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The Limits of Rationality: Aristotle on the Possibility of Practical Reason

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THE LIMITS OF RATIONALITY: ARISTOTLE ON THE POSSIBILITY OF PRACTICAL
REASON

by

RUSSELL WRIGHT HELDER

Under the Direction of Tim O'Keefe, PhD

ABSTRACT

I argue that Aristotle thinks desire is what motivates all animal movement and human action. Reason never motivates us directly, but it can exert an influence on what we desire. I argue that whether reason successfully does so depends on our character states, and that this is one reason why Aristotle is correct to say that virtue makes the end (i.e., the object of desire) right. The object of rational desire is the good, and it is because we have character states of a certain kind that we find the ends that reason proposes to be good. So it is because we are virtuous or vicious that we desire what reason proposes. Since reason cannot motivate us directly, reason can only be practical by affecting our desires. Since reason only affects our desires insofar as we are virtuous or vicious, it is virtue and vice that make practical reason possible.

INDEX WORDS: Aristotle, Practical reason, Virtue, Desire, Ethics, Moral psychology

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RUSSELL WRIGHT HELDER

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- APo.* *Analytica Posteriora (Posterior Analytics)*
- DA* *De Anima (On the Soul)*
- EE* *Ethica Eudemia (Eudemian Ethics)*
- EN* *Ethica Nicomachea (Nicomachean Ethics)*
- LSJ* Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- MA* *De Motu Animalium (On the Motion of Animals)*
- Met.* *Metaphysica (Metaphysics)*
- ROT* *The Revised Oxford Translation*
- Smyth* Smyth, Herbert Weir. *Greek Grammar*. Revised by Gordon M. Messing. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956.

1 INTRODUCTION

That Aristotle might be mistaken for a Humean is a recurrent fear in the literature on reason and motivation in Aristotle.¹ On the basis of such famous comments as ‘reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them’ (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.3.4), Hume’s view is assumed to be that reason alone cannot motivate us or set our ends. Reason is, rather, limited to ascertaining the means to an end set by desire. Aristotle’s insistence that deliberation is not about ends (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1112b11-1113a2) and that it is virtue of the non-rational part of the soul that makes the end right (1144a7-8) seems consonant with this interpretation of Hume’s view, and it is this consonance that commentators on Aristotle have often been eager to deny. Although this paper is not about Hume’s position, I think these commentators have gotten Aristotle’s position wrong in the same sort of way that they have gotten Hume’s position wrong. Hume’s position is both more and less extreme than it has been made out to be. On the one hand, if we take seriously Hume’s claim that reason cannot motivate, then whatever deliberation comes up with as a means to the end of desire must itself be approved by desire; the reasons yielded by deliberation are not themselves motivating. Hume is to that extent a skeptic about practical reason (Millgram 1995, 75-80). On the other hand, Hume elsewhere allows that reason can play an important role in shaping our sentiments (see especially Hume’s essay, ‘Of the Standard of Taste’). In this paper, I will argue that Aristotle’s position runs parallel to this alternative interpretation of Hume. Aristotle argues that only desire can motivate us, and that deliberation never motivates us directly but rather must result in another desire in order to motivate. Reason can, however, be practical by influencing what we desire. What is interesting about Aristotle’s

¹ See, for example, Irwin 1975, 567-78; Sorabji 1980, 209; Hudson 1981, 120-25; and Dahl 1984, 23-34.

position is that reason's influence on desire is enabled and mediated by our character states; it is virtue and vice that make practical reason possible.

2 THE ARGUMENTS IN THE *DE ANIMA*

Aristotle gives us one of his most detailed accounts of the relationship between reason and desire in motivation in Book 3 of the *De Anima (DA)*. In *DA* 3.9, Aristotle takes up the question of what it is in the soul that causes locomotion (κατὰ τόπον κίνησις, or movement from place to place). Proceeding faculty by faculty, Aristotle rules out the nutritive faculty as insufficient for locomotion, both because locomotion is always for the sake of something and because, if the nutritive faculty were sufficient for locomotion, plants would also be capable of locomotion (432b14-19). Nor is the sensitive faculty sufficient, because some animals have sensation but are motionless (432b19-21). Shifting to the more specific case of human locomotion and action,² Aristotle also dismisses the calculative faculty and reason (νοῦς)³ as insufficient because it does not guarantee action; the weak-willed (akratic) person disregards the commands of deliberation and reason and obeys desire (432b26-433a3). Knowledge is also insufficient, since a doctor, for example, although always possessing medical knowledge, is not always practicing medicine (433a4-6). Nor, however, is desire (ὄρεξις) sufficient, because it also does not guarantee action; the strong-willed (enkratic) person disregards her/his desires and obeys deliberation and reason (433a6-8). In the end, no faculty that Aristotle considers is sufficient for locomotion or action.

² Not all action is locomotion; locomotion and action are both for the sake of something, but action may not literally involve movement from place to place (to use Jessica Moss's example, giving a decree from the throne). The fact that both are for the sake of something, however, is commonality enough that Aristotle himself casually interchanges action and locomotion, and so we need not be concerned with this technical dissimilarity between them either (Moss 2012, 9n14).

³ Here, Aristotle seems to be using νοῦς, a term of many meanings, in a generic sense defined previously in *DA* 3: 'I say that νοῦς is that with which the soul thinks [διανοεῖται] and understands' (429a23). I translate it as 'reason', in line with Ross (1961). We can easily see that, since the definition of νοῦς contains the verb 'διανοεῖται', the corresponding noun διάνοια is synonymous with νοῦς here (see also Ross 1961, 315); however, I will also translate διάνοια as 'intellect' when it is being contrasted with νοῦς.

In *DA* 3.10, having dismissed reason and desire as insufficient for movement, Aristotle nevertheless says that they at least seem to be movers:

These two appear [φαίνεται], at any rate, to be movers [κινούντα],⁴ either desire [ὄρεξις] or reason [νοῦς], if *phantasia*⁵ should be posited as a type of thinking [νόησιν τινα]. For many people follow their *phantasiai* contrary to their knowledge, and in the other animals there is no thinking and no calculation, but there is *phantasia*. Thus both of these are productive of locomotion, reason and desire, namely reason which calculates for the sake of some end and which is practical. (433a9-14)⁶

So Aristotle's thesis in this passage is that both desire and reason are movers, with *phantasia* included as a stand-in for reason when reason is absent.⁷ I will call this the 'Inclusive Thesis'.

However, Aristotle contrarily goes on to claim that there is only one mover, namely the faculty of desire (τὸ ὄρεκτικόν) or the object of desire (τὸ ὄρεκτόν), depending on the manuscript (433a21). I will call this the 'Exclusive Thesis'. The question of what Aristotle takes to be the cause of locomotion turns on the not uncontroversial relationship between these two apparently contradictory theses.

