acquiring virtues the affective and the cognitive are intertwined (his example is "shame") is true to this minimal extent (1980, 78).



The students of early education, then, are exposed to contexts as complex as the plots and the conventionalised modes can be. Through performing the students form shared experiences with others, without which the common vocabularies required to establish judgments of characters are much harder to be found. In this way they develop their basic moral sense. The process is akin to how we pick up our native tongue: just as immersing into one's daily linguistic surroundings enables one to develop the native tongue, immersing into one's cultural surroundings enables one to develop the native moral sense. It does not require critical activities. Presumably, there will be chances to practice a series of targeted activities when one tries to emulate the characters, but these are only some of the sub-components, rather than the defining characteristic, of the whole program of *mousike* education. Rather, it is more about having an ethical life - they will witness, if not fully experience, the practical scenarios of love and companionship, hatred and betrayal, victory and humiliation, etc. Participating in *mousike* performance, then, at least helps gathering the prerequisite materials (or at any rate setting the stage of getting such materials) for later reflection/teaching/induction with respect to the nature of the different characters<sup>27</sup>.

Now, the contrast between the activities-specific notion and the holistic notion of habituation has implications on how we should read NE 1103b7-1103b26, where the skills analogy is introduced to explain virtue formation. Olfert once remarked that when claiming "states arise out of like

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<sup>27</sup> Moss (2014, 234); also Sorabji (1980, 215-7)

activities”, Aristotle committed himself to a dilemma. On the one hand, we cannot acquire virtues by doing the virtuous acts, because being able to do these acts suggests that one is already virtuous, but one, *ex hypothesi*, is not. Yet on the other hand, says Olfert, we cannot acquire virtues by doing anything else either, for it is not clear how doing anything short of virtuous acts can lead to the formation of virtuous states. For virtuous states are states that prompt us to do the virtuous acts, should the opportunity arise. We need, then, to identify a notion of activities that is sufficiently different from full-blown virtuous actions (virtuous acts as the virtuous agent would have done it), but is also sufficiently similar to full-blown virtuous actions such that practicing them would give rise to genuine virtuous states. According to Olfert, what we need is some *common factor* between genuine virtuous actions and similar actions as done by the non-virtuous people, such that “non-virtuous people can perform roughly the same kind of action that a virtuous person would do, even if they do not do it in the same way.”<sup>28</sup>

With regard to the first horn of the dilemma, of course, Aristotle had his own solution. He distinguished kinds of virtuous acts and virtuous acts as they are done by (or: as expressions of) the virtuous agent. The three conditions of “acting virtuously”, as I have discussed in section 1.1.3 and 1.1.4, are supposed to demarcate this distinction, and therefore give an answer to the problem. Merely performing the virtuous actions does not automatically suggest that one is virtuous, because these actions may not

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<sup>28</sup> Olfert (2017, 227).

be grounded in those firm and unchanging virtuous dispositions (viz. the virtuous states or fundamental value commitments) that inform judgement and shape deliberation.

With regard to the second horn of the dilemma, however, I think Olfert is asking a pseudo-question. For one thing, many have pointed out that genuine virtues are so robust that even the same virtue can have very different expressions in different situations: “there is no external husk of all just actions that we can isolate and repeatedly practice”<sup>29</sup>. So to look for a “common factor” that bridges those actions done by the virtuous agent and those by the non-virtuous agent seems a non-starter. For another, it seems to me that this question arises only because we are obsessed with the activities-specific notion of habituation. For if habituation is just immersing oneself into a cultural/ethical context, one’s virtues are developed holistically, similar to the way one develops one’s native tongue.

More pertinently, different expressions of a single virtue may share some kind of *family resemblance* to each other, but there may not be any common thread that unites them all. To go a bit further, it is not unreasonable to suggest that different expressions of *different* virtues are related in similar ways. Maybe a virtue is a structured compound such that different virtues can share similar components in similar situations, but all the same they are differentiated from each other because they do not share the same overall shape.<sup>30</sup> This is not at all surprising in Aristotle’s framework. After all, virtues that concern similar areas (such as honour) are differentiated from each

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<sup>29</sup> Sherman (1989, 178); Broadie (1991, 108).

<sup>30</sup> This picture is (very briefly) suggested in Nussbaum (1992, 72).

other because one is focused on its large-scale expressions (greatness of soul) and one is on its ordinary usages (usually dubbed “proper pride”) (NE IV. 3-4). They are similar insofar as they share the same proper concern, but they are different insofar as the difference in scale calls for differences in attitudes, patterns of reasoning, skills, etc.<sup>31</sup> The upshot is that it is not clear *what* we are looking for if, according to Olfert, we should look for actions that are simultaneously accessible by the less-than-virtuous agent and yet are “sufficiently similar” to full-blown virtuous actions. Of course, one can *define* the idea of “sufficient similarity” to include that kind of family resemblances I have suggested above, but then it no longer presents any difficulty. We learn to be virtuous *gradually*: some *components* are learned this time, some other components at another time.

We can see what response we can have, according to the holistic notion of habituation, with respect to the third doubt against the critical practice model. Some pleasures are so complex that they require certain intellectual power to entertain them. Initially, the point is that in putting the intellect in the centre of the picture, the critical practice model over-intellectualised (early) virtue education. But these complex pleasures can well be the product of a series of holistic processes. It is certainly possible that after immersing oneself into a whole lot of different contexts, one begins to be able to appreciate the relevant kind of complex pleasures.

Finally, *mousike* education is uniquely placed in moulding the desiderative parts of the soul (appetites, temper, etc.): “For young persons will not, if

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<sup>31</sup> Irwin (1988).

they can help, endure anything which is not sweetened by pleasure, and music has a natural sweetness (Pol. 1340b15-17)<sup>32</sup>. It gives intellectual enjoyment and is therefore valuable in itself (1338a9-13). It is, then, a noble leisure activity whose educational value depends solely on its intrinsic feature rather than its being necessary for something else or useful (1338a14-21). As a result, it facilitates the proper purpose of education: to be liberal or civilised (*eleutherios*).<sup>33</sup> We can, then, sidestep the above-mentioned second doubt, namely, emotions are recalcitrant to the instructions of the intellect.

### **Imitation**

So we have differentiated the activities-specific notion and the holistic notion of habituation. The second step is to recognise a different way to bring about the formation of states, one that differs from the intellectualised attempts characteristic of critical practices.

Exactly how does habituation - *mousike* education and the like - shape one's character as a whole? Recall Aristotle's remark: "[Human] learns at first by imitation" (Poet. 1448b5-8). Attempting to acquire a state through constant critical practice can be represented by the schema "by doing *this* particular action I approximate toward the ideal". (With past mistakes identified the "particular actions" needed to be practiced are arguably

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<sup>32</sup> But not all kinds of *mousike*, apparently, since "it is quite possible that certain methods of teaching and learning music do really have a degrading effect". Rather, one has to choose the right melodies, rhythms, and even instruments (Pol. 1340b33-1341a9).

<sup>33</sup> That is, provided he is not learning it with a view to being "professional": "by professional we mean that which is adopted in contests" (1341b9-19). Such learning "will be thought menial and servile" (1337b21).

different every time). By contrast, in imitating others one will be mainly responding to the first-order events and people one meets in different scenarios, without the thoughts that articulate the means-end relation, e.g. “it is by doing this (the means) that I understand/learn a little bit more about virtue X” .

Learning through imitation is rather like a form of implicit behavioural influences<sup>34</sup>. Behaviours of parents, for example, are imitated and have implicit influences on the children, regardless of whether they are intended by the adults as explicit instructions<sup>35</sup>. And similar influences occur, expectedly, within friendship (NE IX.12) and the larger political community (NE 1179b31-5; Pol. 7.17). Even in things as mundane or insignificant as daily conversations, there are layers and frameworks of evaluative expectations. Our ethical lives are full of scenarios of rich cultural settings. We are constantly exposed to the “contextual guidance” in the “swim of human practices”<sup>36</sup>.

*Mousike* education is like the fictional counterpart of these cultural settings. In immersing himself into certain scenarios and narratives, the child will mobilise his power of imagination and will also need basic discriminatory cognitions to follow the order of events (cf. Poet. 1448b4-17; Ph.184b11-12). It is through these mental states and psychological

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<sup>34</sup> Imitation can, of course, be one way how critical practice is *conducted*. Presumably this is the reason why Sherman included *mousike* education as an example of critical practice. But at any rate if my reasoning is correct we still need to distinguish, at least insofar as the early stages are concerned, between critical practice and the more implicit and pervasive kind of habituation.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence (2011, 251).

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence (2011, 251-252).

resources, not the works of the intellect, that habituation can contribute to the formation of one's character as a whole.

This allows us to address the first doubts pertaining to the critical practice model, namely, that the education of the "quasi-virtues" comes prior to the works of the intellect. Well, education of these states does not come prior to imitations. In fact, behavioural influences from parents and friends are always more pervasive and long-lasting than we can recognise; by the time we develop the power of reason, we have already formed part of our character through such imitative process<sup>37</sup>.

Now, it is quite clear that the "habituation is immersion" thesis correlates somehow with what I have said about the role of character in section 1.1.3 and 1.1.4. *Mousike* education (done properly) gives one the eye to appreciate truly fine and noble things. Further, *mousike* education and its real-life counterpart gives one the basic moral sense, and it is this sense that guarantees one's seat at the ethical lectures. It is through immersing into certain context that one's character becomes firm and unchanging, which then informs one's judgment of ends and practical reasoning. Just as the epistemic reading and the critical practice model together constitute a package, now we have the opposing package of views.

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<sup>37</sup> I am very sympathetic to Jessica Moss's position defended in Moss (2014). There she argued that the ends we have are fixed by character virtues (which are, in turn, fixed by our upbringing or habituation) instead of deliberation. Therefore she is arguing against the Anti-Humean interpretation of Aristotle's view on practical reasoning.

However, it is important to see that the current discussion is orthogonal to that issue. If habituation itself is shaped by the works of the intellect, then there is no sharp distinction to be made, at the early stages of moral education, between intellectual and non-intellectual elements. It will be intellectual all the way down. But since the question whether habituation is intellectual in this way needs further arguments, it cannot be settled by arguing for or against the Humean position about practical reasoning. I will discuss Aristotle's view on practical reasoning in Chapter 4.

### 1.2.3 The dialectic

Earlier I claimed that the model of critical practice is surely right insofar as improving one's character, as opposed to the initial acquisition of character, is concerned. The reasoning that follows then argues that habituation-immersion should be a better account of character acquisition. So am I saying we need two distinct accounts of habituation, one for the improvement of character, one for its acquisition?

The appropriate conclusion to draw, I think, is this. Extensionally speaking the critical practice model certainly does spot one of the crucial examples of character development. But it does not follow from this that it is the best account overall. After all, even if we restrict ourselves to cases of character improvement, critical practice is only one highly-intellectualised way to do it. Equally important - and *might* be more pervasive - are peer influences, emotional equanimity<sup>38</sup>, and others less intellectualised but no less intelligent efforts. If the relevant thought can be captured by the schema that articulates means-end relation, the "end" in question would more likely be, say, peer recognition, peace of mind, solving a particular practical problem and so on, not the more articulated and second-order thought "to be a person with virtue X is to be such that...". Additionally, most people might not even *begin* to think of improving their character (or reflect on their character) if not because of a serious twist in their lives, maybe a tragic

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<sup>38</sup> Reeve (1992, 71) observed that the need to engage in full-blooded practical deliberation is often triggered by, or most urgently felt when we are in, an emotionally troubling state. It is because we are, for instance, worried, or puzzled, or intimidated that we begin to deliberate about what to do.



event, or a sudden shift in their local communities<sup>39</sup>. Crucially, all these less intellectualised attempts to improve ourselves presuppose our basic ethical sense. It is the habituation that equips us with this sense, then, that is more fundamental.

The critical practice model is usually put on the table as an argument against the idea that habituation is purely mechanical. Habituation cannot simply be a matter of blindly and efficiently internalising external instructions<sup>40</sup>. This is surely correct; and this motivation is also shared by the account of habituation I have been arguing for. But if my argument is correct the critical practice model is not the only alternative. Habituation is not a mindless process, yes, but it is a big jump from there to the conclusion that it must involve self-conscious intellectual attempts to regulate one's behaviour. Habituation understood as "immersion" gives us a middle-ground position between the two extremes.

The argument presented above in favor of the "habituation is immersion" thesis depends on the premise, noted as the first doubt against the critical practice model, that the conditions of the non-intellectual natural qualities or "quasi-virtues" are the starting-point of one's virtue education. The "habituation is thesis" is at its strongest in the case of these natural qualities. (I gave the example of a vague sense of trust towards others as the quasi-virtues of friendliness. Supposedly, these quasi-virtues are the

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<sup>39</sup> Moss (2014, 239)

<sup>40</sup> Hursthouse (1988, 210) called this a "horse-breaking account", and attributed this view to Engberg-Pedersen (1983)

precursors of genuine virtues, and, as I argued, they are the focal point of habituation-immersion. The exercise of the intellect comes in later.) The second doubt can be partly regarded as the consequence of this line of thinking. For emotions are the most recalcitrant if they are not properly trained or addressed. *In practice*, if one has adequately taken care of those natural qualities, the emotions may not present too much a difficulty for the development of character. Conversely, if one can argue that virtue education cannot begin with these non-intellectual “quasi-virtues”, then it *might* be argued that though recalcitrant as these emotions maybe, it is not a failure on the part of the intellect to have left these emotions unaddressed. So, the question is: are these “quasi-virtues” the proper starting-point of virtue education?

Here is one worry. In the context of moral education, it is in those cases of *innate* tendency that the influences of “nature” are the most obvious and undeniable. In NE 1179b19-31 we read that some people “do not by nature obey the sense of shame, but only fear”; but some are “gently born”. But quasi-virtues are natural tendencies. If they really are the starting-point of virtue education, does this mean not everyone has an equal start in terms of character development, that some people have a better (or worse) start as a matter of innate predispositions?

To answer this question I will have to clarify the nature of “quasi-virtues”. I will do this in the next chapter (section 2.2.4). But before that, let me briefly summarise what we know so far.

## **Conclusion**

I began this chapter by first discussing the importance of habituation, where I argue against the idea that proper habituation gives us a firm grasp of the correct conception of the first principle in ethics (eudaimonia). I discussed the way character influences our evaluation of specific ends and practical reasoning. Then I proceed to explore the nature of habituation. I argue for the claim that habituation in Aristotle should be understood as a process of immersion, rather than a process of critical practices. But I face a problem about treating natural qualities as the starting-point of virtue education, and we will have to wait shall the solution presents itself.

## Chapter 2 Aristotle's conception of children

### Introduction

This chapter explores Aristotle's conception of children. It is, to a considerable extent, an extension of the previous chapter. Both focus on the early stages of virtue education. One might say the previous chapter clarifies the (causal) starting-point of virtue education and this one clarifies the subject who is undergoing this process.

I will first fix the age and/or the stage of development of "children" (sec.1), in the hope that this will let us know who our protagonist is. Then, after a few remarks (sec.2-3), I will explain and defend my first working hypothesis: part of understanding how virtues or vices are expressive of human nature involves understanding how there are manifestations of these character states in the stage of childhood (sec.4). This will lead me to the idea that children possess quasi-virtues/vices (sec.5-6), which gives me the basis to clarify the relation between nature and habits (sec.7) and to defend the view that virtues are not "remedial" (sec.8). From section 9 on I will shift to discuss Aristotle's defence of the ethical value of the nuclear family, as it is presented in Pol. II.1-4. Through tracing the dialectic between Aristotle and Plato, I try to argue that it comes down to a dispute between two kinds of virtue, which I dubbed "solidarity" and "loyalty" respectively (sec.11-13). I end by explaining their relations to my working hypothesis.

## **2.1 Theorising the “children”**

### **2.1.1 Who are the “children”?**

It will be helpful to try to fix, at the very beginning, the age range of “children” and/or the stage of development they are supposed to be in. For one thing, Aristotle himself had explicitly said something on this topic. For another, it will help to characterise our protagonist: in what follows, when we make different claims about “children”, the readers can judge for themselves if they find such claims to be plausible for agents of such age or stage of development.

Aristotle implicitly assumed that we can divide different periods of life by age and the corresponding development of our faculties. The turning points do not have to be exact, of course. The general idea, I think, is that there are biological, psychological, maybe even socio-cultural constraints on how we should characterise the process of growing up.

First of all is the period of infants. It is clear that this period has nothing to do with virtues or vices. For the crucial task at this stage concerns physical growth (1336a4-23), which “by its nature [has] no share in human excellence” (NE 1102b12). Then, there is the period between infants and the age of five or seven. This corresponds roughly to our notion of kindergartener. This is the period where “no demand should be made upon the child for study or labour, lest its growth be impeded” (Pol. 1336a24-5). They are supposed to live at home, listen to tales or stories, and have as little contact with indecent things (speeches, actions, pictures) as possible

(1336a24-1336b23). The examples suggest that this is when one's perceptual capacities are developed.

Then it comes to the period "from seven to the age of puberty", and finally from puberty to the age of twenty-one (Pol. 1336b35-6). Puberty roughly corresponds to the age of middle or high school students in the modern education system, while the age of twenty-one is usually the age to attend college. When Aristotle proceeded to discuss the education program where students are supposed to learn "reading and writing, gymnastic exercises, and music" in Pol. VIII, he did not explicitly relate this to the division of age mentioned at the end of Pol. VII. It is safe to assume that the program starts from the age of seven, because before that kindergarteners are not supposed to study or labour, and also because Aristotle stated that the division of the two periods (from seven to puberty and from puberty to twenty-one) is a division "with reference to which education has to be divided" (1337a4).

Consequently, the period from seven to puberty seems to be the stage where the child is gradually developing his cognitive abilities. Learning reading and writing pretty much guaranteed that. Aristotle also mentioned education of the knowledge useful for money-making, managing the household, participating in politics, and judging beauty (Pol. VIII. 3)<sup>41</sup>. Given the scope of these subjects, we may well assume that they may belong

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<sup>41</sup> Aristotle also remarked that, although gymnastic exercises are necessary, for they prepare the child to be "capable of all the actions of a freeman" (including procreation; Pol. 1335b3-1335b12), in general, parents "who devote their children to gymnastics while they neglect their necessary education, in reality make them mechanics" (1338b34-5).

entirely to the second period of education (puberty to twenty-one), or some time ranging from the late stages of puberty to the age of twenty-one.

I suggest the most interesting notion of “children” refers to the middle two periods, that is, from kindergartener to puberty. For before kindergarten only physical health is concerned, and after puberty it is the time to develop one’s intellect - which makes one a young adult already, rather than a child. In terms of the development of faculties, it concerns with one’s perceptual and basic cognitive power. These two are connected. For both of them involve *discriminatory* cognition: telling similarities and differences between things, thereby sharpening one’s cognition of the world. For instance, Aristotle once mentioned how a child “begins by calling all men father, and all women mother, but later on distinguishes each of them (Phy. 184b13-14)”. As we shall see, this fits fairly well with other analyses of children.

