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Aristotle’s excellent, or virtuous person must meet two requirements: he or she must strive for what is good, and be able to figure out how to achieve it. This means that the virtuous person must be motivated by sound desires, and have a well-developed power of reasoning. Virtue, therefore, is manifested both in the state of the desires and in the reasoning powers. He puts these two requirements on the excellent person in terms of two kinds of virtue: virtue of character and intellectual virtue. This twofold requirement has strong support in human experience. For it is easy to come up with examples of people with well-developed reasoning powers, who still bring about disaster both for themselves and for others. And in so far as the person acts voluntarily, it is the desires that lead the person astray, by pushing him or her into doing things that bring about misfortune.\(^1\) Hence, without a sound emotional constitution, virtue is not possible.

On the face of it, virtue is conditional on two different aspects of human nature: the potentiality to be a rational being, and an independent potentiality to be emotionally sound. However, it is a characteristic feature of Aristotle’s view that virtue as a whole is a realisation of human beings’ rational nature, and, hence, that even virtue of character is a realisation of that nature. Perhaps the contention can be explained along the following lines. To begin with, the two virtues are so intimately connected that they cannot be clearly separated from one another. For the relevant intellectual virtue, namely, practical wisdom (\textit{phronesis}), and virtue of character are dependent on one another, in the sense that the one cannot be had without the other.\(^2\) Furthermore, Aristotle might just incline to view the fusion of the two virtues in the light of practical
wisdom, perhaps on the grounds that it squares better with his overall conception of human beings as rational.

However, Aristotle’s contention that even virtue of character is a realisation of the rational nature comes to something else. For although dependent on one another, the two virtues are clearly separated, being virtues of different parts of the soul. That is, virtue of character belongs to the non-rational part, practical wisdom to the rational part of the soul.iii And it is precisely by considering the nature of the relation between these two parts of the soul that Aristotle explains in what way virtue of character is dependent on practical wisdom. For he holds that virtue of character presupposes that the non-rational part follows reason’s lead, that is, the lead of the rational part of the soul.iv He puts this “following” (ajkolouqein `n) relation in somewhat different ways: the non-rational part has a kind of share in reason (metevcein lovgou) in virtue of listening to (kathvkoon), being obedient to (ejpipeiqev~, peiقارcei`n) or being persuaded by (peivqesqai) reason.v These metaphorical ways of putting the relation raises the questions what it comes to, and what this capacity of the non-rational part of the soul amounts to more precisely.

To begin with, the non-rational part follows reason’s lead in virtue of understanding its commands. For the rational part gives commands (ejpivtagma), and the non-rational part takes these commands in.vi But does this mean that the non-rational part of the soul is not, after all, entirely devoid of reasoning powers? The problem is that although it does not take much to understand a command, even this kind of cognitive capacity seems to presuppose grasp of concepts and propositional thought. And if we grant that, then it is hard to resist the conclusion that the non-rational part is capable of more than just understanding commands. In particular, it then seems that it must have
some capacity for reasoning, such that it can understand not only the commands, but also considerations in favour of them.

However, on this anachronistic reading we miss out on something crucial in Aristotle’s conception of the relation between the rational and the non-rational part of the soul. For it seems that his starting point is an entirely intuitive distinction. Consider the case of an individual, and his or her relation to other people. It is one thing to think a situation through for oneself so as to reach a considered and independent decision as to what to do, quite another to go by the authority of someone else. In the latter case, we need not understand the slightest about why whatever we are told to do should be done; suffice it that we understand what we are to do.\textsuperscript{vii}

In what follows, I will try to elucidate what the “following,” or “listening” relation between the non-rational and rational parts of the soul comes to in more detail, and what kind of cognitive capacity this implies in regard to the non-rational part. As we shall see, this relation holds regardless of whether the two parts of the soul belong to one and the same individual, or to two separate individuals, such as is the case when we go by the authority of other people.

I should acknowledge my indebtedness to J. M. Cooper’s two seminal papers on the topic.\textsuperscript{viii} There are two points in particular on his part that have guided my own explorations into it. One is the idea that realising virtues of character, in fact, is a realisation of human beings’ rational nature, precisely on the grounds that in the virtuous person the non-rational part follows reason’s lead.\textsuperscript{ix} The other is his groundbreaking treatment of the part played by a particular kind of desire residing in the non-rational part, namely, spirited desire (\textit{thumos}), both in moral education and in the fully developed virtuous person.\textsuperscript{x}

However, I have some qualms about how Cooper portrays the non-rational part’s
“following,” or “listening” to reason, and I shall challenge his view that listening to the rational part implies a capacity for reasoning, however limited, on the part of the non-rational part of the soul. In particular, Aristotle’s contention that the non-rational part can be persuaded by the rational part, need not imply that the non-rational part, in addition to understanding the commands of reason, can understand the considerations in favour of them. Instead, it will argued that the “following” relation is a matter of directing the desires of the non-rational part towards values of reason itself by exposing them to those values through experience.