Aristotle should be read as rejecting the Inclusive Thesis in favor of the Exclusive Thesis: desire is the only mover, and reason is not a mover. Aristotle not only affirms at 433a21 that there is one mover but also subsequently denies that there are two movers: 'There is, then, some

⁴ The meaning of this line is somewhat obscure. The verb φαίνεσθαι has two different meanings depending on whether or not it governs a complementary infinitive or supplementary participle. In the former case, φαίνεσθαι means 'to appear' and in the latter case 'to be evident' (Smyth §2143) or 'to be manifest' (LSJ, s.v. φαίνω). Here, φαίνεσθαι could be construed as governing κινούντα as a supplementary participle ('these two are evidently movers'), or as governing an omitted εἶναι (as is frequently done) with κινούντα as a predicate adjective (see Smyth §2091) ('these two seem to be movers'). Bywater's insertion of τὰ before κινούντα, accepted by Hicks (1907, note ad loc.) would make the latter construal unambiguously correct. Ross (1961, note ad loc.), although he does not adopt Bywater's emendation, still favors the sense of the latter construal, calling this line 'a provisional statement, which A. later corrects'. We shall see that we have reason to agree with Ross's assessment, and so I have sided with these commentators in adopting the latter translation.

⁵ The Greek term φαντασία is usually and misleadingly translated as 'imagination'. 'Appearance' conveys more of the word's meaning, but *phantasia* is more properly the faculty in virtue of which we have appearances (e.g., *phantasia* is that faculty in virtue of which the sun appears a foot long to me (*DA* 428b2-4)). Because it is not readily translatable, I will use the transliterated term *phantasia* and its plural, *phantasiai*.

⁶ All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

⁷ In the *De Motu Animalium*, Aristotle includes sensation with *phantasia* and reason, since all three are faculties of discrimination (700b19-21). In the *DA*, sensation is presumably subsumed under *phantasia* as 'sensitive' *phantasia* (433b29); Aristotle may not have made this explicit because of the tight connection already established in *DA* 3.3 and elsewhere between *phantasia* and sensation.

one mover, the faculty [object] of desire.⁸ For if there were two movers, reason [νοῦς] and desire [ὄρεξις], they would move according to some common form' (433a21-22). So if there *were* two movers, reason and desire (but there are not), then they would have to move according to some common form⁹ (but they do not). However cryptic his rationale for rejecting the Inclusive Thesis, that Aristotle does reject it is clear.¹⁰ The Inclusive Thesis is a provisional statement of what only *appears* to be true: 'These two *appear* [φαίνεται], at any rate, to be movers, either desire [ὄρεξις] or reason [νοῦς]' (433a9, my emphasis). Aristotle's actual thesis is the Exclusive Thesis, which states that there is only one mover, either the object of desire or the faculty of desire.

If the mover is the faculty of desire, then Aristotle is not introducing a third alternative to desire and reason; rather, he is denying that reason is a mover and asserting that desire is the only mover. Desire is just the actuality of the faculty of desire, in the same way that sensation is just the actuality of the faculty of sensation (417a6-7), seeing of sight (428a6-7), and so on. But this means that whenever Aristotle refers to the faculty of desire as a mover, he is referring also to desire itself, because the faculty of desire as such could not possibly cause locomotion on its own; it is only potentially desiderative, and only what is actual can move (*Physics* 202a5-21). So when Aristotle says that the faculty of desire is a mover, he includes desire itself, in the same way that, when I say 'taste causes pleasure', what I really mean is that actual *tasting* causes pleasure. But of course, tasting only causes pleasure where there is a faculty of taste; when I pick up a piece of pizza, the taste of the pizza does not cause me pleasure until it comes into contact with the sense organ that has the faculty of taste (namely my tongue). So when we refer to taste

⁸ Again, either τὸ ὀρεκτόν or τὸ ὀρεκτικόν, depending on the manuscript.

⁹ As Hicks puts it in his note ad loc., by 'in virtue of some common form' Aristotle means 'in virtue of some characteristic which they shared in common'. Nothing in my argument depends on the exact meaning of these obscure lines; it is clear enough that Aristotle does reject the Inclusive Thesis.

¹⁰ Moss continues to maintain that there are two movers according to Aristotle (2012, 11, 17). She argues that reason and *phantasia* are on equal footing with desire because they discern the good; by evaluating something as good or bad, reason or *phantasia* renders it eligible or ineligible for desire in the first place (3-21). Moss does not directly address *DA* 433a21-22, so it is not clear how her interpretation accommodates it.

as causing pleasure we must refer also to its actuality, tasting, and when we refer to the actuality, tasting, we must refer back to the prerequisite faculty by virtue of which tasting causes pleasure. Likewise, the faculty of desire and desire itself are not separable in the context of causing locomotion, and we should not be taking Aristotle as introducing the faculty of desire as an additional alternative.¹¹

If, on the other hand, the mover is the object of desire, Aristotle is still not introducing a third alternative but is rather affirming that desire is the only mover. If the object of desire moves the animal, the faculty of desire must move as well, because an object of desire, *qua* desirable, cannot affect anything that does not have the faculty of desire, in the same way that an object of sight, *qua* visible, cannot affect anything without the faculty of sight. But, again, if we say that the faculty of desire, a potentiality, is moving the animal, we really mean that its actuality, desire, is moving the animal. So the proposition that the object of desire moves the animal entails the proposition that desire moves the animal; to say that the pizza moves me to eat the pizza entails that my desire for the pizza moves me to eat the pizza. In sum, whether the manuscripts say that the faculty of desire or the object of desire is the one mover does not matter, because what is being said in either case is that desire, not reason, is the one mover.¹²

We are now in a position to state what the overall relationship is, according to this passage, between reason and desire, given that desire is the one mover. Both reason, or at least

¹¹ Hudson argues that both desire and reason/*phantasia* are part of the faculty of desire (because reason/*phantasia* is necessary for desire in the first place) and that the faculty of desire is the one mover (1981, 126-27). However, desire is the actuality of the faculty of desire, not some component of it. And, however necessary reason/*phantasia* is to the faculty of desire's actualization (by discerning the object of desire), it does not follow that it is a part of that faculty, any more than it follows that sensation is a part of the faculty of *phantasia* just because *phantasia* is impossible without sensation (*DA* 428b10-12). Rather, we should try to preserve the distinctions that Aristotle thought important, perhaps all the more when the faculties are so interdependent that the distinction threatens to be obliterated.