### **2.1.2 No one is born virtuous or vicious**

In Aristotle’s ethics, no one is born vicious, or for that matter, virtuous, that is, no one is born with vicious or virtuous states (*hexeis*). This follows from the nature of character as “dispositions”, virtues or vices alike, and the empirical fact that children are simply not ready to have character so construed. For Aristotle defined character as *hexeis*, which are “firm and unchanging dispositions” (NE 1105a34). These are constant and stable components of our personality. But the character of children, whatever that is, cannot be firm in a similar way. For they are subjected to all sorts of external influences; they do not yet have the unchanging *hexeis* to resist

against bad influences. “[W]e always like best whatever comes first. And therefore youth should be kept strangers to all that is bad, and especially to things which suggest vice or hate” (Pol. 1336b31-33).

Children are born with *faculties*, the things “in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these [passions], e.g. of becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity” (1105b23-4), but faculties are not states. For a) states are our *dispositions to respond* vis-a-vis the faculties we are naturally endowed with: “by states [I mean] the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions” (1105b25); and, b) there are questions of whether we are praiseworthy or blameworthy given our responses, but no such ethical assessments are in place for our natural faculties (1105b31-3). Patterns of behaviours children exhibited should be understood as products of these natural faculties rather than products of the unchanging states.

Further, as the practical intellect is also responsible for discerning the mean in the deficient-mean-excess triad, we may also ask how the child, lacking mature intellectual power, is inadequate in this respect. Presumably, this is one reason why Aristotle claimed that “the term ‘self-indulgence’ is one we also apply to the ways children go wrong, for these have a certain resemblance to self-indulgence.....since children too live according to appetite, and the desire for the pleasant is strongest among them. (1119a33–1119b6)”. Children are prone to be excessive when it comes to pleasure. Now, according to the Doctrine of the Mean, we should not *polarise* evaluative assessments. There isn’t a simple good/evil, civilised/



primitive, us/them categorisation. Rather, either side can be found problematic if went too far, and either side can be unworthy of any honorific title if it failed to live up to the standard.<sup>42</sup> Aristotle articulated the delicacy of the triadic spectrum by remarking how the vicious may accuse the virtuous person of deficiency (if his vice consists in being excessive) or excess (if his vice consists in being deficient). For instance, the coward may regard the truly courageous person as being rash, while the rash person may call the courageous person a coward (1108b17-27)<sup>43</sup>. But arguably this delicacy is what the immature mind failed to comprehend: individuals are regarded either as friend or foe, responses are assessed either as absolutely right or absolutely wrong.

### 2.1.3 The human form of life

But Aristotle did recognise “bad nature” such as “brutish states”. Some examples he gave are rather scary: tribes that take “delight in raw meat or in human flesh, or in lending their children to one another to feast upon” (NE 1148b19-24). On the other hand, Aristotle also recognised that “as a result of some divine causes” there are some “truly fortunate” individuals (1179b32-3), they “become gods through an excess of virtue” (1145a23–24). Did Aristotle mean to say some are born vicious, and some virtuous?

Maybe, but these are at any rate very rare cases. Further, in discussing brutish and divine states, Aristotle was not talking about whether anyone is

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<sup>42</sup> The point is not that we should be aiming at a grey area between good and evil, etc., but that what is truly good cannot be *represented as* whatever that is opposing evil, for that would confuse the truly good with the moral fanatic. By the same token, what is truly evil cannot be *represented as* whatever that is opposed by good, for that would confuse the truly evil with any scope of moral latitude.

<sup>43</sup> Nielsen (2017, 18, n.25). Broadie (unpublished manuscript).

born virtuous or vicious. The point is that virtues and vices are *human* excellences and defects, in the sense that they are expressive of human nature. “For as a brute has no vice or excellence, so neither has a god; his state is higher than excellence, and that of a brute is a different kind of state from vice” (NE 1145a24-6). We will face difficult and unnecessary interpretive and philosophical questions if we treat the divine and the brutish states as innate capacity to be virtuous and vicious. For one thing, how is it consistent with Aristotle’s claim that the government should be responsible for the education of children (Pol. VII. 16-17 and VIII)? For another, it also sounds like cheating for any philosophical analyses of children. Why bother with the notion of children and childhood if they are, *ex hypothesi*, perfectly virtuous or vicious? Not even a theory of virtues for normal adults (such as NE) can include them.

## **2.2 The philosophical importance of “children”**

### **2.2.1 My working hypothesis**

However, I do think that the explanation as to how the virtues/vices can be expressive of human nature partly involves a philosophical theory of children. Here is my working hypothesis. I think part of understanding how virtues (or vices) are *human* excellence (deficiency), that is, how they are excellence that expresses the nature of such beings who are born underdeveloped, involves understanding how there are manifestations of these character states in the stage of childhood. That is, we should look for the *seeds* of mature character states in childhood, on the assumption that the excellence and deficiency of human come through a process of

development (from under-developed to fully-developed). Aristotle did sometimes speak in this way: “just as in man we find knowledge, wisdom, and sagacity, so in certain animals there exists some other natural capacity akin to these.....in children may be observed the traces and seeds of what will one day be settled habits, though psychologically a child hardly differs for the time being from an animal” (HA, 588a25b3; cf. NE 1180a4).

Further, one must also note that when Aristotle was making a claim about human nature, it is not uncommon for him to appeal to some observation to support his claims. These observations often either explicitly mention children, or are common and mundane enough to include children. For example, in the *Metaphysics*, after famously claiming that “[a]ll men by nature desire to know”, Aristotle proceeded to talk about how we take delight in our senses, most notably the sense of sight (980a22-980a27). No reference to children here, but one may safely assume that children use these senses in the same way adults did; after all, senses, unlike crafts and excellences, come to us before any prior training and exercises (NE1103a26-1103b2). Further, the delight we take in the sense of sight, namely, how it “makes us know and brings to light many differences between things” (980a27), is shared by everyone: “to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it” (*Poet.* 1448b5-1448b17). Another example from the *Poetics*: “It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower

animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world” (1448b5-8). So, it is not at all surprising if Aristotle should do the same in the case of ethics. We can reasonably expect some manifestations of virtues or vices in children.

My approach, however, is not exactly the same as Aristotle’s. On the one hand, I share his general commitment that ethics should be more concerned with making people virtuous rather than merely discussing/teaching “ethical knowledge” (NE 1103b27-31). Indeed, this is the main duty of the *politikos* (NE I.8). So, especially in section 2.3, I will talk a lot about the development of virtues in children. Yet on the other hand, my focus is different from Aristotle’s. It is quite clear that Aristotle was mainly addressing adults, especially those who are responsible for (or at least are in a position to) making communal educational arrangements or delivering educational policies, whereas I am more focusing on the upbringing of children itself. However, I will still try my best to stay close to Aristotle’s text, and I will state explicitly should I offer my own elaboration.

### **2.2.2 “Natural virtues” in NE VI.13**

Let’s focus on the case of virtues first; I will explain the case of vices as I proceed. There is an obvious objection. In NE VI.13, Aristotle famously distinguished natural and *proper* virtues (*kurios arete*). Natural virtues are virtues only in a derivative sense: only because of their resemblances to mature virtues. “[F]rom the very moment of birth we are just or fitted for self-control or brave or have the other moral qualities...both children and brutes have the natural dispositions to these qualities” (1144b3-6), but they

are *defective*: “without thought these are evidently hurtful” (1144b9). Think of the natural moral quality that is sometimes regarded as the analogue of genuine justice: righteous indignation (EE 1234a23-32). Righteous indignation *by itself* can also lead to some corresponding vices, e.g. someone fanatically demands absolute conformity to just laws. Natural virtues - or better, natural *qualities* - then, are defective in the sense that *by themselves* they can lead to vices. And even if what they have led to are not as serious as vices, natural virtues by themselves lead to bad or foolish decisions. When *taken as such*, then, these qualities cannot be the manifestation of virtues, for genuine virtues cannot be similarly vice-conducive or allow bad decisions. If one takes the “seeds” metaphor seriously, one should also note that actual seeds, unlike natural virtues, cannot grow into something contrary to its own potentials.<sup>44</sup> If we try to look

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<sup>44</sup> Sarah Broadie suggested to me that this may imply the view that “vice is only the failure of full virtues”. The idea seems to be that if we take the “seeds” of virtues as inherently aiming at full virtues (thus cannot grow contrary to its own potentials), then “vice” is only the failure to reach the mature state of this seed. But this is not necessarily the case, for there can be seeds of vice distinct from the seeds of virtues, as I shall discuss briefly below. The point is only that if we are looking for the “seeds”, we should not look at the “natural virtues” as NE VI.13 described it, for “seeds” cannot by themselves lead to something of a different nature (whereas it seems that “natural virtues” can lead to vice).

for the traces and seeds of proper virtues in the NE, then we end up looking at these defective natural qualities.<sup>45</sup>

However, the immediate context of NE VI.13 suggests that Aristotle was not really trying to give a fair portrait of the character of children there. For the notion of “natural virtue” is the product of a simple thought experiment. For earlier in NE VI.12 we have seen, through distinguishing cleverness and practical wisdom, that practical wisdom is dependent on moral virtues. But if it is possible to have the practical intellectual kind of excellence without moral excellence, i.e. cleverness, then conversely it is also possible (at least conceptually) to have *some sort of* moral excellence without intellectual excellence, hence the notion of “natural virtues”. That is, the notion of natural virtues is introduced as the parallel case for cleverness. Furthermore, note that the thought experiment is testing our *evaluative* intuition about the notions in question. That is, excellence in deliberation without moral virtues is not just implausible, but *undesirable*, and renders the intellectual excellence *unworthy* of the *honorific* title of “practical wisdom”. We then proceed to look for the *evaluative* analogue of

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<sup>45</sup> One can use the notion of “natural virtues” in NE VI.13 differently. Instead of treating it as an objection to my working hypothesis, one can think of it as giving a better formulation of the hypothesis itself. That is, one can say, yes, there are manifestations of virtues in children, and they are the defective natural virtues. However, this misses the whole point about my working hypothesis. For the overall aim is to understand how full-blown virtues and vices can grow in human despite the fact that human beings are born under-developed (with respect to both virtues and vices), and the hypothesis says there must be something that aims at full virtues (or full vices) in the first place. It is in this sense, i.e. in the sense that there are something inherent in human nature that can be brought to full-fledged excellence and deficiency, that virtues and vices are human excellence and human deficiency. But if the manifestations of virtues in children are defective (as in the case of natural virtues) and, by definition, distinguished from *proper* virtues, then it is hard to see how they can be illustrative of the relation between virtues and human nature. Therefore, I think it should be treated as an objection.

cleverness: virtues without intellectual excellence are stubborn and *harmful*. There is really no surprise that natural virtues are portrayed as defective. In NE VI.13 the character of children (and animals) is mentioned as a point of contrast, with the aim to illustrate the nature of practical wisdom, not to really investigate whether children can have any virtues.

What about vices? Aristotle did not mention explicitly “natural vices” but the notion of natural virtues naturally invites this thought. Further, the notion of mere cleverness implies that excellence in instrumental reasoning and having the ends (right or wrong) are two different things. So, apparently, one can have the wrong ends and still remain intellectually immature. This would be the case if children do have natural vices. For example, if righteous indignation is the natural analogue of justice, then maybe insensitivity to others’ needs and/or indifference to others’ suffering is the natural analogue of injustice. Unlike natural virtues, natural vices are not even *prima facie* desirable, but like natural virtues, they can lead to genuine vices. But unlike genuine vices, they bring lesser harm. Nothing I have said precludes the possibility that children do have natural vices.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> But it is entirely unclear what purpose it would serve in NE VI.12-13. If we revisit the thought experiment in a purely abstract way, we can see how the combination of “natural vices & inefficiency in deliberation” actually occupies one extreme along the spectrum, with “proper virtues & excellence in deliberation” occupying another. While each of the two remaining possibilities in the middle has its respective role to play (“genuine vices & excellence in deliberation” and “natural virtues & inefficiency in deliberation”), it seems that the combination “natural vices & inefficiency in deliberation” appeared on the list just to complete the taxonomy. Maybe the *distinction* between natural virtues and natural vices can serve to remind us of this: even though Aristotle had argued that natural virtues of children are (potentially) harmful, he did not mean to say they are utterly undesirable. For after all, given that Aristotle had already envisioned the possibility of a clever villain, it is not unintelligible to push the taxonomy further and discuss if they can be children who are born with natural vices. But he did not mention anything like this. And anyway this is just speculating.

### 2.2.3 “Quasi-virtues”: how children do have virtues in some sense

So we must not only rely on NE VI.13 in trying to extract Aristotle’s conception of children. We must start again. Let’s make a terminological point first: let us distinguish quasi-virtues and natural virtues (as characterised NE VI. 13). I need the quasi-virtues to play these roles: i) they are equally attributable to human adults and children, and ii) they are indicative of the fact that there is something in human nature that is unequivocally/non-defectively aiming at virtues. I now argue: children do possess these “quasi-virtues”.

We may begin by exploring an area closely related to ethics. In Pol.I.2, Aristotle claimed that “the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal” (1253a4). What does this mean? By the context it is clear that Aristotle was referring to some tendencies toward forming and living in a political community (1253a29–30). However, as Richard Kraut pointed out, comparing to Aristotle’s other remarks on our nature, namely, our nature to learn (Meta.980a1) and our nature to imitate others (Poet. 1448b4-9), it is not immediately self-evident that our nature towards a political community “have the same ring of truth”. In particular, it is not self-evident that children do exhibit the impulses toward a political community as strong as they exhibit the impulses toward knowledge and imitation.<sup>47</sup> How, then, should we make sense of the claim that man is by nature a political animal? Note that this is parallel to the case of virtues. We are interested in how children can have virtues if, according to NE VI.13, the

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<sup>47</sup> Kraut (2007, 200).



natural qualities that they have are defective. Yet all the same we are looking for the manifestation of virtues in children, manifestation that can vindicate the claim that there is something inherent in humans that is unequivocally aiming at virtues. Similarly, we ask now how children can exhibit the same kind of tendencies toward political community, tendencies that can vindicate the claim that man is by nature political.

Kraut's aim is to make sense of Aristotle's claim about human nature, and his solution is that we should distinguish two ways a given state or tendency can be regarded as "natural". The first and dominant way is to see whether it is present at the beginning of our lives. But a state can also be "natural" "if it is not the product of reasoning or any other conscious effort to summon it into existence"<sup>48</sup>: it is developed without special intervention. So, although children may not exhibit any tendencies toward a political community, and citizens can be politically indifferent, there is still a sense in which man is by nature a political animal, because once the suitable enabling conditions are in place - say, when the children become more mature and intelligent - the relevant tendencies will show themselves without further reasoning or any other conscious efforts.

For Kraut's purpose it suffices to argue that man has a tendency towards political community only in the second sense. Still, it makes sense to ask if there is anything *about* the agents that makes them sensitive to those enabling conditions. And indeed, Kraut has argued to this effect. For he goes on to suggest that normal agents do show minimal "trust, good will,

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<sup>48</sup> Kraut (2007, 204).

and friendliness”<sup>49</sup> to each other. At first this occurs within the family circle, then to strangers and finally even to members of the same species (NE 1155a16–24). There are “trust, good will, and friendliness” in children, at least to their family members, maybe also to the local community. If we allow these qualities to be counted as some primitive manifestation of political tendencies, then in effect we have argued that there are political tendencies in man in both senses of the word “natural”. This is of particular importance to us, since we now have some natural tendencies that are attributable to children and adults alike, and they vindicate a claim about human nature. To complete the story, Kraut argued that under proper enabling conditions, one’s trust, goodwill and friendliness towards his fellowmen will lead to the formation of a political community<sup>50</sup>.

Kraut did not emphasise this point, but I think it is safe to assume that these political tendencies are not defective. If so, these political tendencies might be called the “seeds” of political community. I propose, then, that the “seeds” of genuine virtues should be understood similarly. Quasi-virtues are: a) non-defective, b) equally attributable to adults and children, and c)

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<sup>49</sup> Kraut (2007, 204-6).

<sup>50</sup> Families are also the product of a non-intellectual impulse to maintain a household (Pol. 1252a28–30).

indicative of how there is something inherent in human nature that is unequivocally aiming at virtues<sup>51</sup>.

What are the examples of these quasi-virtues? As “it is right to call things after the ends they realize” (DA. 416b23), let’s think of what ends they can serve. For instance, a caring and considerate tendency might be the seed of friendliness, a tendency to impose order and structure in one’s daily life might be the seed of temperance, a tendency to look for fair treatment and acknowledge others’ point of view might be the seed of justice. Quasi-virtues, though imperfect, cannot be defective (vice-conducive) as they are identified in relation to the proper ends. This confirms condition (a).

Let us proceed to condition (b). Quasi-virtues are attributable to children because they are only the *primitive manifestation* of proper virtues, not the proper virtues themselves. Just like the seeds of political community - trust, good will and friendliness - are not what build a good community (i.e. justice), quasi-virtues should not be confused with proper virtues. We can, then, avoid the conclusion of NE VI.13 (that children do not have virtues),

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<sup>51</sup> Despite drawing on the parallel between ethics and politics, there remains one important difference: Aristotle believed that humans will gather and form some sort of political community unless prevented. But the same is not true for virtues: NE II.1 argued that, unlike our senses which “we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity”, virtues can be developed only through practice (1103a26-1103b2). Virtues, then, do not just come forth whenever there is no impediment. But this difference should not undermine my claim. For a) arguably, NE II.1 is referring to full virtues, and that we need to practice to develop full virtues. But this is compatible with claiming that there are “seeds” in us that allow us to practice in the relevant ways or explain why we are inclined to certain practices in the first place. b) “Practice” is not required in the case of forming political community in the sense that living such a communal life is more the direct expression of human nature as political animal than marking some form of excellence, whereas *full* virtue presumably requires practices. So we can preserve the difference between the political nature and the “ethical nature” of humans with respect to the question of whether conscious practices are needed, while keeping the similarity between them with respect to whether humans are unequivocally prone toward the relevant target.

while at the same time preserving its main insight (that there is a difference between the virtues of adult and the quasi-virtues of children). On the other hand, quasi-virtues are such that they are equally attributable to adults when the adults are already in a position to acquire proper virtues. For proper virtues are mature developments of the quasi-virtues; the two are not in opposition to each other<sup>52</sup>. Just as it is the same trust, good will and friendliness that are expressed when and after one started to live in a political community, it is the same quasi-virtues, with increased psychological depth, that are expressed in the case of adults. (That is, I do not mean to suggest that there are two *kinds* of virtues, proper ones and the quasi ones, but only that there can be primitive *manifestation* of proper virtues, and such manifestation is the quasi-virtues).