Divisions of the soul

In the final chapter of the first book of the Nicomachean ethics Aristotle prepares for the distinction between intellectual virtue, and virtue of character, by dividing the soul into a rational and a non-rational part. The point, as mentioned, is that each of these parts has a virtue of its own. But virtue of character, it turns out, does not belong to the entire non-rational part. For having divided the soul into these two parts, he goes on and points out that a further division can be made of the non-rational part. For in addition to one part, which is entirely beyond the reach of reason and virtue, namely, the nutritive part, there is another part, namely, the appetitive and generally desiderative part. And although this latter part does not possess reason by itself, it nevertheless has a share in reason in virtue of its capacity to listen to it.

The point of introducing this reason-responsive part of the non-rational part of the soul is to prepare the ground for the contention that the non-rational part can be under the sway of reason. And importantly, in following reason’s lead, the non-rational part does not attend to any arguments or considerations, but obeys reason in authority. Hence, the non-rational part does not understand what speaks in favour of a certain
course of action, but abides by the prescriptions of reason without questioning, as it were. In this respect, Cooper’s interpretation is misguided. For according to Cooper, the non-rational part can listen to, and be persuaded by reason, in virtue of having recourse to the same conceptual framework as reason itself has. But what is more, he also holds that the persuasion of the non-rational part implies that it does not blindly follow the commands of reason, but that it actually can be brought to understand the reasons in favour of the recommended course of action. The problem with this suggestion is that the distinction between the two ways of having reason is blurred. For what are we to make of the point that only the rational part possesses reason by itself, if the non-rational part understands not only the commands of reason, but also the considerations in favour of them? Besides, there is little support in the text for a distinction between understanding an argument, on the one hand, and producing it, on the other, and Cooper, at any rate, does not base his reading on that distinction.

The likely source of this problem is a certain fuzziness on Aristotle’s part in drawing the distinction between the rational part, on the one hand, and the reason-responsive part of the non-rational part, on the other. In particular, having divided the non-rational part into two parts, he goes on and seems to make a further division of the rational part. That is, even in the rational part there is one part such that it merely has a share in reason, without having it properly. On the face of it, it appears as if this further division collapses the basic division between the rational and the non-rational part. For it now seems that the reason-sharing part of the non-rational part is merged with a similar part of the rational part, so that these two parts share a common part – an intersection, set-theoretically speaking.

Apart from confusing the division between the rational and the non-rational part, this intersection is also intolerable in that pretty much of the point of introducing a part of
the soul which can share in reason without itself possessing it is lost. For Aristotle is
precisely concerned with explaining how even the non-rational part of the soul can
come under the sway of reason. If the answer is that the non-rational part has a part in
common with the rational part, then the explanation seems vacuous. For then it seems
that the non-rational part, after all, has some reasoning powers in common with the
rational part. And the other side of the coin, namely, that there is a part of the rational
part, which has a minimal power of reason, such that it has a share in reason without
having it properly, is equally intolerable, and without backing in Aristotelian
psychology.xvii

The problem arises from the phrase at 1103a1f, εἰ δὲ σοι καὶ τὸνο ζύνον εἴς τιν, διότι; τοῦτο πάντες λογον εἴς τιν, διότι; τὸνο ζύνον εἴς τιν, which is standardly
rendered “now if we must say that this [the non-rational part] too has reason, then the
part which has reason
should be double too.” A possible way out of this problem is to accept a certain
inconsistency in Aristotle’s use of the expression ‘the part which has reason’ (τὸ;
λογον ε[ν). That is, perhaps there is a shift in extension between its occurrence at
1102a28 and 1103a2, respectively, such that only the latter includes the reason-
responsive part as well.xviii Considering the fact that there turns out to be a part of the
non-rational part of the soul which has a share in reason, Aristotle at 1103a2 might just
have chosen to reflect this insight by making an *ad hoc* variant division, without,
however, abandoning the standard division, according to which the reason-responsive
part belongs to the non-rational part.

Although my overall interpretation does not hinge on it, let me briefly consider a
modest conjecture that would help us out. I suggest that we emend ε[ν to ε[ν.xix
Now we get the sensible apodosis “then to have reason too should be twofold [that is,
have two senses]. In fact, the inferential force of the apodosis, strengthened by the
future tense, makes much better sense if we go by the conjecture. The protasis, or
anything else in the context, does not imply that the rational part should be double,
whereas there is good backing for the conclusion that there must be two ways of having
reason. What follows, to; me;n kurivw~ kai; ejn auJtw/`, to; d j w{ sper tou`
patro;~ ajkoustikovn ti, gives the two senses: “to have it in the proper sense and in
itself, on the one hand, and as something that listens to its father, on the other.”