¹² Richardson places much weight on the discrepancy in the manuscripts; he argues that the object of desire is the one mover, from which it follows that reason and *phantasia* are on equal footing with desire in action, since reason or *phantasia* is necessary to discern the object of desire (1992, 389-94). If my assessment of the discrepancy in the manuscripts is right, however, Richardson's view is not consonant with Aristotle's text, where Aristotle seems to clearly privilege the role of desire in motivation.

phantasia, and desire are *necessary* for locomotion: '[locomotion] is always for the sake of some end and with *phantasia* and desire [ὄρεξις]' (DA 432b15-16). Their roles in locomotion are logically symmetrical. However, it does not follow that they are motivationally symmetrical. Practical reason is itself stimulated by desire: 'for the object of desire [ὄρεκτόν] moves, and on account of it reason [διάνοια] moves, because [reason's] starting point is the object of desire' (433a18-20). So even when practical reason appears to move, that is only because it itself has been set in motion by the object of desire. Accordingly, whenever we act in accordance with reason, we are also just acting in accordance with desire:

Now, on the one hand, reason evidently never moves without desire [ὄρεξις] (for *boulēsis*¹³ is a species of desire, and whenever there is movement in accordance with the calculation, there is also movement in accordance with *boulēsis*), but, on the other hand, desire moves even contrary to calculation; for appetite [ἐπιθυμία]¹⁴ is a kind of desire. (433a22-25)

So whenever we act according to reason, we have a concomitant desire, *boulēsis*, and it is this desire that acts as the starting point of practical reason in the first place. Not only would we not have locomotion without desire; we would not even have practical reason. If I deliberate that more pizza would be unhealthy for me, and I refrain from having another slice of pizza contrary to my appetite, although it *appears* that I am motivated by reason, in reality I am motivated by my *boulēsis* for health. It is, in fact, my *boulēsis* for health which stimulates my deliberation in the first place; if I did not *want* to be healthy, I would not be any more likely to deliberate about refraining from the pizza than to deliberate about train hopping, BASE jumping, or anything else I do not want to do.

Of course, it follows from the logical symmetry that, if we take away both reason and *phantasia*, there will be no locomotion, which still makes them seem motivationally symmetrical

¹³ Usually translated as 'wish', βούλησις is a technical term for a rational desire and a species of ὄρεξις (which, again, I have been translating as 'desire'), for which reason it is sometimes translated as 'rational wish' (e.g., Hicks 1907) or even 'will' (e.g., Anscombe 1965). None of these adequately capture the technical sense of 'rational desire', however, and so I will use the transliterated term *boulēsis* and its plural, *boulēseis*.

¹⁴ Appetite is a species of desire, specifically desire for the pleasant (e.g., DA 414b5-6).

with desire. However, reason and *phantasia* are necessary only as instruments. Their job is to discern the object of desire: ‘for [the object of desire] moves, without being moved, *by means of* [τῶ] being apprehended by reason [νοηθῆναι] or *phantasia* [φαντασθῆναι]’ (433b11-12, my emphasis). However indispensable their role to locomotion, their role is that of mere means, by means of which desire does the actual moving.¹⁵ Reason or *phantasia* moves the animal no more than a prism illuminates a sheet of paper. It is the light source that emits the light which is passed through the prism that illuminates the paper. The prism may be responsible for making the light look like a rainbow on the paper, just as reason and *phantasia* are responsible for representing something as an object of desire, but no one would say on that account that the prism illuminates. Likewise, we should not say that reason or *phantasia* moves.

3 THE ARGUMENTS IN THE *DE MOTU ANIMALIUM*

The arguments in *De Motu Animalium* (*MA*) 6 and 7 corroborate my reading of the arguments in the *DA*. The *MA* starts the same way, by asserting there are two movers:

We see that the things moving the animal are intellect [διάνοιαν] and *phantasia* and choice [προαίρεσιν] and *boulēsis* and appetite [ἐπιθυμίαν]. And all of these are reducible to reason [νοῦν] and desire [ὄρεξις]. For both *phantasia* and sensation hold the same place as reason; for they are all discriminatory faculties [κριτικά], but differing along the lines already discussed in other works. *Boulēsis* and spiritedness [θυμὸς]¹⁶ and appetite are all species of desire, and choice is a compound of intellect [διανοίας] and desire; with the result that the object of desire, being also an object of reason,¹⁷ moves first of all. (700b17-24)

The initial list of five movers is reduced to the same two movers we find in the *DA*. Reason (νοῦς) is a generic term for discriminatory faculties (κριτικά), including not only reason and *phantasia*, as in the *DA*, but also sensation, which, again, in the *DA* was presumably subsumed under ‘sensitive’ *phantasia* (*DA* 433b29). The passage not only starts in the same way as in *DA*

¹⁵ As Skemp puts it, ‘Eventually it is νοῦς πρακτικός and ὄρεξις that are recognized as causes, and though the discriminating and deciding element is intelligent (or based on φαντασία), the sheer “motivation” comes from ὄρεξις’ (1978, 187).

¹⁶ Following Nussbaum’s translation.

¹⁷ See Nussbaum’s note ad loc.

3.10 but also ends in the same way, by asserting that the object of desire, having been discerned by some discriminatory faculty, moves first of all (*πρῶτον*). Aristotle uses the exact same language in *DA* 3.10: ‘in form, there would be one mover, the faculty of desire as such – but first [*πρῶτον*] of all things the object of desire [would be the mover]; for this moves without being moved, by means of [*τῷ*] being apprehended by reason [*νοηθῆναι*] or *phantasia* [*φαντασθῆναι*]’ (433b10-12). In both places, although Aristotle stresses the importance of the discriminatory faculties as a prerequisite for locomotion, he maintains that desire is the one mover.

In the *MA*, Aristotle argues for this thesis by using the so-called ‘practical syllogism’ to show the roles that desire and discernment play in action. The syllogism consists of two premises which combine to produce a conclusion that is an action (*MA* 701a12-13):

For example, whenever one thinks that every person must walk, and that one is a person oneself, straightaway one walks, but if one thinks that no person should now walk, and that one is a person oneself, straightaway one stays still. And one does both of these things, unless something prevents or compels one. (701a13-16)

The first thing to notice is that Aristotle considers the practical syllogism valid; the conclusion must follow unless we are prevented from carrying out the conclusion or compelled to not carry out the conclusion.¹⁸ However, as the syllogism is written in this first example, it could not possibly be valid, since, in fact, people who do think that persons ought to walk (or exercise more generally) and that they themselves are persons still fail to act accordingly (perhaps more people fail to act than do act when it comes to this particular syllogism). This way of phrasing the syllogism, however, does not seem to represent Aristotle’s real view, which he clarifies when he subsequently concludes that the first (‘major’) premise of a practical syllogism is of the good (*ἀγαθόν*) (701a24), and that the second (‘minor’) premise is of the possible (*δυνατόν*) (25). But the good, or at least the apparent good (which includes the pleasant (700b29)), is the object of

¹⁸ Another potential complication would be when we are simultaneously considering competing syllogisms; this can be considered just a special case of prevention or compulsion.

desire (*DA* 433a28-29). So apparently the first premise is a desire to do something, and not just a thought that one must or ought to do something.¹⁹ That Aristotle thinks that the first premise is a desire is confirmed by his next example: “‘I must drink’, says appetite [*ἐπιθυμία*]; ‘this is drink’, says sensation or *phantasia* or reason [*νοῦς*]; straightaway I drink’ (*MA* 701a32-33). We can also see that the ‘possible’ is an object discerned by one of the discriminatory faculties as a possible means of satisfaction of the desire that is the major premise. If the first premise is a desire and the second premise is of the means of satisfaction, it is easier to see how the practical syllogism is valid; if it is really true that I desire something and that I discern the means of satisfaction, then I will act to satisfy my desire unless prevented or otherwise compelled.