We may elaborate condition (c) by observing that the quasi-virtues will lead to proper virtues if the circumstances are favourable to their expression. Just as one's trust, goodwill and friendliness will lead to the formation of political communities when the material, social, and institutional conditions are in place, the quasi-virtues will lead to their corresponding proper virtues once the enabling conditions are satisfied. If we are focusing on natural virtues, failures to achieve excellence are attributed to internal defects (as in NE VI.13). By contrast, in the case of quasi-virtues they are attributed to the external circumstances. This

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<sup>52</sup> The difference between the character of children and adults, I suspect, concerns the psychological depth these character states may have. That is, in the case of adults, the virtues have much more intimate connection with other psychological states (beliefs, attitudes, emotions, inclinations, etc.), and thus much more complicated psychological roles. This is in line with what I have said in the previous chapter: virtues inform our evaluation of ends and patterns of reasoning.

registers the reliance of the development of the virtues on the circumstances. (We will come back to a more elaborate account of this reliance at a later part of this chapter). The ideal society, then, must be such that it allows for the full expressions of the quasi-virtues; conversely, the properly developed quasi-virtues are also what *realise* a good political constitution (NE 1103b3-6). At this point the individual's and the legislator's point of view converge.

#### **2.2.4 Innate predispositions? (Nature and habits)**

Now it's time to return to the question I left unanswered at the end of ch. 1. The worry is that since quasi-virtues seem to be natural tendencies, and since "natural" tendencies include *innate* predispositions, and given the observation that different people are influenced by different innate predispositions (in different degree), does that mean not everyone has an equal start in terms of character development? Is it the case that some people have a better (or worse) start as a matter of innate predispositions?

This is a difficult issue. For on the one hand, it seems unrealistic to deny the relevance of innate predispositions, yet on the other, we tend to have egalitarian conceptions of moral practice: everyone, if he wants, can change his character. This seems to be the message of NE III.5, where Aristotle argued that we are responsible for our character.

But go back to quasi-virtues. Quasi-virtues are "bi-faceted": on the one hand, they are not defective and therefore are the *proper precursors* of genuine virtues, on the other, they are natural and therefore accessible even to children. They are more easily felt/awaken/planted. Consequently, they

are the promising entry points when we are trying to develop some virtues or correct some character flaws.

Consider the child who apparently is not as caring as others. The robust and intelligent nature of genuine virtue prevents any quick and mechanical way to acquire the virtue. As the child is not intellectually ready, critical practice might also not be an option at the moment. Neither can we simply assert that certain responses and attitudes are required, for even if the child does take them seriously and follow them, this sounds rather dogmatic. But one strategy is viable: first, we identify the quasi-virtues corresponding to genuine care. Then, we identify the circumstances or conditions favourable to the expression of such quasi-virtues. Suppose we agree that some sort of emphatic interests in others' fate (e.g. the love of stories) is the quasi-virtue corresponding to genuine care. Then we proceed to identify the circumstances favourable to the expression of such interests, e.g. having a vivid imagination and perception of the subject-matter; learning how to relate the subject-matter to one's own life; maybe even just having enough leisure. Having set the suitable stage, we are more confident to say that the child is on the right track in developing the virtue.

Let's relate this to the problem of innate predispositions. To sharpen the issue, let's consider *quasi-vices*. When the influences of innate predispositions take the form of quasi-vices, educational strategies that aim at activating the corresponding quasi-virtues should be able to counter them. Since they are both quasi-character-traits, by themselves they are of equal strength or weights. Much then, depends on whether the

circumstances are favourable, i.e. the cultural context one is embedded in. When the influences of innate predispositions take the form of genuine vices, as products of both quasi-vices and bad habits, as it is in the case of the badly brought up adult<sup>53</sup> (NE 1114a3-1114a21), one might need to undergo a more radical change. For instance, one might need to identify a list of quasi-virtues and their favourable circumstances and plan one's daily life accordingly. That is, one will need to immerse oneself into a very different context.

We can be realistic enough to acknowledge the influences of these innate predispositions, either as quasi-character-traits *per se* or as genuine-character-traits that are developed from the corresponding quasi-character-traits; but we can also maintain an egalitarian conception of moral practice, by pinpointing the viable entry point for character cultivation.

So, quasi-virtues can be a proper non-intellectual starting-point of virtue education. This in turn suggests that human beings are by nature prone to virtue in the sense that our nature has done us the favour of equipping us to be susceptible to the right circumstances. The cultural context one is immersed in is part and parcel of such circumstances. Nature and habits cooperate with each other, then, since the process of habituation-

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<sup>53</sup> I am assuming that there are no genuine vices at the early stages, just as there are no genuine virtues at the early stages.

immersion is precisely to give shape to the seeds of virtues<sup>54</sup>. This is how I think we should understand the claim “we are adapted by nature to receive them [virtues], and are made perfect by habit” (NE 1103a25).<sup>55</sup> The take-home message is that there are primitive non-intellectual manifestations of human nature - so primitive that they can be exhibited in children.

## **2.3 “Children” in virtue education**

### **2.3.1 Aristotle’s defence of the nuclear family**

Whether one becomes virtuous or vicious depends to a considerable extent on the environment. But how should we understand such “environment” (as Aristotle conceived of it)? And what happens to the child living in the environment so construed? I should first emphasise one indispensable component: the role of the nuclear family. In later sections, I will briefly explain the extension to other communities.

Aristotle had, as we know, defended the ethical and educational importance of the nuclear family when arguing against Plato. In the *Republic*, Plato proposed that children and wives and everyone’s property

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<sup>54</sup> The contrast drawn between virtues and senses in NE 1103a26-1103b2 is still very real. Although the quasi-virtues are in a sense already “in us”, we do not “have” them in the way we already have, e.g. sight. For certain material and institutional conditions have to be realised before the quasi-virtues can have their unimpeded expressions, yet no similar (or at any rate no similarly stringent) prerequisite are needed for us to use the senses. But all the same both the senses and the quasi-virtues can still be qualified as potentialities that are endowed “by nature”. For “we had them before we used them”. We do not need to practice our senses before we can have them, and we do not need critical practices to summon the quasi-virtues into existence. To complete the story, the things that “we get by first exercising them” must be the *expressions* of the quasi-virtues in one’s activities and responses.

<sup>55</sup> Nothing in my argument prevent the same conclusion about vices: there are quasi-vices manifested in children and they are part of human nature. If so, Aristotle must have something else in mind, or was exaggerating when he said in the EE that “wish is of the good naturally, but of the bad contrary to nature, and by nature one wishes the good, but contrary to nature and through perversion the bad as well.” (1227a28-30).



should be shared by everyone living in the city (or at least in the Guardian class). Marriages are arranged by the state, and offspring are raised by supervisors (457c-461e). The initial motivation is to counter factionalism. The hope is that one can thereby foster the highest degree of sympathy, impartiality, even single-mindedness among citizens<sup>56</sup>. All will speak and feel with one voice. Nuclear family is an obvious obstacle to this goal.

Aristotle's main argument<sup>57</sup> turns on defending the right conception about the intimate relation (*philia* or "friendship") that connects parents and children. Here is the crucial passage:

"Whereas in a state having women and children in common, love will be diluted...As a little sweet wine mingled with a great deal of water is imperceptible in the mixture, so, in this sort of community, the idea of relationship which is based upon these names will be lost; there is no reason why the so-called father should care about the son, or the son about the father, or brothers about one another. Of the two qualities which chiefly inspire regard and affection—that a thing is your own and that it is precious—neither can exist in such a state as this [i.e. Plato's one]." (Pol. 1262b17-24)

The main idea is that familial relations are built upon a certain kind of self-referential attachment: that the son or daughter is *my* son or daughter, not everyone else's, that the parents are *my* parents, not everyone else's. These are the relationships naturally denoted by these names, and it is in such self-referential attachment that the participants develop "regard and

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<sup>56</sup> Kraut (2002, 312).

<sup>57</sup> Aristotle also noted practical difficulties such as the impossibility to eliminate evidence about blood relations (because of physical resemblances between family members 1162a14-24, and knowledge possessed by those who are responsible for removing the newborn babies from the parents 1262b24-9).

affection”. But for such relation to take place, two conditions have to be met: that the object of the attachment belongs to one and that it is precious.

By “precious” (*agapeton*) Aristotle here meant something like “special”, “satisfying to have”, even “indispensable” (though it may not be uniquely indispensable, for such kind of attachment is applicable also to sibling love).<sup>58</sup> Note that the two conditions are distinct from each other. The first condition concerns whether the object is exclusively owned by the person in question or collectively owned by many. The second condition concerns whether the person stands in the same relation with only a few objects or many<sup>59</sup>.

In effect, the argument is that Plato’s ideal city violates both of the conditions. That it violates the first is quite clear: since all children (and wives) are commonly owned, each of them does not belong to any single individual. Consequently, Aristotle said in an earlier section, this will lead to the lack of sufficient care to every individual child, for “everybody is more inclined to neglect something which he expects another to fulfil”; children

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<sup>58</sup> Sherman (1989, 146).

<sup>59</sup> Sherman (1989, 147). Aristotle seemed to assume that one’s care and attention to anything “precious” is limited, such that one cannot find too many things each precious in its own way without spreading the love too thin.

will “be neglected by all alike” (1261b32-40), “love will be diluted”<sup>60</sup>. Plato’s proposal also violates the second condition because in his ideal city everyone owns *others’* - more precisely, all - children (and wives and properties). Consequently, there is nothing special about having children - in other words, individual child is not indispensable to individual parent. I suppose this will equally lead to lack of sufficient care, but Aristotle did not spell out this connection. At any rate, it leads to a different problem: given the dispensability of the object, there is nothing special that *the* child is one’s child (since the entire younger generation is), and there is nothing special that *the* parents are one’s parents (since the entire older generation is)<sup>61</sup>. Plato’s proposal in effect eliminates the self-referential element in familial relations.

Notably, Aristotle’s defence of the self-referential attachments involved in familial relation parallels his understanding of how the child develops discriminatory cognition. In a passage already quoted before, the child “begins by calling all men father, and all women mother, but later on

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<sup>60</sup> In fairness to Plato, Kraut pointed out that Plato need not be taken to suggest that the whole community is taking care of the whole generation. Rather, he can just mean there will be trained groups designed specifically to take care of the offspring. This alternative sufficed to answer Aristotle’s objection without granting Aristotle’s own solution, namely, to preserve traditional families. For traditional families are connected by blood relation, and presumably the group trained for child care does not relate to the children by blood. This shows that Aristotle had tacitly assumed that normal human children will receive the love they need and grow best in the care of their biological parents. See Kraut (2002, 317).

<sup>61</sup> This is further illustrated by pointing out an ambiguity in the phrase “all children are mine”. Plato’s Socrates meant to take it to say “each and every child is mine”, intending that every each parents will love every each member of the entire generation in the same way parents love their own children in traditional families. But the “all” in the phrase can also be taken not individually (as in “each and every”), but collectively, in which case it is the collection of all children, not anyone in particular, that is mine (1261b20-30). Of the former reading, Aristotle replied that it is desirable but impossible. The latter, on the other hand, makes each individual child dispensable.

distinguishes each of them (Phy. 184b13-14)”. The ability to call one *particular* woman/man as *my* mother/father is the cognitive basis of the self-referential attachment.<sup>62</sup>

### **2.3.2 Exposure to evaluative experiences and private education**

It is safe to assume that what matters is not just the natural familial roles and relations, but the unique interactions and histories between family members that materialise these roles and relations. It is these interactions and histories that really constitute the intimate and affective *philia*. With respect to the parents, “they [parents] are the causes of their [children’s] being and of their nourishment, and of their education from their birth” (NE 1162a6-7), and they (though Aristotle only mentioned father here) will “feel a sort of kindness towards the son as being his own production, led on by memory and by hope” (MM 1211b37-8). While parents will love their children as “part of themselves” or as “other selves” (1161b17-24) as soon as they are born, children’s love and attachments, on the other hand, will start to grow only when “they have acquired understanding or perception” (1161b26). This suggests that it is through living in the familial environment, established precisely through the intimate interactions

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<sup>62</sup> One wonders what would be the parallel case in Plato’s city. One might suggest that the child does not need to distinguish between men, since all are equally one’s father. Alternatively, the child may need to focus on some men, say, men of certain age, in which case he or she will need to exercise discriminatory cognition to some extent.

characteristic of the special/precious familial relations, that the child is developing the self-referential attachments to his parents and siblings<sup>63</sup>.

Aristotle did not explicitly discuss this, but it is reasonable to expect that the nuclear family will provide the child with the first exposure to various kinds of evaluative experience. Nurtured and raised by tailor-made care and attention (NE 1180b11), he or she will experience those emotions, attitudes and the phenomenology distinctive of (what he or she will later know as) love. Given Aristotle's differentiation of men's and women's virtues (Pol. 1159b51-9), there may even be a division of labour between mother and father concerning different evaluative issues. The mother, given her feminine sensitivities, will bring with her all sorts of virtues involving mercifulness, thoughtfulness, tolerance, helpfulness, etc. Given her daily presence in the household, she will also develop a more intimate understanding of the child<sup>64</sup>. These will be of extreme importance for the growth of the child's heart and mind, for the child will face obstacles and has to learn from mistakes, not to mention the fact that he or she will be too immature to explain him- or herself. The variety of "feminine virtues" will also prove to be valuable in the child's future social and political life.<sup>65</sup> The father, on the other hand, despite his relative absence in the private sphere, will be more

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<sup>63</sup>Thus even when Aristotle used those seemingly biological terms - "production" and "origination" - to describe the relation between parents and children, it is more about the activities and efforts involved in giving birth than it is about the biological bondage (which is also the reason why, Aristotle said, mothers are more attached to the child than the fathers are, 1168a21-7). See Sherman (1989, 149). Biological connection will have some roles to play, but it is not the only factor.

<sup>64</sup> Sherman (1989, 150).

<sup>65</sup> Sherman (1989, 154).

likely to be the source of authority and rules. This fits with Aristotle's thought that, in the household, the man is supposed to give commands (Pol. 1159b59). This is of equal importance to the child's development, for in perceiving the prescriptive force of authority he learns to regulate his own behaviour, and in abiding by the rules he learns that there must be order and restrictions in life.

Aristotle's argument against Plato's abolition of the nuclear family is embedded in his wider discussion about the ethical importance of private education: "Just as lawful things and habits have strength in cities, so in households do paternal words and habits, still more strength, in fact, because of the kinship and the benefactions involved, since children are naturally predisposed to feel affection and be ready to obey" (NE 1180b 4-7). At first sight it is a matter of educating with higher efficiency. For given the love, respect and trust enshrined in familial relations, the child is more willing to learn and follow the rules, and he or she may even absorb faster and better than if the education is conducted and supervised by professional experts. Closer and more intimate interactions with the child result in a more personalised program and method of virtue inculcation (NE 1180b8-12). But, as we have seen, the nuclear family is important also because it provides the child with the first exposure to all kinds of evaluative experience.

Compare the *kind* of value private education may instil with the value instructed by Plato's state-supervised public education. As we know, the purpose of that education is to build a strictly impartial and collective

mindset. By contrast, it is interpersonal love, the “feminine virtues”, respect, and aspiration that private education is capable of inculcating<sup>66</sup>. In other words, as is often pointed out, Aristotle’s defence of traditional families is simultaneously a defence of the intrinsic goodness of these intimate human relations (or intimate aspects of human lives)<sup>67</sup>. This is not at all surprising. For as we can see from his thematic discussion of friendship, Aristotle believed that human beings have a deep desire and need for being part of a long-term and committed relationship. He said, for instance, that “a god is not such as to need a friend...with us welfare involves a something beyond us, but the deity is his own well-being” (EE 1245b15-20). In fact, the number of true friendships any individual can have is highly limited, for each requires a lot of devotion (NE 1171a1-15). On the other hand, in Plato’s *Symposium*, Diotima requires the proper course of love to ascend from particular individuals to the universal and repeatable qualities that are instantiated not just in persons but also in impersonal embodiments such as sciences (210a-212a).

### **2.3.3 Solidarity vs. Loyalty?**

The contrast between the inculcation of the values of partiality and impartiality invites the following elaboration. Different virtues address different evaluative concerns. Was Aristotle’s defence of the value of traditional families also a defence of a specific (set of) virtue(s)? Here is my

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<sup>66</sup> This is not to say, for Aristotle, each nuclear family can decide for their own *what* to teach to their children. In NE X.9 and Pol.VIII.1, Aristotle argued that the program of moral education should be determined by the state. It is just that the execution of such program should be channelled through the nuclear family. At any rate, it is quite different from Plato’s idea of building collective single-mindedness.

<sup>67</sup> Kraut (2002, 316); Sherman (1989, 152).

suggestion. From the individual's point of view, self-referential attachment requires *solidarity* but collective single-mindedness requires *loyalty*.

By "solidarity" I mean the kind of fellow feeling that connects people as members of a common community. Aristotle did say, for instance, "in every community there seems to be some sort of justice and some sort of friendship as well. At any rate, people address their fellow sailors or fellow soldiers as friends" (NE 1160a24-8). Here he used the word "justice" (*dikaion*), but at any rate it should be distinguished from "general justice" discussed in NE V. 1. On the one hand, it is, I assume, like a form of general justice (as opposed to the particular forms of justice, namely, distributive and rectificatory justice) in that it asks for general respect for those who are concerned. But on the other, it differs from general justice as such because it can be parochial, whereas general justice requires respect for all. Further, fellow feeling also asks for relation-specific expression, since what is just differs for different relationships (NE 1159b35-1160a2), and the same unjust act is more unjust if it is done to a friend (1160a2-6).

Aristotle did explicitly mention a similar objection when he argued against Plato in Pol. II.4. The abolition of traditional families runs counter to some of our moral intuitions: assaults and homicides, quarrels and slanders, these acts are most unholy when done against family members, but not equally unholy when there is no such relation (1262a25-8). Partiality expressed in intimate relations matters. Further, Aristotle believed that these unholy acts will happen more often if the traditional families are abolished, for people



will not be “afraid of committing any crimes by reason of consanguinity” (1262b37).

How should we interpret this point? It is not as if individuals unimpressed by the injustice of these acts will refrain from doing them because they realise that if the acts were done against one’s own family member it would be horrible. So Aristotle said abolishing familial roles and relations would make the unholy acts happen *more often*, not that it would cause these new crimes, meaning that there are such acts anyway. But how does the existence of nuclear families help? Given what I have said about how the family inculcates certain values, I suggest that the nuclear family as an institution helps to shape moral intuitions and to make more concrete what “common sense” may ask us to think.