There is some support for the conjecture in the ancients commentators. Aspasius in
the 2nd century elaborates on the division of the non-rational part of the soul, and on the
two senses of having reason, but does not as much as hint at a parallel division of the
rational part. A paraphrase, the authorship and date of which are uncertain, gives
some support for emending the phrase in the way I have suggested. To begin with, in
elaborating on the two different ways of having reason, the paraphrast goes beyond
Aristotle, and introduces a somewhat more elaborate scheme. As the examples show,
the paraphrast first makes a distinction between the having of reason (to; lovgon
e[cein) and the having of a share in reason (to; lovgou metevcein), such that the
former is a matter of putting the capacity for attending to reason into actual use, whereas
the latter signifies the mere potentiality to do so. The paraphrast’s point, then, is that in
regard to both of these a further distinction can be drawn: the non-rational part has
reason in the way in which we listen to our father or our loved ones, whereas the
rational part has it in the way in which we attend to the proofs produced by a
mathematician. And in parallel to these two senses of having reason, the non-rational
part has a share in reason in the sense of having the capacity to obey an authority, such
as one’s father, whereas the rational part has a share in it in the proper way and in itself,
in virtue of having the capacity to understand arguments and proofs.
In other words, in the paraphrast’s terminology the expression ‘having a share in reason’ comes to pretty much the same as Aristotle’s ‘having reason,’ in so far as the general capacity to attend to reason is at issue, regardless of whether it is a matter of attending to it in the proper way, or merely in the secondary way. Importantly, as the paraphrast turns to the two ways in which the having a share in reason is spoken of (in his terminology), he obviously has 1103a1-3 in mind, to which the very phrasing and examples testify. And in what must be his somewhat loose paraphrase of 1103a2, it is more likely that he read e[cein than e[con. For the paraphrase runs “in this way, having a share in reason too is spoken of in two senses” (kata; tou` ton to;n tro;pon diplw`~ levgetai kai; to; lovgou metevcein).xxiii

**Obeying in authority**

Regardless of how we deal with the textual question, Aristotle’s point is sufficiently clear. The soul is divided into a rational and a non-rational part, the latter of which, in a sense, can have a share in reason. The important thing now is that this kind of having reason must be distinguished from the rational part’s proper possession of it. As Aristotle puts it, the non-rational part has reason in the sense in which we say that we have it from our father or our loved ones, and not in the sense in which we have it in mathematics.xxiv What he has in mind is the way in which we may take advice from other people on mere authority, without knowing the considerations in favour of the advice. In mathematics, by contrast, we are presented not only to the truths, but also to the proofs of them.xxv

What is more, in view of Aristotle’s contention “that the non-rational part is in a way persuaded by reason, [as] is shown by admonition (nouqevthsi~), and all sort of censure (ejpitivmhsi~) and encouragement (paravklhsi~)”, it seems highly unlikely
that he has in mind being persuaded in the sense of understanding and accepting an argument, however primitively.\textsuperscript{xxvi} Instead, he seems to have in mind cases like bringing up children, in which the child understands and accepts a command on mere authority without knowing the considerations in favour of it. This also explains why he qualifies the kind of persuasion by “in a way” (\textit{pw~}).

Cooper’s mistake mentioned above, I suspect, is that by articulating the capacity of the non-rational part in terms of conceptual capacities, he takes too much on board, cognitively speaking. It is more likely that Aristotle is dealing in the intuitive distinction between someone understanding, be it through education or by his own wits, why a certain thing should, or should not be done, and someone relying on authority. Indeed, the very wording “to obey in authority” (\textit{peiqarcei`n}) is suggestive of that.\textsuperscript{xxvii} In addition, Cooper also overlooks the ambiguity of the notion of persuasion (\textit{peiqwv}), and particularly the fact that we may be persuaded to do something without our understanding \textit{why} whatever we are persuaded about is to be done.\textsuperscript{xxviii}

This point is also brought home by Aristotle’s remarks on the enkratic, or self-controlled person. To begin with, it should be noticed that the non-rational part’s having a share in reason is a universal feature of the relation between the two parts of the soul. Hence, the non-rational part of the enkratic person has a share in reason as well.\textsuperscript{xxix} Now, the point cannot be that the non-rational part of the enkratic person is brought to understand why something should or should not be done. The understanding takes place in the rational part, and the very characteristic of the enkratic person is that although his non-rational part strives in the opposite direction, his or her rational part is powerful enough to force the non-rational part into obedience, which only requires understanding of the command on the part of the latter. In other words, the non-rational part obeys the rational part without agreeing with it. If the rational part really managed to make the
non-rational part understand why something should or should not be done, and, thus, made it agree with it, then that part would probably no longer strive in the opposite direction. In that case, self-control would be an inappropriate characterization of the enkratic person in the first place.