The upshot is that the discriminatory faculties, including reason, seem to merely furnish the means of satisfying the desire that serves as the major premise. If I have a desire to eat pizza and subsequently eat a particular piece of pizza, reason can participate in my action only insofar as it tells me where and how to get that particular piece of pizza; if reason tells me that it is better for me to stick with an apple, then reason will have no effect on my movement, unless of course I happened to have a desire to stick with an apple. In other words, reason never gives the orders, but rather it always takes them – from desire. This is one sense in which the object of desire serves as the starting point for practical reason (*DA* 433a16); the object of desire is the end to which reason ascertains the means of satisfaction.

Both the *DA* and the *MA* assert that desire is the only mover and that reason’s role is limited to ascertaining the means of satisfaction of desire. Even when we appear to be motivated by calculation (i.e., deliberation), we are really just motivated by desire, namely *boulēsis*. What I want to show now is that reason plays a limited role even in the formation of *boulēsis*; reason

¹⁹ That the first premise is desiderative is acknowledged in the literature (see, for example, Anscombe, 1965, 153-54 and Schofield 2011, 126).

alone not only fails to motivate us but also fails to set our ends. Rather, we shall see that reason cooperates with *phantasia* when it sets our ends and that the virtues of character determine the sorts of ends we end up adopting, because of their influence on *phantasia*. In this sense, virtue does indeed make the end right (*Nicomachean Ethics (EN)* 1144a7-8).

4 THE OBJECTS OF *BOULĒSIS*

Boulēsis is the desire of the rational part of the soul (*DA* 432b5). Like all desire, its general object is the good. What sets *boulēsis* apart is that its object is ‘without qualification and in truth’ the real good, but to each person the apparent good (*EN* 1113a23-24).²⁰ More specifically, an object of *boulēsis* is some particular thing (i.e., the content of the desire) desired as a real good.²¹ What makes *boulēsis* rational is that its object is what the rational part of the soul bids us pursue (1102b16). Although Aristotle says in many places that we have *boulēsis* for what we *think* good (*Rhetoric* 1369a3-4; *EN* 1136b7-8; *Eudemian Ethics (EE)* 1226a13-14), what distinguishes *boulēsis* from the non-rational desires is not that its contents are discerned by reason, because spiritedness’ and appetite’s contents can also be discerned by reason, namely by argument (λόγος)²² (*EN* 1149a32-b1).²³ The drink syllogism from the *MA* also shows that the content of appetite can be discerned by reason. The major premise is an appetite (‘I want drink’), and the minor premise (‘this is drink’), which in one sense supplies the means of satisfaction of the major premise, also supplies the content of a newly specified appetite (‘I want this drink’).²⁴ Aristotle says that the minor premise can be supplied by sensation, *phantasia*, or reason. So

²⁰ One might also say that *boulēsis* is ‘by nature’ for the real good (*Eudemian Ethics* 1227a18; see Grönroos 2015, 70-74).

²¹ For a fuller discussion of the object of desire, see Pearson 2012, 33-61.

²² See Moss 2014 for the translation of this difficult word in Aristotle, usually translated as ‘reason’. She ends up favoring ‘account’, but ‘argument’ seems slightly more natural here.

²³ This and much of what follows in this section is greatly indebted to Pearson 2012, 178-89.

²⁴ See Schofield 126-27 for further discussion of how the practical syllogism results in a new desire.

boulēsis is certainly not rational because reason discerns its contents; reason can discern the contents of non-rational desires, too.

Nor is *boulēsis* rational because of its connection to deliberation.²⁵ Again, Aristotle says at *DA* 433a24-25 that whenever we act in accordance with calculation (λογισμός) we act in accordance with *boulēsis*. However, this does not imply the reverse, that whenever we act in accordance with *boulēsis* we act in accordance with calculation. In fact, there is good reason to think that some *boulēseis* must be undeliberated. All deliberation is for the sake of some end (e.g., *EE* 1226b29-30), and the end is the object of *boulēsis* (*EN* 1113b3; *EE* 1226a13-14).²⁶ If every such *boulēsis* is open to deliberation, we will have an infinite regress of deliberations (*EN* 1113a2). Further, to say that all *boulēseis* are deliberated seems to obliterate the distinction Aristotle insists on making between *boulēsis* and choice (προαίρεσις). Choice is deliberate desire of things in our power (1113a10-11), where ‘deliberate’ means that deliberation is the starting-point and cause of the desire (*EE* 1226b19-20). Deliberation (*EN* 1112a30-31) and choice can only be for things within our own power, but *boulēsis* can be for even the impossible, like immortality (*EN* 1111b20-26; *EE* 1225b32-36). We also can form a *boulēsis* suddenly, but not a choice (perhaps precisely because the former can be undeliberated but never the latter) (*EE* 1226b2-4). These distinctions seem to evaporate if we require every *boulēsis* to be deliberated.

Further, not every *boulēsis* can be deliberated because not every object of *boulēsis* is desired for the sake of something else. Some things are desired for their own sake, and such desires *ipso facto* cannot be deliberated; deliberation is for the sake of some further end, but

²⁵ Contrast Hudson 1981, 127-33.

²⁶ Not every end of deliberation need be an object of *boulēsis* however; Aristotle says in *EN* 6 that a bad or akratic person can deliberate towards a ‘great evil’ (1142b18-20) and that a ‘clever’ (δεινός) person can deliberate well towards the wrong ends (1144a23-28). In *EN* 6, Aristotle is explicitly exploring the possibility of deliberation toward a bad end, but elsewhere Aristotle freely assumes that deliberation or reason generally is towards a good end (e.g., *DA* 433a22-26 and *EN* 1145b10-12, as here at *EN* 1113b3 and *EE* 1226a13-14).

these things are desired irrespective of any further end. Our *boulēsis* for *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία: i.e., ‘happiness’) is certainly like this, since we desire *eudaimonia* for its own sake and never for the sake of something else (*EN* 1097b1).²⁷ We also desire honor (τιμή), pleasure, reason (νοῦς), and the virtues not only for the sake of *eudaimonia* but also for their own sake (1097b2-4). To this extent, our desire for them is undeliberated. I may deliberate about whether I would be happier pursuing honor as a politician or pursuing reason as a scientist, but that I find honor or reason valuable in the first place is not a result of deliberation. I would value them even if nothing resulted from them (1097b3-4), or even if disaster resulted from them. I might desire honor, for example, even if it involves dying in battle and I never see the rewards, accolades, etc. that result from it.