As we have seen, Aristotle believed that intimate human relations have intrinsic value. That means the ethical value of family is itself one of the traditional values shaped and preserved by “nuclear family” as an institution. According to this interpretation, then, Aristotle’s objection seems to be: citizens in Plato’s city will not be “afraid of committing any crimes by reason of consanguinity” because such particularly unholy acts will not go against their common sense. After all, in Plato’s city, everyone is supposed to identify himself with the single unified mind of the state, and if it so happens that the state calls for killing one’s biological family member, it

would not be against one's common sense to do so. Presumably, Aristotle was saying this horribly distorts what is naturally just<sup>68</sup>.

“Natural”, that is, in the sense that it is grounded on deep human psychology, as opposed to any abstract principle or conventional standard. As we have mentioned, this is a characteristic of Aristotle's theory of friendship. In other words, then, Aristotle's defence of the ethical value of traditional family is also a defence of what is naturally just, that is, what we should think of as commonsensical. “Solidarity” is my best attempt to capture the specific quality of character that commits oneself to this sense of “(natural) justice”. Solidarity expresses one's self-referential attachment to one's fellow colleagues (soldiers, sailors, in Aristotle's original example): these are *my* friends. As fellow feeling expresses the bond between agents of equal status, Aristotelian ethical community is *egalitarian* in spirit. By contrast, earlier in *Republic* IV, Plato argued that *justice* consists in each part of the soul - and by analogy, every class of the city - making its own proper contribution to the active life of the whole agent (city) whose soul it is (433a-434d). Plato's justice consists in what unifies all walks of life. To be sure the different social classes in Plato's city are not identical to each other, so there is diversity. But in Plato's framework, only the ruling class can possess wisdom, whose role is to prescribe or command (428b-429a). The subjects, on the other hand, though they may have some room for discretion, are strictly speaking not supposed to exercise their ability to

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<sup>68</sup> Apparently, Aristotle believed that Plato's system would give rise to more acts of incest, and this is objectively bad. Presumably, this judgment of the badness of incest is part of what Aristotelian common sense teaches.

judge (or do not have such ability at all). It is “loyalty” rather than solidarity that is inculcated in this scheme: everyone wholeheartedly embraces this multifaceted (in terms of division of labour) single unity and obeys the command coming from a single source. The quality of character promoted in this city is at the bottom paternalistic, as opposed to egalitarian. So it is not at all surprising that there will be no conflicts of common sense, for in the end there is only one common sense. This seems to be the logical consequence of collective single-mindedness. The debate between Aristotle and Plato concerning whether to preserve the intrinsic value of (different forms of) intimate human relationships or to secure the absolute unity/collective single-mindedness of the state, then, turns out to be a debate between whether to promote egalitarian or paternalistic virtues.

#### **2.3.4 Extending solidarity**

I have over-simplified. Though all counted as forms of *philia*<sup>69</sup>, there are important differences between the parents-children relation, the friendships between siblings, and those friendships outside the family circle. In the course of the development of virtue, at least after children have reached a

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<sup>69</sup> In fact, ideally, friendship as such demands absolute equality - of status, of goodness, of given and received, of pleasure or advantage (if it is that kind of friendship) (NE 1158b30-33). The inequality between parents and children, elder to younger, man and wife, and ruler to subject (NE 1158b12-28), then, make their friendships at best a deviant case.

certain age (starting from puberty, most likely), friendships of brothers and comrades play indispensable roles<sup>70</sup>.

However, it is important to note that the notion of natural justice - and therefore the character of solidarity - is neutral between equal and unequal friendship. Of course, since the community of equals and of unequals differs, what is just in the two cases also differs. So the *application/realisation* of natural justice can differ between these communities. Further, some contexts may even ask us to treat a whole community as sharing equal status with another community, despite the unequal relations *within each* of the community. Thinking of the family as a unit, existing alongside other families, the inequality between the elder and the younger within each family may not be relevant, for it can just signify differences concerning the division of labour, not the status. The child can achieve something for the family which the parents cannot, and *vice versa*. For instance, Aristotle spoke of how “children seem to be a bond of union...for children are a good common to both and what is common holds them together” (1162a27-9). Children may be a lot weaker and less mature, but that just means their contributions to the family are going to be very

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<sup>70</sup> These friendships are at least as important as, if not more important than, the *philia* between parents and children. Similarity in character and background binds them, makes them more likely to understand each other; similarity in age means they are undergoing similar process of physio-psychological development (which is something the parents can never join); assuming that they make friends within the normal social circle, they will share similar past and/or future experiences, which further enhance their fellow feelings. Further, some experiences characteristic of some virtues are possible only among friends with equal status. For example, sharing and keeping secrets test trustworthiness, and watching each other's back means supporting one's brother(s) or comrades (the superior does not need the inferior to watch his back). Finally, since friendships of comrades are products of one's *choice* (which makes it different from that of brothers), and since learning to make good choices is itself a crucial lesson in acquiring virtues, the experience of *making* friends is itself ethically important.

different from that of the parents. At any rate, they are all part of one family (a small “community”) and as such there can be fellow feelings between them. Similarly, thinking of the state as a unit, existing alongside other states, the inequality between rulers and subjects within each state may not be relevant. Further, there can be contexts where we need to appeal to the most fundamental status in forming the community, that is, the status of being a human. In this case, inequalities we mentioned so far between the different roles dissolved.

Notably, all these cases ask us to somehow go beyond the apparent inequality and realise that at a different level, we can reasonably regard those originally unequal friendships as constituting part of a larger equal friendship. In light of this, I suggest, the essence of solidarity is still the friendships between equals, but its expression need not be confined to conventional social roles. Rather, the key is to be able to see at which level and context which community can be regarded as a unit, and thus what apparent inequality can be dismissed as irrelevant.

Aristotle nowhere says this, but I think it is reasonable to elaborate as follows. I suggest, to be able to go beyond the conventional social roles and look for a higher level of equality (thus of solidarity) is itself a crucial step in the course of virtue development. For one thing, as non-familial community is typically bound by some common purpose or goal (NE 1160a9-1160a31), the child’s attempts to go beyond the family circle is simultaneously an attempt to inquire into or further understand the purposes of different human activities. As for Aristotle the *purpose* of

something is closely related to its *value*, finding the right non-conventional community is itself an attempt to understand the values of things. Relatedly, going beyond the conventional roles itself broaden one's horizon. One can then start to approach others with an eye to their character (or at any rate the purpose of their choices and actions as they understand them), instead of their social status.

Further, developing solidarity with people outside the family circle is itself morally significant. Aristotle envisaged the circle of friendship going from family to the entire human race: "It [friendship] seems to exist by nature in a parent's relation to offspring and offspring's relation to parent, not only among humans but also among birds and most animals, and among members of the same species, and especially among humans —which is why we praise those who love humankind (*philanthrôpous*) (NE 1155a16-24)". Given what I have said about dismissing apparent inequalities as irrelevant, extending one's circle of solidarity is itself a step towards an egalitarian ideal - an ideal where we (realistically) acknowledge differences in background, talents, resources, etc., but withhold the conclusion that these constitute unequal moral status. I will further elaborate some of these themes in the last chapter.

Note the connection between this account of extending solidarity with a thesis I argued in the previous chapter: that the child learns through imitation rather than critical attempts to approximate an ideal model. It is not like the child will already have some plans in mind, informed by the ideal model he identifies, then he begins to search for the candidate communities

according to the plans. Rather, the child is developing his understanding of purpose and values as he *navigates* through the different people and different groups he meets. The interdependence between the process of blending into any community and the process of understanding (of values, purpose) shows that the critical practice model is too intellectual to be accurate.

### **2.3.5 How the state is a plurality and civic friendship**

There is only one point left to elaborate. Aristotle's defence of the ethical value of traditional families (and, by extension, intimate relations) is only one instance of a larger dispute. While Plato believed that "unity" is the only thing that builds and benefits a city, Aristotle asserted that "the nature of a state is to be a plurality" (Pol. 1261a17). "[A] state is not made up only of so many men, but of different kinds of men" (a21-28). The ideas of plurality and diversity are built into the notion of natural justice and solidarity. Accordingly, one can have solidarity with different communities.

Consider how Aristotle gave his first objection to Plato's obsession with unity: "in tending to greater unity, from being a state, it becomes a family, and from being a family, an individual; for the family may be said to be more one than the state, and the individual than the family" (Pol. 1261a17-20). As Kraut pointed out, Aristotle maybe assuming that the smaller the size of a group, the less it is possible for the group to be the "locus of disagreement and ill feeling"<sup>71</sup>. Accordingly, Aristotle's objection is that if it is unity one is after, one should try to establish the smallest possible state, for in that case

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<sup>71</sup> Kraut (2002, 312).

the possibility of disagreements and ill feelings are diminished, and the possibility of collective single-mindedness maximised. But in fact, this destroys the state, for obviously the reasoning does not stop to the smallest possible state: a family is even smaller, and an individual will be the most unitary. If this interpretation is correct, then, given Aristotle's defence of plurality and diversity, one should expect that disagreements between different communities are allowed in Aristotle's ideal polis.

But there is more. Recall, it is the fear of factionalism that motivates Plato in the first place. How will a plurality of different communities avoid that? Extending the scope of solidarity is part of the answer, but let us further consider one of Aristotle's attempts to guarantee social cohesion in the city. In Aristotle's ideal city, every citizen is supposed to meet each other at common meals, where they discuss issues, share feelings, enjoy entertainment, make fun of each other, most plausibly even gossip in a comfortable setting. They will also participate in religious and musical festivals together (NE 1160b25-7). All these lead to a particular form of *philia*: what Aristotle called civic friendship. Presumably, then, social cohesion is guaranteed and citizens of this city will not think only for themselves and their closest friends because of this civic friendship. Further, given differences in background, upbringing, social ties, experiences, etc., one need not expect that everyone will share the same view on most of the things, but all the same these disagreements are not likely to destroy the civic friendship. For one thing, they are all committed to the virtues and they understand that well-being consists in virtuous activities.



For another, although a fellow citizen is not as close as one's family and friends, he is not a complete stranger, and it is reasonable to assume that this fellow will be "someone whose company one regularly enjoys".<sup>72</sup> Aristotle seems to mean this is his way to *replace* Plato's absolute unity (single-mindedness). If so, when arguing against treating unity as the sole criterion of the best city, and replacing it with civic friendship, Aristotle is in effect arguing that it is not beliefs or opinions that bind or divide people, it is rather character and shared activities.

This brings us back to the topic of virtue education. "The state, as I was saying, is a plurality, which should be united and made into a community by education; and it is strange that the author of a system of education which he thinks will make the state virtuous, should expect to improve his citizens by regulations of this sort [i.e. Plato's proposal], and not by philosophy or by customs and laws" (Pol. 1263b35-9). Some sort of social cohesion is required. But as we have seen through the notion of civic friendship, this is not the same as Plato's proposal of collective single-mindedness. By education, then, children will form civic friendship with his fellow citizens, but (in my own terms) this only requires solidarity, not loyalty.

## **Recap**

Let's recap. I have elaborated on Aristotle's defence of the ethical value of the nuclear family. I pointed out that it is embedded in the discussion of the ethical importance of private education. Since private education provides children with their first exposure to various kinds of evaluative

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<sup>72</sup> Kraut (2002, 321).

experience, Aristotle can also be seen as defending the intrinsic goodness of the intimate human relations enshrined in the traditional families. This fits well with his theory of friendship. Furthermore, I suggest that Aristotle was also defending a specific (set of) virtue(s), which I dubbed “solidarity”. In support of this view, I explored Aristotle’s discussion of how friendship and justice are interrelated. Aristotelian ethical community turns out to be egalitarian in nature. By contrast, Plato’s justice consists in the unity of all walks of life as they are governed by the ruling class, who is the only group in the state who possesses the wisdom to give judgment. Plato’s state is essentially paternalistic. Finally, I explored how extending the scope of solidarity is an important step in virtue education, and how civic friendship brings social cohesion, rather than absolute unity.

Let me connect the several themes discussed in these two chapters. As I said when I introduce the discussion of family, the initial point is to further elaborate the thesis that habituation is an immersion into the relevant context. We now know one of the crucial components in this “context” is the nuclear family, and, by extension, friendships of brothers, comrades, and civic friendship. In a word, the communities surrounding the younger generation. I have also explained how the account of extending solidarity can be seen as an extension of the argument against the practice of identifying ideal models.

Now, let me return to my working hypothesis. I have argued that children do possess quasi-virtues/vices, and thus, to repeat the hypothesis, part of understanding how virtues (or vices) are *human* excellence (deficiency), that

is, how they are excellence that expresses the nature of such beings who are born under-developed, involves understanding how there are manifestations of these character states in the stage of childhood. Recall that my argument turns on an analogy between the seeds of virtues and the seeds of forming a political community. Now, given what I have said about solidarity, we can see how it is not merely an analogy. That is, the parallel between human propensities to political community and analogous propensities to virtues actually points to a more general truth: the human develops virtues (or vices) *in* forming communities. So, my working hypothesis can be reformulated as: “part of understanding how virtues (or vices) are *human* excellence (deficiency),...involves understanding how there are manifestations of these character states in the stage of childhood, *as it is embedded in the (familial and non-familial) communities.*” So solidarity is also an expression of human nature. Virtues and vices are expressive of the nature of this peculiar political animal<sup>73</sup>. This in turn points to a connection between the “habituation-immersion” thesis and the working hypothesis of this chapter. Habituation involves immersing into the familial and non-familial communities, human virtues and vices are (as an expression of human nature) developed in forming such communities, thus habituation is also expressing our nature as a political animal. This reconfirms and further illustrates a point I made earlier: habituation and nature work together.

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<sup>73</sup> As Gottlieb remarked: “Neither human virtue nor human vice are possible without the polis. The polis enables humans to be both virtuous and vicious” (2009, 194).

## Chapter 3 Practical Induction

### Introduction

This chapter brings in some relatively new materials. I will discuss Aristotle's theory of "practical induction". In a way, we can see clear continuity: as I will talk about the "starting-point" of reasoning, and as Aristotle believed that habituation informs one of the starting-point of deliberation, it will be an extended topic of Chapter 1 (see esp. section 1.1.4 "Character informs the evaluation of specific ends") Indeed, as we shall see at the end of this chapter, the debate in the first chapter extends to a debate between two positions in this one. But the materials are new in the sense that I have not discussed in the previous chapters about *how* exactly does the agent grasp the starting-point of reasoning. Further, as we shall see, in theorising practical induction there is a position according to which the starting-point of reasoning is not "(action-guiding) ends", but intuition about the essence of the ends. This goes beyond the notion of habituation as we know it. So there is discontinuity, too. As these new materials direct us to a new path with some clear references to the previous chapters, the next chapter will bring the whole discussion into its *finale*.

But to focus on this chapter, in what follows I shall proceed as follows. After a preliminary section explaining the basic notion of "practical induction" (3.1), I will proceed to contrast two different accounts, namely,

the Socratic conception and Jessica Moss' account. According to the former (3.2), practical induction leads us to intuition about essences of the relevant subject-matter (nature of specific virtues, *eudaimonia*, etc.), while according to the latter (3.3), practical induction leads us to evaluative appearances. Quite roughly, the difference is epitomised in the difference between emphasising reflectiveness and emphasising truthfulness as the mark of ideal character. I will end by drawing a relation between the positions discussed in Chapter 1 and the positions discussed in this chapter (3.4).

### **3.1 Preliminaries**

In Aristotle's framework, "induction" is the method or process through which the "starting-point" is grasped (APo.II.19; NE1098b3; 1151a15-19). As such, it is distinguished from "deduction" or "demonstration", the syllogistic process of reasoning that proceeds from the starting premise to the final conclusion (APo. 71a1-8). The theory of induction, then, is supposed to explain our "understanding" or "intuition", or at any rate the kind of intellectual activity that cannot be (fully) captured by syllogistic inferences (NE1139b29-30). This chapter will focus on "practical induction", that is, the kind of induction that allows us to grasp the starting-point of practical reasoning.

The discussion of Aristotle's theory of "practical induction" usually begins with stating that it is an analogue of "theoretical induction". Since Aristotle has explicitly elaborated on the latter but not so much on the former, the

theoretical/practical analogue is usually introduced as a strategy to shed light on the nature of practical induction. Following this practice, let's first look at the different stages of the induction process as it is understood along the lines of theoretical induction. Using the usual example of coming to learn the definition of mathematical entities such as a triangle, the stages can be described as follows:

- 1) One perceives many instances of triangles many times.
- 2) Such perceptions are preserved in memory. (APo. 100a3; Meta. 980a28-9)
- 3) Many memories give rise to one experience (100a5-6; Meta. 980b29-981a1), which contains implicitly a universal (100a6-7), responsible for explaining why the particular triangles have the properties they do.
- 4) One explicitly grasps this explanatory universal, which can then be the starting-point for demonstration (100a6-9).<sup>74</sup>

But it is not entirely clear what exactly these stages correspond to in the practical case. We will see more about them below.

Induction is in essence a process/method that proceeds from the many (particulars) to the one (universals, implicit or explicit). One generalises from the many examples one is exposed to, detecting some commonalities between them, thereby forming a universal notion supposedly present in one's perception of these particulars. As such, then, the product of this induction process should meet the following criteria. a) It should be sufficiently simple, in the sense that its content does not repeat every detail of the particulars. For otherwise there is no need for induction in the first

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<sup>74</sup> As summarised and demarcated in Moss (2012, 153).

place. b) It should be “well-grounded”, in that there should be some sort of intimate connection or continuity between the basis and the product of the induction. This captures the idea that the product of induction should be somehow answerable to the data perceived. c) The basis of induction should be sufficiently wide. For there is no point in forming a universal notion if one encounters only a few samples. The three conditions jointly capture how the universal notion generalised from the process is explanatory of the perceived particulars: there is a sufficiently simple definition answerable to the sufficiently widely collected data or samples. As such, the universal notion demarcates the scope of the relevant object (i.e. what falls under this definition).

Aristotle’s own characterisation of practical induction is very compressed:

Also, understanding (*nous*) is concerned with things that come last in both directions. For concerning the primary terms and the things that come last, there is understanding but no reason (*logos*)—that is to say, on the one hand, in the case of demonstrations, understanding is of the unchanging and primary terms; on the other hand, in the case of those that are practical, it is of the last thing and the one that admits of being otherwise and the other [i.e. the minor] premise, since these are starting-points of the end, as it is from particulars that universals come. So of these we must have perception, and this is understanding. (1143a36-b6)

In the rest of NE VI. *nous* is restricted to theoretical use: a kind of intuitive and intellectual grasp of the necessary first principles (the “unchanging and primary terms”).