So *boulēsis* is not rational because reason discerns its contents but because its contents are desired as real goods, which are what the rational part of the soul bids us to pursue. Nor is *boulēsis* rational because of a connection to deliberation. Something good is either desired for its own sake or for the sake of something else. Insofar as the object of *boulēsis* is desired in the former sense, the *boulēsis* must be undeliberated, since it is desired without reference to some further end. Insofar as the object of *boulēsis* is desired in the latter sense, *boulēsis* can be deliberated, in which case the *boulēsis* is a choice. The remainder of the paper will be devoted to elucidating the role of reason in discerning the objects of both undeliberated and deliberated *boulēseis*.

5 PHANTASIA AND JUDGMENT OF THE GOOD

Discerning the contents of *boulēsis* is only part of discerning the object of *boulēsis*; we also have to discern that content *as* good. Again, Aristotle says that by nature (*EE* 1227a18) the

²⁷ There is not much disagreement about this; our desire for *eudaimonia* is held to be undeliberated even by commentators who attribute to deliberation broad power to set our ends (e.g., Irwin 1975, 571 and Wiggins 1980, 226).

object of *boulēsis* is the real good but, contrary to nature, the apparent good (1227a21-22). The former is whatever seems (φαίνεται) so to the good person:

Ought we say that the good is without qualification and in truth the object of *boulēsis*, but to each person the apparent [φαινόμενον] good [is the object of *boulēsis*]? That therefore, to the good person what is in fact good is the object of *boulēsis*, but to the bad person any chance thing, just as, in the case of bodies, what is in fact such is healthy to well-disposed bodies, but different things to unhealthy bodies, and likewise also bitter and sweet, and hot and cold, and so on; for the good person discerns each and every thing rightly, and in each and every case the truth appears [φαίνεται] to her/him. For each state of character has its own ideas of the noble and pleasant,²⁸ and the good person perhaps differs most of all by seeing the truth in each and every case, being, as it were, a rule and measure of them. (*EN* 1113a23-33)

In virtue of what does the good person discern the right things as good? Or, in other words, in virtue of what is the good person a proper judge of the good, or a proper judge of the end? A strikingly parallel passage in the *Metaphysics* (*Met.*), where Aristotle is defending the law of non-contradiction and the possibility of truth, helps show that the good person discerns the good by means of *phantasia*:

Concerning the truth, we must maintain that not everything which appears [τὸ φαινόμενον] is true. Firstly, even if sensation, at least of the special objects of sense, is not false, still *phantasia* is not the same as sensation. And so it is fair to express surprise at our opponents for raising the question whether magnitudes are as great, and colors are of such a nature, as they appear to people at a distance, or as they appear to those close at hand, and whether they are such as they appear to the sick or to the healthy, and whether those things are heavy which appear so to the weak or those which appear so to the strong, and whether truth is what appears to the sleeping or to the waking. For obviously they do not take these to be open questions. (*Met.* 1010b1-10)²⁹

Likewise, it is not an open question whether the good is as it appears to the good person or to the bad person. Both the good and bad person have correct sensation of, say, a Twinkie, because the so-called special objects of sense can never be mistaken (*DA* 418a11-14, 428a11, 428b18-19); I cannot be mistaken that I am seeing golden-brown, smelling a sweet smell, etc. *Phantasia*, however, can not only be wrong, but wrong most of the time (428a12). I can be wrong about

²⁸ Following Ross/Urmson in *The Revised Oxford Translation (ROT)*.

²⁹ Modified from Ross's translation in *ROT*.

whether the golden-brown thing is a Twinkie or a churro, whether it is large or small,³⁰ whether it is pleasant or unpleasant (it could seem pleasant to me, but upon taking a bite turn out to be disgusting), or whether it is good or bad (e.g., healthy or unhealthy). That is because *phantasia*, in both of our passages, depends on facts about us, including our position, condition, and state. The Twinkie will seem large or small depending on my position, it might seem pleasant when I am healthy and unpleasant when I am sick, and it will appear good to the intemperate person and bad to the temperate person.

These *phantasiai* are movements arising from an actual exercise of sensation (429a1-2), and the objects of *phantasia*, *phantasmata* (φαντάσματα), are just like the objects of sensation (αἰσθήματα) but without matter (432a9-10).³¹ This exercise of sensation is like the impress of a bronze ring on wax, which leaves behind the form of the ring without the matter (424a17-24). The ring is like the object of sensation; the impression, which is a representation of the ring, is like the *phantasma*. So, the enmattered qualities (incidentally of the Twinkie) are the objects of sensation, and the representation of the Twinkie resulting from the exercise of my senses is the *phantasma*, the object of *phantasia*. Again, *phantasia* is that faculty in virtue of which things seem to us, and the *phantasma* is the thing that seems. Seeming occurs because representation can never be naïve but rather always involves interpretation; we always represent *as* (Nussbaum 1978, 224-27). Even photographs are not naïve representations of their subjects: an advertiser's photograph of a Twinkie will try to make it seem bright and appealing, and a children's health advocate's photograph will make it seem dark and sinister. So it is that, on account of my

³⁰ How much of identifying the 'incidental object of sense' (e.g., the Twinkie) or the 'common objects of sense' (e.g., its size) is due to sensation or due to *phantasia* is disputed (contrast Nussbaum 1978, esp. 255-61 and Schofield 2011, 119-25). Nothing in my argument hangs on the precise division of labor between sensation and *phantasia*.

³¹ For the sake of simplicity, the account of *phantasia* I am giving here is just of sensory *phantasia*. Not only does my account exclude deliberative *phantasia*, which I will treat later, but also it excludes memory and dreaming.

temperance, when I represent the Twinkie to myself as a result of exercising my senses (i.e., when I am forming the *phantasma* of the Twinkie), I represent it as bad.

My goal in the rest of this paper will be to show that virtue, by thus influencing *phantasia*, is what determines the objects of *boulēsis*. We should thus take Aristotle at his word when he says that ‘virtue makes the end [σκοπός] right’ (*EN* 1144a7-8).

6 *NOUS* AND ENDS

An especially common suggestion is that reason discerns the undeliberated objects of *boulēsis* by means of *nous*.³² *Nous* is a state (*Posterior Analytics* (*APo.*) 100b5-8) of the soul that grasps the starting points (ἀρχαί) of theoretical reasoning (*APo.* 100b12; *EN* 1141a7-8) and possibly of practical reasoning as well (*EN* 1143a35-b5). We come to be in a state of *nous* as a result of induction (*APo.* 100a3-b17). First, we have sensation of many particular things (for example, triangles). Second, I develop memories of triangles and can picture them when they are not present. Third, from all of these memories emerges one ‘experience’ (ἐμπειρία). At this point, I am (merely) experienced when it comes to triangles: I can identify *that* a figure is a triangle on demand, but I do not know *why* the figure is a triangle. I have *nous* when I know not only *that* a figure is a triangle but also *why* (i.e., because it is a three-sided and two-dimensional figure) (cf. *Met.* 981a28-30).

Some ‘intellectualist’ commentators think that we can have *nous* of practical starting points as well as theoretical starting points.³³ A deliberation can be modeled as a series of

³² *Nous* (νοῦς) here could be translated ‘[intellectual] intuition’ (e.g., Cooper 1975, 65 and Moss 2012, 154), or perhaps ‘understanding’ (e.g., Reeve 2013, 169) or ‘comprehension’ (e.g., Barnes, *Posterior Analytics* and Ross/Urmson, *EN* in *ROT*). ‘Intuition’ is not adequate, because *nous* is not sudden but is a result of induction. ‘Understanding’ and ‘comprehension’ are better, but are too broad. I will consequently avoid translating *nous* when it is used in this way. *Nous* here is used in a narrow technical sense and must not be conflated with *nous* in the *DA* and *MA*, ‘that with which the soul thinks and understands’ (*DA* 429a23; see Moss 2012, 153n2, and contrast Reeve 1992, 58 and 2013, 168-71).

³³ See, for example, Greenwood 1909, 51; Sorabji 1980, 208-209, 214-16; Dahl 1984, 41-45; Reeve 1992, 56-61; and Tuozzo 1992, 202-205. Cooper 1975, 58-66 assigns the same role to *nous* but emphasizes the role of dialectic in

practical syllogisms (*MA* 701a17-22). Just like the first premise of a demonstration is the undemonstrable starting point of the demonstration, so the first premise of a deliberation is the undeliberated starting point of the deliberation. The first premise of the deliberation is a *boulēsis* for some end. The object of desire (in this case, the end) is what moves ‘first of all’ (*DA* 433b11), so the not implausible assumption is that practical starting points are ends. And Aristotle does seem to allow that we can inductively set our ends:

And *nous* is of the last things in both directions; for *nous* (and not argument) is both of the first and the last premises [ὄρων],³⁴ and in demonstrations it is of the unchanging and first premises, but in practical sciences it is of the last and possible premise and the minor premise [τῆς ἐτέρας προτάσεως];³⁵ for these [αὐται] are the starting points [ἀρχαί] of that for the sake of which (for the universal [τὰ καθόλου] is from the particulars [τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστα]);³⁶ of these [τούτων] it is therefore necessary to have perception [αἴσθησιν],³⁷ and this is *nous*. (*EN* 1143a35-b5)

The general proposal is supposed to be that, first, I repeatedly ‘perceive’ particular actions (i.e., minor premises) with *nous*. For example, I repeatedly perceive that keeping this or that promise to my friend is just (where the action in each case is a minor premise in a syllogism with the major premise ‘just things must be done’). I then inductively come to understand that keeping promises to friends in general is just; and insofar as this fleshes out my understanding of what *eudaimonia* consists in or what my actual good is,³⁸ I adopt keeping promises to friends as my end. So from perception of particular actions with *nous*, I inductively arrive at a universal, which is a general end.

bringing about *nous* (see also Reeve 1992, 62-66). Because what these authors mean by dialectic is not well defined, I will not treat that aspect of their views here.

³⁴ Although ὄρος is more usually translated ‘term’, Aristotle clearly means ‘premise’ here. First of all, *nous* is not of terms but rather of propositions (e.g., I do not have *nous* of ‘triangle’ but rather of something like ‘all triangles have three sides’; see Greenwood 1909, 32-34). Second, Aristotle directly says that *nous* is of a premise (*EN* 1143b2-3: ἡ ἐτέρα πρότασις, ‘minor premise’), so when Aristotle says that *nous* is of the last ὄρος in practical matters, we should understand him as meaning that *nous* is of the last premise, which is the minor premise.

³⁵ Dahl’s suggestion that we should translate this as ‘the other premise’ instead of ‘the minor premise’ (1984, 44) is undercut by the immediately preceding ‘last and possible [ἐνδεχομένου]’, which seems to refer to the minor premise; see *MA* 701a23-25, where Aristotle says that the minor premise is of the possible (δυνατόν).

³⁶ Bywater’s punctuation in the Greek text suggests that we should treat this clause as parenthetical.

³⁷ Moss correctly calls this ‘perception in a broad or metaphorical sense’ (2012, 41). So far, I have translated αἴσθησις as ‘sensation’, but here and in other contexts where the word is clearly used metaphorically, ‘perception’ seems more natural.

³⁸ See Dahl 1980, 48-50 for the latter sort of view and Reeve 1992, 59-60 for the former sort of view.

This reading relies on two flawed assumptions. First of all, *nous* is the final step of induction in theoretical sciences, not the first step; so there is something not quite right about the proposal that it is *nous* that perceives the particulars in practical sciences. Aristotle does say that *nous* is perception, and commentators seem to assume that Aristotle means perception of particulars,³⁹ presumably reading τούτων as referring to τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα. This is, first of all, an implausible reading of the Greek, because although τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα is adjacent to τούτων in the English translation, it is actually τὰ καθόλου that is adjacent in the Greek. Since the syntax is such that Aristotle could have placed either τὰ καθόλου or τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα adjacent to τούτων, it would be unacceptably vague, even for Aristotle, for τούτων to refer to τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα. So, since it is so unlikely that τούτων refers to τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα, the text does not immediately support the thesis that *nous* is perception of particulars. Second, *nous* is of starting points (*APo.* 100b12), and if *nous* is a form of 'perception', it is natural to see it as perception of these starting points. If I have *nous* that all triangles have three sides, for example, then it seems natural to say that my *nous* is perception of the fact that all triangles have three sides, in which case my *nous* is also perception of universals. So it is better to read τούτων as referring either to αὐται,⁴⁰ which in turn refers to ἀρχαί, or to τὰ καθόλου;⁴¹ *nous* is perception of starting points and (what is the same) universals. Either way, it certainly seems wrong to say that *nous* is of particulars.

The second flawed assumption is that these starting points and universals are general ends. Although Aristotle does say elsewhere that the end is the starting point of deliberation (e.g., *EE* 1227a8), Aristotle explicitly states that, at least in this passage, the starting points in

³⁹ See, for example, Dahl 1984, 44-45 and Reeve 1992, 58-59.