### **3.2 The Socratic conception**

We can begin by explaining the debate concerning the last stage of practical induction, which concerns the product or the end-point of the induction process. Some argued that practical induction is the process through which the agent forms his general conception of what is required in a given set of situations<sup>75</sup>. Some argued that it is rather the process through which the agent forms evaluative appearances and uses them to guide his practical reasoning. Let's begin with the first conception: for reasons that will become clear later, let's call it the "Socratic conception". My elaboration will be centred around 1143a36-b6 quoted above.

#### **3.2.1 Sorabji's initial construction**

Suppose it is courage that we care about. According to Sorabji's interpretation, the process of induction leads to a general conception of what courage requires of one. Sorabji suggested that judgements of the form "this is what courage requires of us right now" can be the particular starting-point from which the induction process begins<sup>76</sup>. These particular judgments supply "the initial materials for building up a conception of what is required not merely now but in general".<sup>77</sup> Presumably, the idea is that the agent proceeds from particular judgments to a collection of these judgments, (all of the form "this is what courage requires of us right now", each responding to different situations) then eventually he will have a

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<sup>75</sup> See, e.g. Reeve (1992), Dahl (1984).

<sup>76</sup> Sorabji (1980, 215).

<sup>77</sup> Sorabji (1980, 215). See also Dahl (1984, 44).



determinate conception of what courage in general requires of him. This is how Sorabji interprets “these are starting-points of the end, as it is from particulars that universals come” (1143b5). Presumably, “these” refers to the objects of *nous*, in this case, the particular judgments. According to this interpretation, then, the “starting-points of the end” correspond to the “particulars” and the “end” itself corresponds to the “universals” (a general conception).

Now, Sorabji suggested that the judgment “this is what courage requires of us now” can be understood as (a) “the last thing” (1143b2) because “the particular is the last thing you arrive at, if you work your way down from the universal”, when deciding what you ought to do. Relatedly, Sorabji argued that the judgment “this [say, ambush] is what courage requires of us now” can serve as (b) the “(last) minor premise” (1143b3) because one’s knowledge of what best promotes or realises the end (being courageous) needs to be “controlled by an intuitive perception of what courage requires”<sup>78</sup>, and because it is the minor premise that concerns perception. Point (a) and point (b) characterise the object of *nous*, and as such it is also the last minor premise of deliberation. So the theory of *nous* covers both the materials for induction and the last step of deliberation, despite the fact that inductive reasoning and deliberative reasoning are distinct in kind.

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<sup>78</sup> Sorabji (1980, 209).

In fact, one may extend the theory to cover the ultimate goal, *eudaimonia*. Reeve, for instance, argued that eventually it is the intuition about this end, the unconditional end, that practical induction will lead us to.<sup>79</sup>

(In the next chapter, we will see how the Socratic conception can be extended to support a theory of practical deliberation. Maybe practical reasoning is analogous to the practice of medicine: just as the doctor diagnoses and decides to give certain particular treatments to different cases given his substantial and determinate (and may well be implicit) conception of healthiness, the good deliberator perceives and chooses based on a substantial and comprehensive conception of the good (Cf. Meta. 1032a32-b17; NE 1180b14-1181b10). However, this is not self-evident; we will see objections in the next chapter)

But then *how* exactly do one come to grasp the general conception? What happens exactly when one comes to collect particular judgments and “extracts” from them the essence of the subject-matter concerned?

Now, Sorabji did not explicitly say this, but I think it is reasonable to elaborate as follows. I think the picture that emerges, according to this Socratic conception, is of someone who always remain self-critical and reflective of his own thoughts, decisions and actions (maybe also emotions). He values clear-eyedness, sanity, and tries his best to regulate his own behaviour based on his latest conclusion. For example, with regard to courage specifically, initially he may think that it means fearless whatsoever. But then he may realise that there are things that one ought to

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<sup>79</sup> Sorabji (1980, 206-214). See also Reeve (1992, 86): “Now *nous* is of the first principle or unconditional end, *eudaimonia*” and Reeve (2013, 6-17).

fear, and he should “fear them as he ought and as reason directs”, and the brave man “will face them for the sake of what is noble” (1115b7-13; ). For otherwise he would be mad or insensible or rash (1115b24-8). So some behaviours are ruled out as instances of courage. Then, he may further notice that true courage requires aiming at the right things (1116a13-15). So, some aims or motives are ruled out as instances of courage. Then, he may also distinguish true courage from 1) “political courage”, which aims at honour (1116a16-1116b3), as opposed to excellence, 2) confidence grounded in sufficient experience (in dealing with similar situations) (1116b4-1116b23), 3) dangerous acts driven by pain or passions (1116b24-1117a9), 4) acts based on over-optimistic expectation, (1117a10-1117a21) and 5) seemingly fearless acts based on ignorance (1117a22-1117a26).

All these require careful distinctions and being able to discern specific conditions for appropriate actions. The one who is gradually learning all these through practical induction and eventually grasps the essence of true courage is the one who conducts deep reflective thinking with respect to his own practical life. One reason to hold this view is that since virtues are “*prohairesis* states” (literally, “a state issuing in decisions”), and since decisions are the results of rational deliberation, our virtuous responses must be warranted by our reflective thinking<sup>80</sup>. This makes the Aristotelian agent rather like Socrates: “this even happens to be a very great good for a

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<sup>80</sup> One implication, then, is that virtues according to this interpretation are in part an intellectual state. See, e.g. Lorenz (2009), Irwin (1975, 576).

human being—to make speeches every day about virtue and the other things about which you hear me conversing and examining both myself and others— and that the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being” (Apology, 37e6-38a7).

### 3.2.2 How (Socratic) inductive reasoning is a long-term process

Now let’s return to 1143a35-b6 (“understanding is concerned with things that come last in both directions...”). But I want to start by looking a few lines below:

while nobody seems wise by nature, people do seem to have consideration, comprehension, and understanding by nature. An indication of this is that we also think these states correspond to the stages of life and that a particular stage brings understanding and consideration, as if nature were the cause. (1143b6-10).

We will discuss “consideration” and “comprehension” in the next chapter. I would like to focus on the reference to the “stages of life” here. It suggests that the process *can* extend over quite a long period of time: the process of induction is temporally-extended. In other words, the Socratic conception of practical induction is not focusing on a particular snapshot of inductive reasoning. It tells a story about one’s constant, most naturally long-term, reflection about certain essence. Occasionally, one may arrive at a conclusion about the essence of certain subject-matter *while* one is giving a particular judgment here and now (it’ll be something like “ah, yes, this is it, I get it now”). Or, conversely, one can realise that this particular judgment is the right judgment to make here and now while one is reflecting on one’s

conception of the subject-matter. So tokens of inductive reasoning about essence and tokens of deliberative reasoning that aims at giving judgments, though distinct in kind, can overlap at the level of causal occurrence.

There will be cases where one knows the right judgments but failed to examine one's own ideas in the Socratic style. There will also be cases where one conducts Socratic inductive reasoning thoroughly but fails to keep up with all the details of the particular situation. Additionally, one may realise the significance of some particular judgments only in retrospect. So, one's judgments here and now can be helpful for one to understand the essence of the subject-matter in the future, even it does not seem so at the first sight. Finally, it is also possible that if one's judgment is qualified by a clause stating that this is an exceptional case, valid only as a one-time deal, then this judgment stated as such is not likely to be included in the general conception (but the conception may state the relevant non-ideal condition). So, not every particular judgments will end up being reproduced in the product of induction; the inductive generalisation is essentially selective.

### **3.3 Moss' alternative account**

Now I proceed to an alternative conception of practical induction. Let me begin with explaining how it conceives of the end-point of induction: an evaluative appearance of something pleasurable/good or painful/bad. Since Jessica Moss gave the most systematic and complete account of this position, I will focus on her discussion.

### 3.3.1 Evaluative appearances

Let's first look at the nature of the goal:

But before the process [of deliberation] begins there will be the that-on-account-of-which, and this is the that-for-the-sake-of-which, for example wealth or pleasure or any other such thing which happens to be the that-for-the-sake-of- which.....And the cause [of this kind of error i.e. error about the end] is the pleasant and the painful. For things are so constituted that the pleasant appears good to the soul, and the more pleasant better, and the painful bad and the more painful worse. (EE1227a13-b1; trans. Moss)

Naturally, we are attracted to pleasurable things and we tend to avoid painful things. Aristotle goes on to claim that finding the wrong things pleasurable or painful causes us to endorse corrupted ends: to value the wrong things. Moss also argued that the contents of both belief and wish (*boulesis*), the distinctively Human desire as Aristotle conceived of it, are determined by evaluative *phantasia*<sup>81</sup>, i.e. evaluative appearances about what is pleasurable/good and what is painful/bad<sup>82</sup>. Moss emphasised that Aristotle was more a psychological hedonist than one might think<sup>83</sup>. (In the next chapter, we will see that the “pleasure” and the “painful” involved here have a moral connotation: pride and shame respectively.) The adoption of

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<sup>81</sup> Standardly translated as “imagination”, but literally as “appearance-awareness” or “being-appeared-to” (Moss, 2012, xii).

<sup>82</sup> More precisely, Moss argued that beliefs are assent to appearances and wishes are based on beliefs; that is, wishes track appearances indirectly via beliefs. This leaves room for the akratic (who acquires the right beliefs elsewhere through, say, others' testimony, thus also - since wishes are based on beliefs - the right wishes, but do not have the right appearances) and the enkratic (who shares the same states-of-mind but whose beliefs are motivationally efficient). See (2012, ch.8.5).

<sup>83</sup> Moss (2012, 141).

ends (the that-on-account-of-which/for-the-sake-of-which), then, has a standard of correctness different from the correctness related to deliberation: it is rather because something appears pleasant or painful, not because it is the most deliberated option (or the option that is most reasonable according to deliberation), that one is inclined to embrace or reject a certain end. One acquires such ends even before the deliberation process. This is very different from the view according to which the induction process leads to intuition of essences.

The emphasis on evaluative appearances is further confirmed by the intimate relation between evaluative perception and character:

Should we say that what is wished for without qualification is the good, but for each person the apparent good? For the virtuous person, then, what is wished will be what really is [good/to-be-wished-for], while for the base person what is wished for is some chance thing . . . For the virtuous person discerns each thing rightly, and in each case the truth appears to him. (NE 1113a23-31; trans. Moss)

But how does this involve a process of *induction*? Moss' view can be summarised in the following passage: "just as induction yields, through perception and *phantasia*, an ability to recognize certain shapes as triangles (where that does not yet include an explicit grasp of the feature one is recognizing), so habituation yields, through pleasurable perception reproduced by *phantasia*, an ability to recognize virtuous activity as to-be-pursued (with the same caveat). Someone who has acquired this ability is

someone to whom virtuous activity now appears good, i.e. someone subject to a general appearance of virtuous activity as good.”<sup>84</sup> The product of induction, then, can be expressed by the form “x is good (to-be-pursued)”. Correspondingly, as it is quite natural to think, the starting-point of induction takes the form “this x is good (to-be-pursued) here and now”. (Similar to the Socratic conception, there can also be appearances of middle-level generality, e.g. “this courageous act is good here and now (to-be-pursued)”).

This process of forming appearances fits our initial analyses of induction. Through repeated pleasurable exposure to x, some aspects of x are recognised and preserved, which will eventually lead to an implicit yet determinate grasp of the goodness of x. Arguably, this representation of the value of x is selective, and thus will not include every detail of x, or every aspect through which x can be presented. In this way, the appearances formed are a generalisation from the (first-order) perception.

Relatedly, these first-order perceptions are what the product of induction must be answerable to<sup>85</sup>. She had argued, quite forcefully I think, that the formation of the general evaluative appearances involves the exercise of one’s *phantasia*: *phantasia* preserves and reproduces not just the narrowly representational content of the perceptions, but also their affective and motivational dimensions. The general appearance of, say, the taste of a delicious cake does not just give one the description *that* the cake is

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<sup>84</sup> Moss (2012, 221). See also Burnet (1900, 64-68), Achtenberg (2002).

<sup>85</sup> Moss calls this “Practical Empiricism” (2002, 151-2).



delicious, but invites one to re-experience the pleasure of enjoying the delicious flavour of the cake. Generally, Aristotle said with regard to passions and *phantasia* that: “people are either pleased in remembering as they experienced, or in expecting as they will experience. So that it’s necessary for all such pleasure to arise from perceptibles” (Phy. 247a7-14)<sup>86</sup>.

Finally, it is also quite natural to suppose that the appearances formed are based on exposure to a sufficient amount of samples. These may involve expectation of possible cases: one feel pity “whenever one is so disposed as to remember such things happening to himself or to one of his loved ones, or to expect such things to occur to him or to one of his loved ones” (1386a1-3). Sometimes it may even involve visual postulation of fictional scenarios: “as Cydias said to the people in the debate about the allotment of land in Samos; for he thought the Athenians should suppose he Greeks standing around them in a circle, actually seeing and not only later hearing about what they might vote” (1384b32-35).

So, the nature of “goal” is “being pleasurable”. But Moss further argued that the “function” of having ends is to let us deliberate with a view to settle on a practicable decision:

[D]ecision is not present in the other animals nor in people of every age nor of every state. For neither is deliberation [present], nor supposition of the that-on-account-of-which, but nothing prevents many from being able to opine whether something is to be done or

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<sup>86</sup> Moss (2012, 79-81).

not to be done, while not yet doing this through reasoning .....Wherefore those for whom no goal is laid down are not able to deliberate (EE 1226b20-30; trans. Moss)

To decide to do something, rather than just opining whether to do that thing, one has to have an end in view and hold on to it while conducting mean-ends reasoning.<sup>87</sup> Moss meant to say inductive reasoning ends at deliberating how to achieve what one finds pleasurable (and avoid what one finds painful).

So according to Moss' account, the "starting-point" that practical induction enables us to grasp is evaluative appearances, not general conceptions. Indeed, Moss had explicitly rejected the idea that (in the ethical realm) we need anything as intellectualised as an intuition of the essences of virtues and/or *eudaimonia*.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.3.2 Nous (1143a36-b6 again)

Let's turn to 1143a36-b6 again and see how Moss' account would interpret the passage. Let's start by the most enigmatic phrase: "these are starting-points of the end, as it is from particulars that universals come". We have seen how the previous interpretation reads this sentence: the

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<sup>87</sup> This echoes what I wrote at the end of section 1.1.4: the starting-point of practical reasoning is indemonstrable in the sense that "one cannot *both* deliberate about *whether* to adopt a certain end *and* adopt it as an end that effectively guides one's reasoning and action. For any end to be *grasped as an end*, that is, for that end to be the *purpose*, the "that-for-the-sake-of-which", or that which is *expressed* in one's chosen action, one has to stop the series of asking for its further rationale", and it is virtues rather than reason that enable one to stop this series. Moss' account gives us a theory as to how virtues are supposed to do this.

<sup>88</sup> See Moss (2012, 184-5, 189, 227-8).

particular judgement “this is what courage requires of us now” serves as the material, and in this sense the starting-point, of the induction process, through which our general (universal) conception of courage is formed. Moss explicitly argued against this reading. According to her reading, the particulars are not the starting-point for our conception of ends, but the starting-point for the *attainment* of ends, that is, they are the starting-point of *action*<sup>89</sup>. Correspondingly, “from particulars that universals come” may mean something like “the realisation of universals begins by getting particularised”. The induction process eventually contributes to wise decisions, one might suppose, as *nous* helps to calibrate one’s given ends by finding the appropriate evaluative interpretation of the situation; presumably, this is one way how one’s ends can guide one’s reasoning.

Consequently, the relation between the material of induction (evaluative perceptions) and its product (general evaluative appearances) will be much closer. I want to suggest that, in Moss’ account, the product of induction has to be sufficiently vivid, concrete and fine-grained. We have seen one instance of this already: evaluative appearances have to preserve the affective and motivational power (not just the narrow representational content) of perceptions, and that almost always means having concrete and determinate appearances.

Recall, as we have seen in section 3.2.1, the materials of induction are a) “the last thing” and b) the minor premise. Let’s first look at point (a): how are

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<sup>89</sup> Moss (2012, 190).

the particular perceptions so conceived (“this x is good (to-be-pursued) here and now”) “the last thing”, i.e. immediately practicable? In Moss’ account, this brings us to the theory of locomotion<sup>90</sup>: “*phantasiai* and perceptions and thoughts alter the parts [thereby initiating the changes which lead to locomotion]. For perceptions are at once a kind of alteration, and *phantasia* and thinking have the power of the actual things” (MA 701b16-19); The intuitive idea is that the exercise of *phantasiai* (and perceptions and thoughts) has a physiological aspect: anger, say, is accompanied by the boiling of the blood around the heart (403a31-b1). This is true not just of emotions but also of more intellectual thought process: “For in a certain way the thought form of the pleasant or frightening is like the actual thing itself. That is why we shudder and are frightened just thinking of something...(but we don’t notice this happening concerning very small things)” (b19-35). Supposedly, the indexical minor premise will trigger the motivating/physiological aspect of one’s deliberation. To have the evaluative appearances answerable to these evaluation perceptions, then, means we have to keep our evaluative appearances sufficiently vivid. Aristotle’s analysis of mourn makes this clear: mourning consists in “seeing [the departed] and what he used to do and what he was like” (1370b26-28). It is not enough just to see that “x is good”, then, one has to be able to account of the goodness of x in vivid terms: what it is like to have/achieve/experience x, what image it is associated with, which aspect of it you find most relatable, and so on.

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<sup>90</sup> See esp. Moss (2012, ch.2.1).

Second, point (b): the materials of induction (viz. evaluative perceptions) are also the minor premise. This can be understood as: rational agents deliberate *through* these perceptions. At this point it is quite natural to appeal to the theoretical/practical analogue again. Aristotle gave the example of geometrical reasoning. Diagrams are essential constituents of geometrical reasoning, in the sense that it is through diagrams that we can represent to ourselves different variations and combinations of the purely abstract entities.<sup>91</sup>

Analogously, in the practical case, Aristotle claimed that “to the thinking soul, *phantasmata* [images] serve just like *aisthēmata* [content of perception], and whenever it states or denies good or bad, it avoids or pursues. This is why the soul never thinks without a *phantasma*” (de An. 431a14-17).<sup>92</sup> But what is the practical analogue of geometrical shapes? Let’s continue reading: “sometimes it [the relevant faculty] calculates and deliberates about future things in relation to present things, using the *phantasmata* and thoughts in the soul, as if seeing” (431b8-9). Presumably, argued Moss, the idea is that in deliberation we envisage or otherwise determinately characterise (“as if seeing”) what it is like should certain state-of-affairs obtain<sup>93</sup>. Just as geometrical reasoning is inseparable from

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<sup>91</sup> Aristotle claimed that “whenever one contemplates, one necessarily at the same time contemplates by means of phantasmata” (de An. 432a3-10); “It is not possible to think without a *phantasma*. For the same affection occurs in thinking as in drawing diagrams...it is clear that the recognition of these objects is through the primary faculty of perception” (Mem. 449b31-450a13).

<sup>92</sup> The reference to avoid and pursue should be familiar given what we have just seen about how appearances can cause, through triggering the physiological aspects of the relevant faculty of mind, locomotion.

<sup>93</sup> Moss (2012, ch.6.3, esp. 145-146).

drawing and inspecting diagrams, practical reasoning is inseparable from envisaging possible objects of decisions. To have the product of induction answerable to the last minor premise, then, means one's evaluative appearances should be sufficiently concrete: it is not enough just to see "x is good", one has to be able to describe the goodness of x in concrete terms: in what ways, in which aspects, to whom, etc.

This is not all. Elsewhere Aristotle hinted that one's deliberation is not only about envisaging future state-of-affairs. In NE VI. 1142b25-30, Aristotle compared practical deliberation to solving geometric problems again: "...practical wisdom concerns the last thing, of which there is not scientific knowledge but rather perception - not the perception of the special objects but like the sort by which we perceive that the last thing among mathematical objects is a triangle, since there too will come a stopping-point". What is this "stopping-point" in practical reasoning? Natali (2014) further introduces Meta.ix.9, which provides an illustration of the geometrical procedure: "It is by actualisation that geometrical relations are discovered: for it is by dividing the given figures that people discover them" (1051a21-23)<sup>94</sup>.

The geometer tries to find a solution by drawing and transforming the diagram: by adding lines, decomposing the figure, etc., he inspects the figure until the solution simply manifests itself, or until he can simply "see" the solution (the "stopping-point"). Similarly, the deliberator approaches the

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<sup>94</sup> Natali (2014, 193).

situation by describing it in many different ways, configuring it in terms of many different evaluative appearances, interpreting it through many different evaluative categories, etc. One might at first suppose that it is an issue/debate concerning the interests of different social groups, then one might realise that it involves different political views, then power structure suggests itself, then it might turn out to be a matter also of moral principles. By navigating through these different analyses, one tries to make sense of the situation through a variety of different “middle/intermediate-terms”, until eventually the “best” solution shall suggest itself, or one shall eventually be able to simply “see” the way out.

*Nous*, then, prepares one to be maximally in tune with the delicate and fine-grained situation<sup>95</sup>. To have the product of induction answerable to the last minor premise, then, means that one’s evaluative appearances have to be sufficiently fine-grained: it is not enough just to see “x is good”, one has to be able to articulate the goodness of x as it is presented in a specific context. Only then can one approach the situation using these appearances, just as the geometer inspects a figure with different geometrical tools.

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<sup>95</sup> Moss came closest to this when she argued that *phronesis* is supposed to detect the mean, which will serve as the minor premise of a particular syllogism, and that this is also equivalent to deliberate excellently about “things toward ends” (2012, 195). For failing to deliberate well about “things toward ends” amounts to failing to detect the best way to realise one’s otherwise virtuous goals in a particular situation. She even called *nous* the “intellectual quasi-perception of particulars”, and in this sense agreed with McDowell and Wiggins that the practical intellect is responsible for specifying the “constituents”, as opposed to instrumental means, of one’s ends (McDowell 2002, Essay 2; Wiggins, 2002, Essay 6). That is, the excellent deliberation helps to specify what realising certain ends amounts to in a particular situation (196-7). But Moss did not introduce *Meta. ix.9* and did not illustrate *nous* with the analogy of geometrical reasoning.

This rules out those evaluative appearances that are too remote, abstract and unspecific, e.g. those vague fantasies about what's worth-pursuing one heard from others' testimonies, films, unrealistic imagination, etc. One's general evaluative appearance as to what is desirable (thus to-be-pursued) and undesirable (thus to-be-avoided) should be maximally coherent with one's first-order evaluative perceptions. For ultimately the basis of induction is evaluative perceptions. Further, as Aristotle believed that repeated and memorised perceptions produce "experience" (Meta. 980b26-29), one might even say one's evaluative appearances should be coherent with one's *evaluative experience*. In general, then, practical induction explains why habituation does have character-shaping power<sup>96</sup>: a vivid, concrete, and fine-grained major premise influences many aspects of one's personality.

The general picture we get out of these, I think, is the following. The Aristotelian agent cannot be characterised as someone who inquires into the essences of different subject-matter in the practical realm. Rather, the Aristotelian agent as Moss' alternative interpretation has it would be someone who is most truthful to his heart (in the sense that his evaluative thoughts are maximally coherent with his evaluative experience)<sup>97</sup> and most

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<sup>96</sup> Unlike the Socratic conception, where experience is useful mainly for coming up with a finer-grained articulation of the minor premise, in Moss' account, experience also shapes our character (therefore the articulation of the major premise, given the correlation between evaluative appearance and character).

<sup>97</sup> As practical-inductive reasoning extends beyond the period of early education, using practical induction to explain the character-shaping effects of habituation also means claiming that habituation is a long-term process that extends beyond the period of early education. The idea that habituation is a long-term (maybe even life-long) process is itself reasonable and interesting, but I will have to leave it at that.



sensitive to the actual situation he is in (in the sense that he reads the situation in its full delicacy and fine-grainedness).

### 3.3.3 Recap

One may summarise the differences between the two positions using the following four parameters. 1) The end-point of the induction process. One thinks that it is the intuition of essence (of the relevant subject-matter), another thinks it is the deliberation-guiding evaluative appearances. 2) The object of *nous*. The Socratic conception claims it is the first principles - true essence of whatever it is that is grasped by induction. Moss' account claims it is evaluative perceptions. Through the analogy with geometrical reasoning, I interpreted it as one's attempt to interpret the situation. 3) The exact nature of those particulars from which the induction process begins. The Socratic conception identifies these particulars as the particular judgments, expressed by the form "this is what certain virtue requires of us now", and treats them as the materials from which one's general conception is formed. Moss' account identifies particular evaluative perceptions as the relevant particulars, expressed by the form "x is good (to-be-pursued)" (or "x is bad (to-be-avoided)"), and treats them (more precisely, the evaluative experiences one gains out of them) as the building blocks of one's character.

Quite roughly, if it helps to compare the two accounts at a very general level, one might say the differences are epitomised in the difference

between emphasising reflectiveness and emphasising truthfulness as the ideal character.

### **3.4 Habituation and practical induction**

At this point we may explain the relation between the first chapter and the current one. In the first chapter, I discussed the dialectic between the critical practice model of habituation and the thesis that habituation is immersion. How do the two positions there relate to the Socratic conception and Moss' account respectively?

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the theory of practical induction explains one's grasp of the starting-point of practical reasoning. The discussion of habituation, on the other hand, is embedded in the debate about whether virtue is taught, innate, or acquired by habits. Supposedly, habituation also explains why we have the ends we do. As one's ends serve, in virtue of being the major premise, as the starting-point of one's practical inference, and as Aristotle explicitly said one's ends are fixed by one's virtue (NE 1151a17-19; 1144a29-36; 1113a25-b2; 1104b32-4), the theory of practical induction can be translated into a theory of habituation (which is a theory of virtue-inculcation). Indeed, this is how Moss locates the theory of practical induction in Aristotle's universe<sup>98</sup>. At the first sight, then, the two sets of positions discussed in the two chapters respectively map onto each other. The Socratic conception of practical induction fits

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<sup>98</sup> Moss (2012, ch.8).

fairly well with the critical practice model of habituation, and Moss' account seems to be a further elaboration of the "habituation-as-immersion" thesis.

With regard to the former set, one might say: the ideal model that one identifies as the targeted goal for critical activities should be accepted as a goal only if it is warranted by one's intuition of the relevant essences. That is, regarding the ideal model with reference to which one regulates and measures one's efforts, one should ask whether the model itself is supported by one's best understanding (based on one's degree of reflective thinking conducted so far) of the relevant conception in question. The specification of the content of the model itself can be governed and shaped by one's latest conclusion of the induction process<sup>99</sup>. Suppose one's ideal concerns acting courageously. Then one regulates one's actions in the hope that one can approximate this goal and measures one's successes and failures with reference to this ideal. It is very natural to suppose that the kind of reflection one conducts throughout the induction process (forming general conception of courage based on particular judgments of courage) should somehow inform and enlighten one's specification of the goal of acting courageously. One's ideal model of courage and thereby how one regulates one's behaviour will differ, for instance, if one draws the finer-grained distinction between the five types of courage Aristotle discussed in NE III.8.

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<sup>99</sup> Joachim (1951, 210), quoted from Moss (2012, 183, n.66).

Further, measuring one's efforts against the informed ideal (as part of what "critical practice" requires) can sharpen the focus of one's particular judgments (from which the induction begins). This may be so because pinpointing one's specific weaknesses in approximating the ideal can help further articulate the content of the context-sensitive judgment (that "*this* is what a certain virtue requires of me"). Finally, at the level of particulars, the fact that one *realises* "this is what certain virtue requires of me" and one's attempt to assess one's responses against the ideal model occupy the same conceptual space. That is, one evaluates one's successes and failures in approximating the ideal *by* considering how best one had fulfilled the normative demand of the particular judgments; and, conversely, one is able to detect what is required here and now because one has the ideal model in mind. In these ways, the critical practice model and the Socratic conception of practical induction enrich each other.

With regard to the combination of Moss' account of practical induction and the "habituation-as-immersion" thesis, one might say the following. Recall, according to the "habituation-as-immersion" thesis, the process of habituation is like the process of picking up one's native tongue: through imitation or implicit behavioural influences, one holistically exposes oneself to a cultural setting, and thereby one's natural states are shaped without substantial intervention of the intellect. Moss' account of practical induction seems a perfect way to unpack what exactly happened during the process of "immersion". How one's evaluative experiences serve as the building

blocks of one's character echoes how habituation is supposed to shape our evaluation of specific ends and patterns of reasoning (section 1.1.3-1.1.4).

Further, I also emphasised that the immersion process need not be singular; rather, it can involve a series of holistic episodes. I emphasised that the different expressions of virtues in different situations, or even that of different virtues, can be related to each other through family resemblances. As such, we acquire virtues by acquiring sub-components of each of them gradually. I argued that this allows the "habituation-as-immersion" thesis to explain how the agent can acquire complex pleasures (such as that of accomplishing justice) (section 1.2.2). This echoes how the induction process took place: through generalising from particular evaluative perceptions.

What's more, the fact that virtues can be broken down into their sub-components invites the thought that "situations" can also be regarded as structured compound. It is plausible to suggest that the situations we face in our ethical lives consist of different constituent parts, such that we can define some structural properties of situations as follows. The *complexity* of situations can be articulated by the varieties of parts that constitute that situation. The *similarity* between situations, therefore one's *familiarity* with them, can be articulated by the similarity between different parts of different situations<sup>100</sup>. Further, the *uniqueness* of particular situation consists in this: that the parts that constitute such situations cannot be repeated in other

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<sup>100</sup> This picture is suggested by Nussbaum (1992, 72).

situations, or that the whole combination of the parts that constitutes a particular situation can hardly be repeated. Intimate interpersonal relations are often like this. One's relationships with his or her parents, for example, are typically built on top of one's childhood and teenage experiences and memories associated with them. These experiences are themselves non-repeatable and full of such contingent and highly specific elements as a particular fight, a particular birthday, and so on<sup>101</sup>.

This gives us a way to illustrate the exercise of *nous*. One might say, for instance, that gaining familiarity with situations is a way to make sense of the situation one is in, as finding similarities is a way to organise one's experiences. This may also be the way how past experiences give us an eye of wisdom. One can also say we should always appreciate the uniqueness of *new* situations, despite the fact that they share similarities with situations we are already familiar with (or despite the fact that we need to make sense of new situations through finding similarities). For otherwise we would fail to keep in touch with the constantly changing reality. Further, one can say becoming familiar with complex situations is a way to acquire practical wisdom. In fact, one may think of how the *nous* approaches or interprets the situation in terms of how it figures out the variety of constituent parts of complex situations. Again, this is analogous to geometrical reasoning; figuring out how the shape can be decomposed into different constituent parts or transformed into different shapes by adding lines are ways to discover the geometrical properties of the original figure.

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<sup>101</sup> Nussbaum (1992, 72), and the works cited in (1992, n.36.)

So the critical practice model does seem to fit with the Socratic conception, and the “habituation-as-immersion” thesis does seem to fit with Moss’ account.

### **Interlude**

As the two sets of positions in the two chapters fit with each other, the debate between the critical practice model and the “habituation as immersion” thesis in ch.1 extends to the stalemate between the Socratic conception and Moss’ account in this chapter. The philosophical package of each side becomes even more complicated, and adjudicating between them becomes more difficult.

I have been explaining the relation between the first and the current chapter. In the next chapter, I will bring in what I found in the second chapter into the discussion. This will help me to confront the issue on yet another front. In particular, I will pick up some themes I introduced in section 2.3.4 (“Extending solidarity”). There, I pointed out that to explore a level of solidarity beyond conventional social roles helps the child to further understand different purposes of different human activities (since community is typically bound by some common purpose). Now the connection should be fairly straightforward: the purposes that bind communities are also the purposes that one grasps through practical induction. I will argue that revealing the communal background of our ethical lives helps shed light on a number of issues, including the nature of

ethical emotions, the exercise of intellectual skills in practical reasoning, and how ethical community should be egalitarian.

In effect, I will be arguing, as one can expect from my position in ch.1, in favour of Moss' account. By emphasising on the significance of the ethical community, I will argue for a rather non-intellectualised theory of practical reasoning.



## Chapter 4 Deliberation and the ethical community

### Introduction

This chapter explores practical deliberation and how “ethical community” plays an indispensable role in practical deliberation. I will begin by pushing the dialectic between Moss’ account and the Socratic conception one step forward. I will discuss how Moss’ account can try to accommodate the main points of its opponent without compromising its own contentions (section 4.1). Then I will proceed to outline the significance of friendship and emotion in shaping our goals (section 4.2). After a short section on intellectual skills (section 4.3), I will explain how the ethical community is indispensable in an Aristotelian theory of emotions and theory of practical deliberation (section 4.4). I end by revisiting the notion of “solidarity” I introduced in ch.2; I will further elaborate on the ethical qualities involved in an egalitarian ethical community.

### 4.1 Deliberation

Let’s start by briefly summarising Moss’ account. As we have seen, in her account, the induction is based on one’s evaluative perception. And since the theory of induction is meant to explain our grasp of the starting-point of syllogistic reasoning, it follows that (according Moss) it is through the evaluative perceptions (and *phantasia*) that one grasps the starting-point.

And this is done through sensing/feeling what is pleasurable and what is painful to the agent; Moss argued that Aristotle was more a psychological hedonist than we might think. As we have also seen, in Moss' account the induction process ends by having the agent explicitly using his goals (formed through perception and *phantasia*) to guide his reasoning and actions. In short, then, having instilled the sense of what is worth-pursuing and what is not, the world appears to one differently (Cf. NE 1113a23-31), and it is through explicitly articulating and representing to oneself these evaluative appearances that one reasons and decides "x is to-be-pursued".

Now, since the "starting-point" of deliberation is also one's ends, and since in Moss' account the final stage of induction consists in exercising one's practical rationality (to conduct means-ends reasoning), the debate about the theory of practical induction can be easily extended to the debate about whether Aristotle was a Humean: whether, in Aristotle's account, the practical intellect can deliberate about the ends. For if the ends are determined through induction based on evaluative perceptions, (and evaluative perceptions involve only the exercise of the non-rational soul) then *ceteris paribus* the practical intellect does not have much contribution in fixing the contents of ends. Conversely, if, according to the Socratic conception, we are supposed to grasp the essence of certain human goods or virtues through induction, then maybe we can use this conception as a justification for our choice of ends. We do, then, reason about what ends to adopt. So, in an attempt to push the dialectic forward, we may proceed to the corresponding theory of practical deliberation. Due to limited space,

however, I will not address all the positions involved in the debate between the Humean and the Anti-Humean. Rather, my discussion will be centred around Moss' account and what I found about the ethical community in ch. 2.

#### **4.1.1 Reasoning does not establish ends**

In discussing the function of *phronesis*, Moss argued how some of the passages usually cited as Anti-Humean (i.e. that one's ends are determined by one's intellect) actually only show how the intellect is responsible merely for deliberating the "things toward ends". In effect, she illustrated, quite compellingly I think, the differences between "having an end to guide one's deliberation" and "intellectually grasping the possible implementation of ends". Let me briefly explain the differences, for they will point to a way how Moss' account can accommodate the Socratic conception of practical induction.

In NE 1180b8-26, Aristotle argued that although particularised treatment and education have the advantage of providing a more exact or tailor-made supervision, preferably it is the agent (craftsman, doctor, trainer, educator) with knowledge *also* of the universal that can fulfil the task better. An Anti-Humean, therefore, may infer that the *phronimos* must have knowledge of the universals and this amounts to having his practical intellect determine the ends, i.e. what should or should not be pursued, according to some laws or general policies.

However, argued Moss, "legislative science" here need not refer to laws that prescribe ends. Knowledge of the universals are not "ends" - that is,

goals that tell us what certain courses of actions or plans are *for*. For instance, while “laws must prescribe their [the young] nurture and practices”, the purpose of doing so, namely to prepare the young to be virtuous, is fixed before such laws are prescribed. The laws are merely general institutional policies that implement this end. These policies can be counted as “things toward ends”. Relatedly, although Aristotle did characterised political science as being concerned with the highest human good, this means only that political science *aims at* promoting this good, not that it determines what it is. Of course, politicians must have the right conception of the human good and must begin by stating clearly what it is (NE 1094a22-25). In general, one might say, political science contributes to policy-making by explicitly stating and clarifying clearly the contents of the right conception. But this does not mean it is political science that determines the correct conception; rather, the contents are given by one’s virtues and this makes virtues of character a necessary condition of political science (NE 1095b4-6)<sup>102</sup>. The ruler cannot rule well without temperance and justice (Pol. 1259b37).

So Moss concluded: “To say that *phronesis* is concerned with universals as well as particulars, then, is simply to say that deliberation involves

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<sup>102</sup> Wiggins and McDowell’s famous proposal according to which the practical intellect can specify the “constituents of ends”, as opposed to purely instrumental means, can be treated similarly. What they regarded as “constituents of ends” can be seen as “things towards ends” in Moss’ account. The upshot is that one can accept their proposal without drawing the conclusion that therefore the practical intellect can determine the ends. The practical intellect is making explicit what is already fixed implicitly by evaluative appearances (see below). See n.96 and the citation there.

universal claims as well as particular ones”<sup>103</sup>. That *phronesis* must involve universals, therefore, does not imply deliberation can be about ends<sup>104</sup>.