⁴⁰ Although τούτων is rather distant from αὐται, Bywater's punctuation in the Greek text suggests that we should treat the intervening clause as parenthetical, in which case the distance between them is no obstacle to reading the former as referring to the latter.

⁴¹ If the MS that reads τὸ καθόλου instead of τὰ καθόλου is correct, however, τούτων could not refer to τὸ καθόλου alone, because they would not agree in number.

practical sciences are minor premises (*EN* 1143b2-4; see also *DA* 433a16-17 and *MA* 701b33-34), which of course are not general ends but rather particular things to be done.⁴² *Nous* is thus perception not of general ends but of minor premises. But what *nous* grasps is also a universal (*APo.* 100a6-8); how can a minor premise be a universal? I perceive (not with *nous*, but by other means that we will have to treat later) that keeping this or that promise to my friend is just, I form memories of these just actions, and I come to see that keeping promises to friends in general is just, although I do not yet know why (i.e., I have ‘experience’). When I come to learn why keeping promises to friends is just, I am in a state of practical *nous*. The universal I have grasped, however, is not an end, but rather a minor premise (in a practical syllogism where ‘just things must be done’ is the major premise). What I have inductively ascertained is what counts as a just action, a rule of thumb for achieving some further end. This is why we think experience makes old and experienced people so perceptive (*EN* 1143b11-14), that they readily see what counts as virtuous in a given situation. A well-intentioned adolescent, on the other hand, may want just as much to be virtuous but fail to see what counts as virtuous.⁴³

C. D. C. Reeve (1992, 59-60; 2013, 231-34) tries to skirt this sort of issue by appealing to the first line of *EN* 1143a35-b5, that *nous* is of the last things in both directions (1143a35-36). So *nous* can be perception of *both* the universal and the particular (i.e., τούτων could refer to both τὰ καθόλου and τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστα), and thus Reeve could accept everything said so far and still maintain that *nous* is of general ends. But this is simply not what Aristotle says. He says that *nous* extends in two directions, one way in demonstrations, *on the one hand* (μέν), and one way

⁴² According to the intellectualist interpretation, when Aristotle says that minor premises are the starting points in practical sciences, he means that they are the starting points (ἀρχαί) of *induction*, since after all the universal proceeds from the particulars. However, Aristotle never refers to particulars as ἀρχαί of induction in his main discussions of induction in *APo.* 2.19 and *Met.* 1.1 nor, to my knowledge, anywhere else. So when Aristotle says that minor premises are starting points, he means in the usual sense of that which is the product of induction and of which we have *nous*.

⁴³ I owe the image of the well-intentioned adolescent to Hursthouse (2006, 288-89).

in practical sciences, *on the other hand* (δέ). Not only does Aristotle clearly assign one direction to the theoretical and another to the practical; he also suggests that they are opposed. The text, if it does not rule it out completely, at least makes Reeve's reading very strained. Again, although Aristotle does refer to ends as starting points elsewhere, what this particular passage is saying is that minor premises are the starting points of which *nous* is perception.

In general, if *nous* can only identify minor premises, it can only identify the means of satisfaction of some preexisting desire given in the major premise. *Nous* can tell us that just actions are *eudaimonia*-furthering and are therefore to be done for the sake of *eudaimonia*, for example, but it cannot tell us that *eudaimonia*-furthering actions are to be done. Even if *nous* happens to thereby identify things we adopt as ends in other contexts, like keeping promises to friends, *nous* does not identify them for their own sake but rather for the sake of some further end; *nous* identifies ends only incidentally. *EN* 1143a35-b5 is thus at least not incompatible with Aristotle's claim that 'virtue makes the end [σκόπον] right but practical wisdom [φρόνησις] the things towards it' (*EN* 1144a7-9).

I want to conclude this section by revisiting the first step of induction, where we 'perceive' that an action is, say, just. I argue that we do so by means of *phantasia*. My 'perception' that keeping this or that promise to my friend is just is just the same as my 'perception' that the Twinkie is bad (or good). The various qualities I sense over the course of this complex action are assembled into a *phantasma* that is represented according to my character, such that the action will seem just or unjust, more generally noble or ignoble, and most generally good or bad. Phenomenologically, this process is exactly the same as 'perception' by *nous* was supposed to be: I observe the action and 'intuit' or 'see' that it is just. What is different about my account (besides the fact that it does not rely on a primitive and unexplained form of

nous) is that it shows that the virtues of character have a role in every perception we make as part of the first step of induction. Whether or not I see keeping this or that promise to my friend as just or unjust, good or bad, etc. will depend on whether or not *I* am just, just like whether or not I see the Twinkie as good or bad will depend on whether or not I am temperate.⁴⁴ We have already seen that *nous* is only of ends incidentally; what we see now is that *nous* is constrained by a number of non-intellectual factors right from the start. Because of virtue's influence on *phantasia* and because of *phantasia*'s integral role in induction in the practical sciences, *EN* 1143a35-b5 is not only compatible but also consonant with Aristotle's claim that virtue makes the end right.

7 DELIBERATION AND ENDS

Another common intellectualist suggestion is that reason sets our ends by means of deliberation.⁴⁵ The first exegetical hurdle is Aristotle's insistence that deliberation is not about ends (*EN* 1112b11-1113a2; *EE* 1226b9-10, 1227a7-8). I have already argued that there is an important sense in which this is true, namely that some of our ends are desired for their own sake and are *ipso facto* undeliberated. However, Aristotle's assertion is not as straightforward as it perhaps appears, because the same thing can be desired both for its own sake and for the sake of something else; the same thing can be both an end and a 'means' (τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος).⁴⁶ For example, we desire honor, pleasure, reason, and the virtues for their own sake (i.e., as ends) but also for the sake of *eudaimonia* (i.e., as 'means' to *eudaimonia*) (*EN* 1097b2-4). In fact, *eudaimonia* is the only thing we desire only for its own sake and never for the sake of something

⁴⁴ Even merely habituated virtue will count for something: someone who lacks practical wisdom but has been brought up with just habits (i.e., the well-intentioned adolescent) will doubtless be more likely to represent keeping her/his promise as good than someone without just habits, and someone who lacks practical wisdom but has been brought up with healthy habits will be more likely to represent the Twinkie as bad than someone without healthy habits.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Irwin 1975, 567-78 and Wiggins 1980, 221-40.

⁴⁶ This phrase, translated 'means' by Ross/Urmson but more literally 'things toward the end', is widely recognized to encompass both instrumental means and constituent 'means'; see Irwin 1975, 571 and Wiggins 1980, 224.

else (1097b1, 5-6). If I am a politician, honor is my end, and insofar as I am a politician I do not deliberate about it. As a person in general, however, I might still deliberate about honor as a ‘means’ to *eudaimonia*, namely about whether or not honor would make me *eudaimōn* (i.e., happy). In the latter case, I am only deliberating about ends incidentally; honor, which I am deliberating about not as an end in itself but as a ‘means’ to *eudaimonia*, just happens to be my end in some other context. So we do not, strictly speaking, deliberate about ends, but because the same thing can be an end in one deliberation and a ‘means’ in another, we might be tempted to (strictly) inaccurately say that we deliberate about ends.