Now, to go back to the Socratic conception of practical induction, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the general conception such induction process establishes is similar or at least comparable to the laws or policies just mentioned. For one thing, if the general conception comes from a collection of immediately practicable judgments, then there is no surprise that, like the universals in craft production, it is useful mainly as law-like generalisation of particular judgments. The general conception therefore belongs to “things toward ends” rather than the ends themselves. One has to *first* care about, say, being courageous, *then* one makes those particular evaluative judgements and forms the general conception of what courage may require of one.<sup>105</sup> The ends provide the *raison d’être* for the “things toward ends”: laws, policies, general conceptions.

If that’s the case, then this is how Moss’ account can accommodate the Socratic conception of practical induction. Having first instilled virtuous (or, for that matter, vicious) dispositions as to what is and what is not worth

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<sup>103</sup> Moss (2012, 186).

<sup>104</sup> It is in this light that one should read the remark “the doctor does not heal man except incidentally, but rather Callias or Socrates or someone else . . . (Met. 981a18-19).” While the merely experienced recognises only particular patterns for individuals, the craftsman with knowledge of universals knows that “[this cure] benefited all people of this sort, divided off into one type, when ill with this disease” (981a7-12). The knowledge of universals here are useful as what best categorise the particular patterns, or as law-like generalisation of particular cases, rather than as what prescribe the ends.

<sup>105</sup> Admittedly, one will have *some* understanding as to *what* it is that one is caring about, but given Moss’ account of practical induction, such understanding may just consist in non-rational evaluative cognition, i.e. evaluative perceptions and appearances.

pursuing, and thus what appears pleasurable and painful, the agent can then entertain the general conceptions established through particular judgments and see how they may best promote the given ends. This seems to fit with a point Moss made clear in a later article. Exchanging “ends” with “values” (as a translation of *telos* and *skopos*), Moss gave one more motivation for claiming that one’s ends (values) are determined by the non-rational soul: these “are not the sort of thing you can reason yourself into having”<sup>106</sup>. This is particularly true when it comes to the fundamental value commitments, i.e. those commitments that define one’s moral character (see section 1.1.2). For they have complicated roles to play in our practical lives; they are the nexus that connect dispositions to feel, act, choose, and reason. As such, they can come only through habituation, long-term practices, exposure to the right kind of circumstances - in short, a proper upbringing.

This is confirmed by a close reading of NE 1103a5-8, where Aristotle drew the distinction between virtues of character and virtues of the intellect. These two kinds of virtue are said to correspond with the non-rational part and the rational part of the soul respectively. “For in speaking about a man’s character we do not say that he is wise or has understanding but that he is good-tempered or temperate”. Indeed, it is part of our common sense that it is not in virtue of some intellectual excellence that we are praised or blamed as good or bad. Rather, as Aristotle later made explicit, virtues are whether “we stand well or badly with reference to the passions” (NE

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<sup>106</sup> Moss (2014, 239).

1105b25). We might as well follow Aristotle's strategy and take a look at our vocabularies. Courageous, compassionate, trustworthy, etc., these are all natural candidates for praising others' character, and they do not usually suggest any close connections with such intellectual excellences as wittiness, being analytical, and being rigorous. The virtues of character have their own standard, which is distinct and different from the standard of the virtues of the intellect. This echoes Moss' idea that one's ends or values are shaped by the non-rational part of the soul.

But of course, there is a relevant difference between the intellectually equipped and the intellectually impoverished virtuous man. Being analytical can give one a clear head, which is particularly important when it comes to difficult moral situations. One will then have to (as once explained in section 3.3.3) approach the different aspects of the situation in different ways, shift between different perspectives, and so on. These intellectual efforts certainly help one to come up with a, say, just policy that does justice to the interests of all the affected parties. Further, being rigorous helps one to explain one's decisions to others, which can be crucial if collective efforts are required to solve the problem at hand. As these illustrations suggest, excellence in deliberation matters mainly as skills to furnish given virtuous ends, including giving the right analysis of the situation or coming up with the best policy (more on this below). The ends provide the *raison d'être* for these intellectual efforts. This explains how the general conceptions about what ought to do here and now (as required by specific virtues, etc) can be

regarded as “things toward ends”, and thus accommodated within Moss’ account.

#### **4.1.2 A comprehensive conception of human value**

But some doubts remain. For one thing, Aristotle said, “we must enjoin every one that has the power to live according to his own choice to set up for himself some object for the good life to aim at” (EE 1214b7-11; NE 1094a18-1094b11). This looks like the intellect can help to identify the target one should be aiming and determine what kind of life one should pursue. This seems to be a way to “deliberate about ends”, which is thought impossible according to Moss’ account.

For another, as mentioned in section 3.2, Sorabji believed that eventually the inductive process will lead us to an intuition about our ultimate goal, namely *eudaimonia*. As such, then, the general conceptions formed through inductive reasoning should contain a hierarchy within themselves, as different requirements about what ought to do can be arranged hierarchically. Eventually, then, the Socratic conception requires the agent to have a *comprehensive* (all-encompassing) conception with all the constituent-conception well-ordered. Now, this comprehensive conception helps justify one’s choices and actions by giving the specific ends one is deliberating their proper places within a *hierarchy of values*<sup>107</sup>. Possessing such a comprehensive conception of the human values is a hallmark of practical wisdom (NE 1140a25-30). For instance, one may wonder whether happiness includes such goods as fortune, good birth and beauty, and to

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<sup>107</sup> Inglis (2014, sec.3)



what extent we are morally allowed to pursue them. In a nutshell, Aristotle's answer is that they should be pursued insofar as they promote the ideal form of life (a life of virtuous activities). Although these goods may not be directly useful, they nonetheless put one into a more advantageous position in leading a noble life. For instance, they can increase one's charisma, enhance one's public image, and thereby prepare one to perform noble acts (NE 1099a31-b6)<sup>108</sup>. It requires (philosophical) reflection to give these specific ends their proper places. The agent will then have the right priorities; he will not, for instance, overvalue the importance of good birth over virtuous character. These careful analyses of the relative evaluative importance of different goods, one might object, cannot be the result of merely the exercise of the non-rational soul. The rational soul must have contributed to fix the ends - more precisely, to fix the proper place of specific ends within the hierarchy of values.

In light of these doubts, advocates of the Socratic conception might try to turn the table on his opponents. They may insist that although educating the non-rational part of the soul is necessary, what EE 1214b7-11 describes as "the power to live according to his own choice" is still indispensable, and attaining the comprehensive hierarchical conception of human values is of much practical significance. The role of the virtues of character, accordingly, is really just to listen and obey "as the logos commands" (NE 1102b26-32; 1119b13-18; 1125b34-35).

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<sup>108</sup> Interpretation of the passage found in Kraut (1989, 254-5).

By contrast, one might respond, on Moss' behalf, that the comprehensive (all-encompassing) conception of human values is not really necessary. For having a good upbringing already gives you the right priorities: one's character is not expressed only in one's actions but also in one's process of *reasoning* (see section 1.1.3): some lines will not be crossed if one is a virtuous person, some options do not even cross the virtuous person's mind, and so on<sup>109</sup>. Further, in deciding what to do, we consider the particularities case-by-case rather than appealing to a comprehensive conception of human values<sup>110</sup>. One may not even have a coherent picture about how these particular elements fit together; yet one can still make a wise-enough choice. At times, appealing to rules of thumb sufficed<sup>111</sup>.

So it seems we are in a stalemate. Followers of Moss may insist that it is the virtues of character, properly instilled, that give our deliberation and the general conception the required *raison d'être*. Moss' account tries to accommodate the general conceptions as part of "things toward ends"; and the comprehensive conception of human values is not even necessary for wise decisions. The Socratic conception, on the other hand, may argue that all that one's upbringing can do is to *prepare* one for acquiring wisdom. Wisdom itself, marked by having the comprehensive conception of human values, cannot be given through the excellence of the non-rational part of the soul.

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<sup>109</sup> Broadie (1991, 245).

<sup>110</sup> Note that these considerations of particularities are typically made available to the ordinary mature agents through sufficient experiences (to the right kind of situations), not intellectual reflections.

<sup>111</sup> Nussbaum (1992, 73).

In what remains of the present chapter I will bring in what I found in Chapter 2 about the importance of ethical community and prove that it can help adjudicate the stalemate between the Socratic conception and Moss' account. My strategy is fairly straightforward: I will elaborate in greater detail the way how the non-rational soul shapes one's ends/values. I believe this will show that the above-mentioned doubts are really ungrounded and a rather non-intellectualised account of practical deliberation is closer to the truth.

## **4.2 Friendship**

### **4.2.1 Friendship and *eudaimonia***

First, recall, I argued that the egalitarian fellow feeling or "solidarity" among the participants (parents to children, siblings, non-familial comrades, etc.) is at the heart of Aristotelian conception of ethical community, and this is supposed to be distinguished from the paternalistic Platonic conception. The theory of friendship plays some important role. I will now articulate some general connection between friendship and one's goals.

Let's first look at *eudaimonia*, the highest human good or the ultimate goal. In NE IV. 9 Aristotle discussed "whether the happy man will need friends or not" (1169b3). For the happy man (i.e. the man living a flourishing life) is (by default) self-sufficient, and thus will not need a "friend" to bestow benefits on him.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Aristotle first replied that since it is characteristic of a virtuous person to confer benefits (than to receive) and since it is nobler to confer them on friends (rather than on strangers), one needs friends to express one's virtues (1169b3-15). This response, it seems to me, is a bit strained.

One of Aristotle's arguments involves the thesis "human being is a political being" (b18). Human beings live a social life, and among all kinds of people, it is much more pleasant to live with friends than with strangers (b19-21). We have come upon this notion several times before: for Aristotle, the need of friendship is grounded in human nature.

Then there is an argument about how happiness is a sort of activity and how friendship can contribute to this activity. It seems to be intertwined with a long and difficult passage several lines below. There is much to discuss in this argument but I will have to be brief. The ideas seem to be the following. One's friend is, according to Aristotle, "another self". Since the virtuous man enjoys his life, and since his friend is similar to him, so the friend also enjoy his own life. But the virtuous man enjoys fine and pleasant things, so he enjoys having such a friend and spending his life with the friend - that is, his company (1170b14-6). So friendship is one of the essential components of one's *eudaimonia*. This is what we should expect given what we have said about educating children. In both contexts, friendship is one of the essential components. This seems to be good news, for it paves the way for claiming that the education of children also prepares them to have a *eudaimonistic* life. Indeed, "it is presumably strange too to make a blessed person live a solitary life" (1169b16). What's more, this also gives us a rough answer to the first doubt noted above, namely, that one needs the intellect to identify what kind of life one should choose (so the intellect is responsible for determining the ends after all). For to say that childhood education prepares the child to have a flourishing life

invites the idea that what kind of life one will choose (will consider as flourishing) is to a considerable extent fixed by one's upbringing.

Finally, to come back to the point about how human nature demands companions, Aristotle noted that “for a solitary person life is difficult, since it is not easy for him, when all by himself, to be continuously in activity, whereas together with others and in relation to others it is easier” (1170a4-6). As Cooper interpreted, simply as a matter of our psychological make-up, humans cannot automatically and continuously engage in any activities with the same degree of passion merely because of what the activities *are like*<sup>113</sup>. Even for activities that one enjoys very much doing - say, playing music - one's feelings can be paralysed by repetition. But with the company of one's true friends, even repetition can be a source of enjoyment (“ah, I feel the same, too”; 1170a4-12). In general, friendship contributes to *eudaimonia* by facilitating the sense of satisfaction the participants get in joining group activities<sup>114</sup>.

#### **4.2.2 How one learns about values through friendships**

So I have explained some general relations between friendship and the ultimate goal, *eudaimonia*. I now proceed to more specific goals.

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<sup>113</sup> Cooper (1980, 331).

<sup>114</sup> At times Aristotle spoke as if having a true friend is what allows us to be *aware of* our own happiness (1170b1-14). For sometimes we can be quite ignorant as to how lucky or blessed we are, but if the same is happening to someone very similar to us (friend is “another self”), we are more likely to appreciate the pleasant nature of the event (1169b34-5). After all, we would be “as impoverished as other animals”, if, although exhibiting wondrous ingenuity and rich personalities, we are not able to love and celebrate these fascinating phenomena through our own eyes (as the wondrous nature of animals is appreciated only by the human observer) (Broadie & Rowe (2002, 63).

Developing friendship with others may just help one to better understand different values. This is particularly true in the case of “character-friendship” - friendship founded on character. As is well-known, Aristotle distinguished three kinds of friendship, the pleasure-friendship, the benefits-friendship, and the character-friendship. All three kinds share some genuine features of friendship: they are bound by mutually acknowledged reciprocal good will that is grounded on the qualities for which the participants are loved in the first place (NE VIII. 4). For pleasure-friendship, such quality is pleasure, for benefits-friendship, it is benefits, for character-friendship, character. The character-friendship is the most complete and perfect kind of friendship, because it is also pleasurable and beneficial for the participants, while the two other kinds of friendship are not inclusive in similar ways.

Now, as we have seen in section 1.1.4, one’s character informs one’s evaluation of specific ends and thus expresses one’s conception of the good. In Moss’ account, this amounts to saying that the general evaluative appearances one has as to what is worth-pursuing express one’s character. It follows that character-friendship encapsulates one’s grasp of the friend’s conception of the good or his perception of what is valuable, for the friendship is grounded on their respective characters. This captures the intuitive sense of *intimacy* true friendship should exemplify<sup>115</sup>. Friends will find their attitudes and maybe even emotions naturally “in sync”.

So when friends bound by character hang out (“living together and sharing in talk and thought”), communication about their respective fundamental

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<sup>115</sup> Cooper (1980, 330).

ends blossoms and there will be mutual understanding (NE 1170b10-13). They will express their views on, say, politics, how they spend their leisure, how they feel about others, their dreams, and so on. This communication is itself pleasurable and is one of the constituents of *eudaimonia*. But communicating one's conception of goodness inevitably involves articulating and exchanging some general notions concerning the constituents of goodness - more precisely, general notions as they are understood by *this particular* individual. So in the case of character-friendship, general understanding of the constituents of goodness and perception of the particular exemplifications of such goodness are nicely united. In this way, developing character-friendship with others enhances one's ethical sense. (Further, the experience of "having friends" certainly fosters ethical qualities such as love and trust, see below).

All these square fairly well with Moss' account. For one thing, arguably, the interaction with different characters will broaden one's basis of induction, and therefore one's evaluative appearances. For another, she argued that beliefs assent to appearances<sup>116</sup>. That is, despite being more conceptualised, the contents of beliefs are determined by one's perception and *phantasia*. All that rational cognition does is to articulate explicitly what is implicitly understood in one's non-rational cognition. This will occur when one tries to understand the different particularised conceptions of goodness. As she said, she can grant this to the Intellectualists without compromising her own position, since

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<sup>116</sup> See section 3.3.1, n.83.

conceptualising implicit contents does not entail having insights into the highest human good (the function of *nous* according to the Socratic conception).

#### **4.2.3 How emotions inform our specific goals**

In this connection it is natural to recall Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. The key to an Aristotelian theory of emotion and rhetoric is the idea of non-rational cognition, i.e. evaluative perceptions and *phantasia*. Moss' certainly puts such cognition right at the centre of her theory of practical induction and virtues.<sup>117</sup>

Mostly because of the cognitive nature of emotions, these emotional states are susceptible to rhetorical exhortation. As is well-known, the *Rhetoric* is devoted precisely to such a project. By familiarising oneself with the different beliefs, dispositions, objects, circumstances and behaviours typically associated with different emotions, and by describing the scenario as vividly as possible,<sup>118</sup> the orator hopes to master the art of directing (manipulating) the audiences' hearts.

Now we are ready to give a more substantive reply to the first objection noted above: that we need the practical intellect to identify the goal of action. Since emotions are cognitive, and since emotions are pluralistic and context-sensitive in the sense that naturally one will experience different emotions for different occasions, it is plausible to suggest that emotions can help reveal the salient features of the situation to which the emotions

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<sup>117</sup> This at least amounts to the position now called the cognitivist account of emotion: that emotions involve evaluations. Moss (2012, 76).

<sup>118</sup> Rhet. 1386a29-b7.



are answerable. Consequently, to better understand emotions in general and one's own specific emotions in a particular context will help calibrate one's appreciation of the salient features of the situation. As a result, one can approach the issues and decide what to do by emotionally engaging with the situation, case by case. For instance, one deliberates by thinking of whether a course of action will make one proud or make one shameful. This depends to a considerable extent on the list of cases one associates with "proud" and "shame" respectively. This practical intellect may be responsible for articulating the implicit contents of emotions (and the salient features of the situation the emotions are addressing), but it does not determine the contents themselves.

### **4.3 Intellectual skills**

So I have argued that deliberation is not of ends. But this does not mean that the practical intellect does not have any substantive contributions to practical deliberation. In fact, in line with what I have said in section 4.1.1, where general laws (i.e. not just immediate means) can also be included in the "things toward ends", in this section I will explain how the "intellectual skills" Aristotle discussed (in NE VI. 10 and 11) contribute to practical reasoning.

The point is that to acquire these skills is far from developing a comprehensive conception of human value. Firstly, one will need discernment or consideration (*gnome*): an ability to give "correct judgement of what is reasonable/equitable/decent (*epieikes*)" (1143a20). What is equitable is explained in terms of giving the right verdict concerning

exceptional cases - cases where universal laws failed to apply. Sometimes this involves having an insight into possible non-stereotypical ways to fulfil the demand of certain virtues.

Then, Aristotle believed that someone who has discernment also has the ability to sympathise with others' point of view (*sympne*; 1143a28-31). Consequently, doing what is equitable also involves an ability to exchange different parties' different perspectives on the same subject. The agent needs to think beyond his own horizon, and try to get "in sync with" others' emotions. Hursthouse (2006) especially emphasises the importance of "comprehension" (*sunesis*) in this respect<sup>119</sup>, which involves the ability to judge "in order to discriminate about the things wisdom deals with, when someone else is speaking" (1143a11-16). But Aristotle's remarks are very brief, and what follows is my own elaboration. Since our understanding of situations are largely dependent on others reports and accounts, the wise man will have to be able to do the following. a) To judge *about* others' words, which might include discriminating between: reliable and unreliable source of information, semantic and pragmatic expressions, sincere but mistaken accounts and deceiving but useful accounts, and so on. Comprehension allows the wise to avoid one-sidedness as much as possible, in the sense that it enables him to make good use of the information and accounts gathered, so that he can piece together a bigger picture of the situation. b) To judge *with* others' considered views, as they are equally intelligent. In cases where one needs to address the preferences

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<sup>119</sup> Hursthouse (2006, 293-5).

of agents, comprehension allows the wise person to negotiate and mediate better. In this way he can achieve the best solution where most of the participants' preferences can be accommodated.

This echoes the analogy between the interpretation of situation and geometrical reasoning we noted in section 3.3. One tries to analyse the situation based on what one already knows, one shifts between different perspectives until finally a new and more reasonable interpretation comes up. Different perspectives are like different hypotheses, and one needs to find a solution that can withstand the tests of most (if not all) reasonable hypotheses (in agreement with most perspectives). This fits what Aristotle said about the concerns of comprehension: one needs to exercise comprehension only when one puzzles about what to do (1143a5).

So here is the final reply to the objection that says we need the comprehensive conception of human value to determine the ends. One certainly needs the intellectual skills to analyse information, others' speeches, preferences and perspectives, and to come up with a bigger picture of the situation. Will this lead to us to a comprehensive conception of human value? But these skills are directed at the situation, not a general conception. It can tell you, for instance, when your shy friend neither accepts nor rejects an invitation, he means not to come, but just doesn't know how to refuse. But it cannot tell you that, for instance, friendship is an essential part of *eudaimonia*. That, I have argued, is instilled in the agent as part of the education of the virtues of character (viz. about what is worth pursuing).

## 4.4 The ethical community

### 4.4.1 Emotions and the ethical community

Now, note that the ethical community plays a crucial role in shaping, brewing, communicating and developing the emotions. The effect of a communal background is most explicit when Aristotle remarked that people feel shame when (they imagine they are) being observed by others (already quoted before):

Cydias said to the people in the debate about the allotment of land in Samos; for he thought the Athenians *should suppose the Greeks standing around them in a circle, actually seeing* and not only later hearing about what they might vote. (1384b32-35, emphasise mine)

Relatedly, there is a very close relation between “shame” and “honour” on the one hand and “ethical membership” on the other, at least as Aristotle conceived of it. This is most evident in the following passage:

people before whom we feel shame are those whose opinion of us matters to us. Such persons are: those who admire us, those whom we admire, those by whom we wish to be admired, those with whom we are competing, and those whose opinion of us we respect (Rhet. ii 6.1384a22–27).

Further, the ethical community is crucial not just for giving ethical assessments. In fact, it is reasonable to suggest that the emotions are embedded in the interpersonal relationships one shares with other members. For instance, Aristotle noted that one feels pity “in general whenever one is so disposed as to remember such things happening to himself or to one of his loved ones, or to expect such things to occur to him

or to one of his loved ones.” (1386a1-3). This is expected given what we have said about immersing into an ethical community. In fact, Aristotle once characterised passion, the focal point of virtue education, as what gives birth to friendship in the first place: “passion is the quality of the soul which begets friendship and enables us to love; notably the spirit within us is more stirred against our friends and acquaintances than against those who are unknown to us, when we think that we are despised by them” (Rhet. 1328a1-5). This reaffirms the idea that *philia* is indispensable for (early) moral education.

The echoes a claim I made at the end of ch.2: the human develops virtues (and vices) *in* forming communities. Virtues and vices are impossible without the community. Further, the ethical importance of having *good* friend can be explained by this: they provide the favourable conditions for the expression of quasi-virtues (section 2.2.3).

#### **4.4.2 Intellectual skills and the ethical community**

There are also unmistakable traces of the presence of the ethical community in one’s exercise of the intellectual skills. Recall two points earlier. First, I suggested that developing character-friendship is a way to develop one’s ethical sense because communicating and exchanging viewpoints with friends is a way to learn different particularised conceptions of goodness - conceptions of goodness as they are exemplified by one’s friend’s character. Second, I noted that the exercise of comprehension involves sympathising with others’ perspectives. These two points combined suggest that the use of comprehension can be directed at one’s

character: what we would say “to read” others’ character (and personalities).

Aristotle noted that “this is where the name “comprehension”—in the sense of what makes people have good comprehension (*eunsunetoi*)—came from, namely, the comprehension involved in learning. (1143a15-18).” As such, comprehension is located at an interesting point somewhere between theoretical and practical wisdom. For on the one hand, it involves cognitive attitudes such as beliefs, and is discerning rather than prescriptive (1143a6-9). But on the other, it concerns things in the practical realm: what people say about what is acting finely (*kalos*) (a14). So comprehension is about discerning what people say about fine actions. Presumably, what one regards as fine tells something about one’s character (at least one’s aspiration). Further, as we have seen, comprehension is also about those situations where one is puzzled about what to do. Arguably, this tells something about one’s character, too: as conventional wisdom tells us, one’s decisions and actions in morally ambiguous or otherwise difficult situations tell a lot about one’s character. To read one’s character, then, involves seeing things from their perspectives: on what difficulties they face, the costs and the compromises, and so on.

So, the ethical community is relevant for a theory of practical deliberation, in the sense that one needs to sympathise with other members of the community. But ethical community provides the framework for deliberation in a further sense: there can be collective reasoning. This should not be so surprising. If *eudaimonia*, as I have explained, is itself constituted by sharing

lives and cooperating with others (NE 1097b8-14), then one may well rely on others for their life experiences and expertise when deliberating about what to do. In fact, this is a commonplace in managing a household, which is part of what practical wisdom is concerned with (1142a29-33). Relatedly, in NE III. 3, Aristotle argued that we deliberate only about those things that are possible for us to achieve, and: “by ‘possible things’ I mean things that might be brought about by our own efforts; and these in a sense include things that can be brought about by the efforts of our friends, since the moving principle is in ourselves (1112b27-28)”. So, as long as the moving principle is originated in the group as a whole, different individuals (though numerically distinct) can be seen as participating the same process of collective deliberation<sup>120</sup>.

We are very far from the comprehensive and hierarchical conception of human values. Below is also my elaboration, but I think it is fairly “Aristotelian”. Excellent deliberation may look like this. Suppose what you think you need to do will put you in a dangerous position. You reasonably believe that the action is morally required. But you do not know if you are the most suitable person to do that, nor if you are the only one who has the chance. So there will be room for thinking, reasonably, “It’s not now or never, it will be alright even if I don’t do it now”.<sup>121</sup> Meanwhile, you have friends and families caring for you, urging you not to take that risk. So, courage may push you into one direction, and the care you have in return to

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<sup>120</sup> Sherman (1989, 54).

<sup>121</sup> For Kantians: think of it in terms of imperfect duties.

the love of your friends and family may push you into another. Here is the deliberation. You start to think of a courageous figure you are familiar with, and imagine what he will do. It could be someone you know in your daily life, or a historical figure, maybe even a fictional figure. You have concrete understanding of his specific attitudes, dispositions, preferences, and so on. At the same time, you also think of what your friends and families would say if you do choose to stand out. It will be like envisaging the conversation between these two parties.

Theorising deliberation in terms of conversation has several theoretical advantages. Firstly, as I take it this is fairly common. Few (if any) people really deliberate by *first* settling on a well-defended choice of end (through Socratic inductive reasoning), *then* working out the means to this chosen end. Instead, people often begins by an end particularised to a certain degree and familiarised with a certain “face” (the image/figure/model associated). It is such an end that we can relate to and therefore are interested in pursuing in the first place. Second, interpretation of the situation is perspective-dependent. What one sees as threat, another sees as challenge; what one sees as chaos, another sees as opportunity. If I am deliberating whether to do that action in the above-mentioned scenario, what I see as the least dangerous alternative could be, in my family’s eyes, an indication of my stubbornness, since I decided to stand out anyway, despite their disagreement. In ordinary conversation, people naturally describe the situation in the way they see it, as it presents to them *given* their perspectives. So theorising the deliberative process in terms of



conversation captures the perspective-dependency when one is shifting between different interpretations. Finally, utterances often come with emotional power. Should I feel exhausted and start to consider whether to give up, particular rhetoric or expressions may keep me fighting (e.g. “think of those who sacrificed for this. Don’t let them down”). Theorising deliberation in terms of conversation captures how different proposals one deliberates about have emotional, therefore motivational, power.

#### **4.5 Egalitarian ethical community (solidarity revisited)**

In section 2.3.4 I wrote “to be able to go beyond the conventional social roles and look for a higher level of equality (thus of solidarity) is itself a crucial step in the course of virtue development”. And I promised to elaborate on some the themes noted there. Now we are ready to do so. This will also help illustrate once again Moss’ account given what I have said about the role of ethical community (and *philia*) in influencing one’s emotions and practical deliberation.

I wrote that blending into non-familial communities is itself a way to learn about the purposes, thus the values, of different human activities. We should now be more familiar with the key terminologies at least. In general, we now have a theory, built on Moss’ account, that tells us how “human activities”, “the pursuit of value”, and “ethical community” relate to each other. We explore human values through participating purposeful human activities with other members of the community. Now, the crucial question is: what binds us as equal members of a non-conventional community? Consider this passage:

(a) But friendship seems to consist more in loving than in being loved. An indication of this is that it is in loving that mothers take enjoyment. For mothers sometimes give away their own children to be reared by others, and though they love them (since they know who they are), they do not look for reciprocal love (if love in both directions is impossible). Instead it seems enough for them to see that their children are doing well, and they themselves love their children even if these render up none of the things appropriate to a mother because of their ignorance of who she is.

(b) Since friendship consists more in loving, however, and those who love their friends are praised, loving seems to be the virtue characteristic of friends, so that (c) it is those in whom love comes about in accord with worth who are steadfast friends and have a steadfast friendship. It is in this way that even unequals will best be friends, since in this way they will be equalized. (NE 1159a27-37, trans. Reeve<sup>122</sup>).

The reference to giving away the children in (a) may sound surprising, given, as we have seen, what Aristotle said about the practical difficulties of fully separating newborn babies from their biological parents.<sup>123</sup> But clearly it is meant to illustrate a more general point: the kind of love that asks for no return (for there is no opportunity to return in that scenario) at all. Those mothers who send their children away to be reared by others (for practical reasons, the passage implies) cannot expect the children to pay back their love because the children simply do not know who their biological mother

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<sup>122</sup> Reeve (2014, 146).

<sup>123</sup> See ch.2, n.19.

are. The love of the mothers consists primarily in seeing “that their children are doing well, and they themselves love their children”<sup>124</sup>.

I think Aristotle was making a general point about the expressions of love as it is characteristic of friends: that it is more about to give (loving) than to receive (being loved). This is (b). The reference to mothers is meant to illustrate how this is possible even in the extreme situation (with no possibility of returning love at all). To receive love from the beloved is not part of the reason why each party in the friendship gives his or her love in the first place. From the subjective point of view, this shares similarity with the kind of nonreciprocal and wholehearted concerns the mothers have for their estranged children. The difference is just that, given a mutual bond, character-friends *do* get the return of love. Building on this thought, Aristotle in (c) proceeded to suggest that in unwavering and permanent friendship, the friends must be worthy of such love. Then he drew the conclusion that is most interesting for our purpose: that the unequals can be equalised.

So unequals can be equalised when: a) each party of the relationship focuses on giving rather than receiving; and b) each party is worthy of the love given by the other party (or parties).

What follows is my elaboration. First, note that at least for character-friends between well-brought up agents, friends are counting on each other to keep themselves virtuous. As Aristotle continued: “For it is characteristic

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<sup>124</sup> Note that the passage does not seem to imply that there is anything (not anything concrete anyway) the mothers can do *for* the children. At best, it may include choosing a better foster family; but obviously this is not guaranteed.

of good people neither to commit errors themselves nor to allow their friends to do so” (1159b5-6). Conversely, it is by being accountable to each other that they show themselves to be worthy of the love, and thus of a steadfast friendship. So other than mutual understanding, the intimacy between friends is also expressed in the degree of trust one has for another. And this is a kind of trust with moral ramification: one’s friend will not ask oneself to do dishonourable things, for otherwise one will not be worthy of love.

Second, as I have said, sympathetic understanding requires one to have certain respect towards others’ decisions. If so, then, the intimacy expressed in mutual understanding and mutual trust also facilitates mutual respect, for naturally it is easier for one to respect those one understands and trusts.

But one may observe that “respect” as an attitude sometimes requires not interfering with others’ decisions (whenever appropriate). This raises the question: how is one’s respect for one’s friends expressed, if respect requires noninterference? How is a friend different from, say, a complete stranger (since both of them did nothing to interfere with one’s choice)?

I suggest that there is a question of appropriate attitude. This is a question not about action (thus no possibility of interference), but about perspectives.

This brings us back to the nature of solidity. For there can be perspective that one adopts to show one’s *solidarity* with one’s friend, when there is not much to be done. One can show one’s wholehearted support of one’s friend

by adopting the perspective that allows one to feel as if one is sharing “one” life with one’s friend. While this may not lead to any immediate and relevant action, it certainly fosters the steadfastness of the friendship. The upshot is that the intimacy of character-friendship is not just expressed in mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual respect, but also mutual solidarity.

What I have said hitherto in relation to NE 1159a27-37 illustrates quite elaborately the spirit of egalitarian ethical communities, and therefore how unequals can be equalised. Love that does not ask for anything in return shows one’s passions, which helps break the external barriers that unequal social status may bring. Mutual trust shows possibility of cooperation, which facilitates fellow-feeling. Noninterference shows room for disagreements (with respect to decisions), which fosters diversity. Mutual solidarity shows unity, which helps sustain the community.

One question remains: how exactly do we identify the non-conventional egalitarian ethical community? Given we have elaborated on the qualities essential for an egalitarian ethical community, I think the answer is that it depends on the context. It can be formed via strategic (though not only strategic) concerns, or via cooperation between different social groups. The point is that they are crucial for virtue development as long as they instil the ethical qualities I outlined: love, mutual understanding, etc.

Given that the ethical community constitutes a larger part of the cultural context the agent is supposed to immerse himself in (see the end of ch.2), the Aristotelian account dictates that this community - the egalitarian

community - is the one within which habituation-immersion takes place. To go through *mousike* education, for instance, is to learn about love, respect, trust, understanding and solidarity with the fictional characters (and, of course, eventually with the real-life counterparts).

Basically, I add two further elements to Moss' account: the ethical community (friendship) and intellectual skills. I am inclined to say my conclusion is still within her basic contention. For one, if habituation really is immersion into certain cultural context and community, and if the ethical community really does have a role to play in shaping one's passions or emotions, then it is reasonable to say we form the general appearances as to what is worth-pursuing (this is how Moss characterises our endorsement of ends) through living as a member of an ethical community. For another, given a very wide notion of "things toward ends" (that can include items such as general policies), and despite substantive contributions from the exercise of intellectual skills, the practical intellect is responsible only for figuring out possible implementations of given ends. Reasoning does not establish ends after all.

## **Recap**

This chapter explores an Aristotelian theory of practical deliberation and how the ethical community contributes to this deliberation. I began by discussing how reasoning does not establish ends, which amounts to an argument against the Anti-Humean about Aristotle's theory of practical reason. Then I proceeded to explain how one learns about values through friendships: in character-friendships, the friend's character is a

particularised version of his conception of goodness, in gaining mutual understanding with friends, one thereby learns about the corresponding conception (of goodness). With reference to the *Rhetoric*, I also explained how emotion informs our specific goals. Then I articulated the elements related to ethical community implicit in Aristotle's theory of emotions and his discussion of intellectual skills. I emphasised that what he called "comprehension" (*sunesis*) requires sympathetic understanding, and this echoes my discussion of friendship. Building on the idea that it is through developing friendships that one learns about values, I then suggested "practical deliberation" should be theorised as a kind of conversation. Finally, I return to the topic of solidarity and egalitarian ethical community again, in the hope that this will deepen our understanding of the ethical qualities involved in participating in the practices of an egalitarian ethical community (which I believe is Aristotle's preferred version of community). I discover that these qualities are: mutual love, mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual solidarity.

## Final Conclusion

In the General Introduction and several places I talked of how there are basically two camps in theorising “virtues” - the intellectualised and the non-intellectualised - and each bring with it its own “philosophical package”. Now we should have a better idea what this means. At the end of Chapter 3, I indicated how the critical practice model (in Chapter 1) and the Socratic conception of practical induction can enrich each other: the specification of the ideal model should be informed by one’s latest understanding of the essence of the relevant virtue and/or *eudaimonia*. Similarly, the “habituation as immersion” thesis (in Chapter 1) and Moss’ account of practical induction belong to the same package, as Moss’ account of how one generalises from particular evaluative perceptions to form evaluative appearances can help explain the process of immersion. This is where, as I have argued, the boundary is most clear.

But other parts allow for the same demarcation, too. What I dubbed the epistemic reading of the effect of habituation, though rejected early on, belongs to the intellectualised camp, as I have briefly noted near the end of section 1.2.1. According to this reading, habituation gives us a vantage point to grasp firmly the nature of *eudaimonia*. This looks like something the Socratic conception of practical induction would agree to and welcome; and one’s understanding of the nature of *eudaimonia* can then serve as the ground for articulating the ideal model. As the dialectic between the two



camps moves on, what I have said about quasi-virtues and the ethical value of the nuclear family (Chapter 2) also find their places. Quasi-virtues are non-intellectual starting-points of virtue education (section 1.3) and as such the category serves to explain how (human) nature and habits (as immersion) work together (section 2.2.4). So “quasi-virtues” enrich the non-intellectualised account of virtue education. Together with the idea that the nuclear family constitutes a crucial component of the context of habituation-immersion, I concluded at the end of Chapter 2 that virtues and vices are impossible without the community and habituation-immersion expresses the nature of human beings as political (social) animal. As another nuance of the idea that nature and habits work together, this conclusion further elaborates the non-intellectualist account of virtue acquisition.

Finally, the opposition between the two camps also finds its expression in the theory of practical deliberation. The intellectualised account says we need a comprehensive conception of human value to deliberate excellently, and the non-intellectualised account that I argued for says it is one’s proper upbringing, emotions, and connection with the ethical community that shape one’s evaluation of ends. Then, theorising deliberation as conversation and emphasising sympathetic understanding are some ways how the non-intellectualised account can do justice to the positive and robust contributions the practical intellect can have in practical deliberation. They complete the non-intellectualised camp for they show how an non-intellectualised account can be true not just of early virtue education (of the

child, of the passions) but also of wise (excellent) deliberation. The emphases on solidarity, love, mutual trust and mutual understanding epitomise how the non-intellectualised camp can give us a convincing ethical picture.

So, given all my arguments, I conclude that, according to this Aristotelian account, a rather non-intellectualised account is closer to the truth. Though, as I said in the General Introduction, my aim is to give a “philosophical reconstruction” of Aristotle; I have no space to discuss other virtue theories in contemporary philosophy. But I hope what I have said at least makes this “Aristotelian” account a respectable candidate worthy of serious consideration.

The translation of Aristotle's texts are from:

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**Abbreviation:**

APo. Posterior Analytics

DA. De Anima

EE. Eudemian Ethics

HA. History of Animals

MA. Movement of Animals

Mem. On Memory

Meta. Metaphysics

NE. Nicomachean Ethics

Ph. Physics

Poet. Poetics

Pol. Politics

Rhet. Rhetoric

Top. Topics

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