Because everything except *eudaimonia* can be both an end and a ‘means’, the qualification that we cannot deliberate about ends places very little restriction on the scope of deliberation. I can deliberate about broad ends like justice as a ‘means’ to *eudaimonia* and narrower ends like keeping promises to friends as a ‘means’ to justice. What I want to show now is that this broad role for deliberation does not entail an equally broad role for reason as such. Unlike theoretical reasoning, real deliberation is not a merely intellectual process but one that is deeply entangled with desire and the virtues of character.

Deliberation is essentially concerned with desire. Deliberation owes its apparent motivating power to this fact, because, according to my interpretation of Aristotle’s claims in the *DA* and the *MA*, deliberation can never motivate directly; only desire can do that. Deliberation is, first of all, initiated by a *boulēsis*.⁴⁷ We deliberate for the sake of some end (*EN* 1112b11-12, 15-16), and the end is the object of *boulēsis* (*EN* 1113b3; *EE* 1226a13-14). In fact, it is absurd to think of us as deliberating as all if we do not already have an end in mind (*EE* 1226b29-30).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Again, although deliberation can technically be initiated by other desires (*EN* 1142b18-20), Aristotle assumes for the most part that deliberation is initiated by *boulēsis*.

⁴⁸ As Segvic insightfully puts it, ‘What makes both technical and ethical deliberation practical is (in part) that deliberation presupposes aiming at a particular goal, and starts with a certain conception of the goal’ (2011, 171).

Deliberation not only takes a desire as an input but also yields one as an output; *boulēsis* is the input, and choice (προαίρεσις) is the output, which is why Aristotle defines choice as deliberate desire (*EN* 1113a9-11, *EE* 1226b16-17), a desire of which the starting point (ἀρχή) and cause (αἰτία) is deliberation, where we desire on account of our deliberation (διὰ τὸ βουλευσασθαι) (*EE* 1226b19-20). So deliberation both gives and takes orders from desire; deliberation takes orders from *boulēsis* but gives orders to choice. Deliberation is, however, still motivationally inert by itself. Deliberation needs to result in a desire, namely a choice, to have any influence on motivation, and deliberation must have been set in motion by another desire, namely a *boulēsis*, to do even that. Granting that deliberation has broad authority over ‘ends’ thus seems a small concession to the intellectualist, because deliberation needs desire to have any effect on motivation or to even occur at all.

This becomes even clearer when we consider the interrelationship between deliberation and *phantasia*. Deliberation is essentially connected with *phantasia*, so much that Aristotle actually calls deliberation a form of *phantasia* in *DA* 3.11 (434a7).⁴⁹ We can see the rationale for this in *DA* 3.7, where Aristotle says that all thinking involves *phantasmata* (431a16-17). These *phantasmata* play an especially important role for practical reason, because it is these that the practical intellect judges to be pleasant or painful and thus to be pursued or avoided (431a14-16). This is why deliberation is able to result in a new desire. I am deliberating, for example, about how to spend an amusing evening.⁵⁰ I could read a book, get drunk, go for a walk, etc. I will choose the course of action that *seems* best to me. On account of my temperance, I represent walking and reading as better than drinking; then on account of whatever other factors, either one of walking or reading will seem better than the other. What I have represented as good then

⁴⁹ I cannot treat here some of the interesting things Aristotle says about deliberative *phantasia* in *DA* 3.11; for further discussion, see Hudson 1981, 127-33; Richardson 1992, 395-98; and Moss 2012, 142-52.

⁵⁰ I owe this example to Wiggins 1980, 228.

becomes an object of choice, and in this way the object of choice is desired *because* of deliberation.

In fact, it seems impossible to imagine a deliberation that is purely thought-based (i.e., one that does not involve the representation of the object of thought as good via *phantasia*). First of all, it is hard to see where such a line of thinking would ever terminate, or, put another way, what reasoning is sufficient for producing a choice. I might suggest that getting drunk, at least, is a bad idea because it will be detrimental to my health, which is a constituent part of the overall good for humans and for me. In other words, I might conclude that getting drunk will be inimical to my *eudaimonia* and thus not choose to get drunk. But is even this enough? On what grounds, for example, is health a part of the overall human good? Because of our function (ἔργον)? It is not clear what level of justification would count as satisfactory for ruling out getting drunk, unless the process terminates at whatever point getting drunk *seems* bad to me. Second, this example and, I suspect, the idea that all ‘deliberation that relates particular actions to some overall systematic structure of ends, the final good’ (Irwin 1975, 575) seem to invoke a number of considerations irrelevant to the deliberation at hand. Since the end of this deliberation is an amusing evening, it seems strange that health would enter into the deliberation; health is not ordinarily a criterion for amusement. Third, I am not convinced that it is at all common for anyone to deliberate this sort of way. Even supposing that I have decided against drinking because it is inimical to my health and thereby my *eudaimonia*, am I then really going to decide between walking and reading by appealing to my systematic structure of ends and to *eudaimonia*? Would anybody? Or will I just choose the one that I *prefer*, the one that *seems* better to me? Aristotle’s sensitivity to the actual phenomenology of deliberation in this way is doubtless why he classes deliberation as a form of *phantasia* in the *DA*.

The virtues of character are thus interwoven into deliberation as well. Virtue affects our *phantasia*; it affects how things seem to us. And so, even when we are, loosely speaking, deliberating about ends, virtue influences the course of action that will seem best to us and which we will choose as a result of our deliberation. This is no doubt part of why Aristotle says that virtue makes the choice right (*EN* 1144a20), and that virtue preserves and vice causes us to be deceived about the starting point of action (1144a34-36), namely the last step of deliberation (*DA* 433a16-17; *MA* 701b33-34).

8 CONCLUSION

Reason alone cannot motivate us or shape our desires. But reason in combination with *phantasia* does shape our desires, and, because of the influence virtue and vice exert on our *phantasiai*, it is virtue and vice that determine when and how reason shapes our desires. In other words, it is virtue and vice, through their influence on *phantasia*, that make practical reason possible and set the end towards which practical reason is directed. Insofar as Aristotle denies that reason *alone* can motivate us or set our ends, he is indeed a Humean. But both Hume and Aristotle are sensitive to the phenomena and try to do justice to the messy interdependence between reason and desire that we experience in everyday life. Commentators should accordingly avoid attributing an extreme sentimentalism to Hume as much as attributing an extreme intellectualism to Aristotle.

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