In regard to the non-rational part’s having a share in reason, Aristotle puts the difference between the enkratic and the virtuous person by saying that the non-rational part of the enkratic person obeys reason, whereas the same part of the virtuous person obeys reason even more willingly, in the sense that it actually agrees with it, and that no conflicts in the soul arise. But as we are about to see, this does not imply that the non-rational part of the virtuous person is made to understand why one should act, or feel in a certain way, in virtue of a supposed power of reasoning. Instead, it is transformed in such a way that its desires agree with reason, and this transformation is not brought about through reasoning.

_Spirited desire and reason_

To become a virtuous person, then, the non-rational part of one’s soul must agree with reason in such a way that no conflicts arise: it must chime in with reason. The crucial point in Aristotle’s account of how the desires of the non-rational part can be made to agree with reason is the idea that the non-rational part can be transformed to strive for values endorsed by reason itself. But since the non-rational part cannot be convinced through arguments, the transformation must be brought about in some other way. It is in this regard that one of the desires of the non-rational part, namely, spirited desire (thumos), plays a pivotal part. For when it comes to the non-rational part’s following reason’s lead, it is, in fact, only spirited desire, not appetite (epithumia), that can do so. What makes spirited desire suited to do this work on behalf of the non-
rational part is the kind of objects, or values, it is set upon. For Aristotle distinguishes between the two kinds of non-rational desire by the kind of object each strives for: whereas appetite always is set upon pleasure (hedone), spirited desire is set upon an entirely different value, namely, what is fine and beautiful (to kalon). xxxiii

However, the desire of the rational part of the soul, that is, wish (boulesis), is set upon yet another value, namely, the good (tagathon). So, the contention that the fine is a value endorsed by the rational part must be qualified in some way, so that it does not imply that the rational part actually desires the fine. To begin with, the desire for the fine is a desire to become fine. In other words, spirited desire, in contrast to appetite, is concerned with obtaining and maintaining a character. Since this character is developed and maintained through fine actions, spirited desire strives for actions that are fine, and is concerned with all aspects related to what makes a person, and his or her actions, fine. What is more, spirited desire is qualified not merely by its object, that is, the fine, but also by its belligerence in defending the fineness of the subject. By way of adumbration, we might say that the fine for Aristotle is a matter of pride, dignity and self-esteem both in the face of others and oneself, and in all aspects of life.

Before we consider what it is about the fine that makes it a value dear to reason, let us prepare the ground by piecing together a picture from the somewhat scattered remarks as to what spirited desire’s susceptibility to reason’s lead amounts to. A good start is the argument to the effect that the akratic person is more readily excused for being overcome by spirited desire than by appetite, precisely on the grounds that only spirited desire, in some sense at least, can listen to reason. For in that case the akratic person, in a way (pw~), is overcome by reason itself. xxxiv The example is how we might be overcome by our feelings in the face of insults. Returning to the details shortly, the idea, in outline, is that the non-rational part of the soul prompts a certain response to the
insult solely in virtue of its sense of the fine, and not by reasoning about what course of action is fitting.\textsuperscript{xxxv}

On this point, I depart from Cooper’s account.\textsuperscript{xxxvi} For he thinks that spirited desire, in contrast to appetite, is indeed involved in some kind of reasoning, such that, for instance, it puts together the evaluative view that insults are belittling, and that they must be retaliated against, with the factual information that an insult has taken place, so as to reach the decision to fight back. But the crucial textual evidence does not support this reading. As Aristotle puts it, spirited desire, on the factual information that an insult has taken place, prompts action “as if having reasoned” (\textit{w}sper sullogisavmeno~) that insults of this kind are cause for going to war.\textsuperscript{xxxvii} As the very grammar suggests, Aristotle does not think that spirited desire is involved in reasoning in a literal sense. To the contrary, since there is no reason to think that spirited desire has evaluative views to begin with, we need not conclude that it entertains any major premiss at all; it just seems as if it had reasoned.\textsuperscript{xxxviii} Hence, Cooper ascribes too much cognitive power to spirited desire, and, consequently, to the non-rational part of the soul.

But what is more, the important point, to which I shall return shortly, is that Aristotle has no need for reasoning as a distinguishing mark of spirited desire. For all that matters is that spirited desire is susceptible to the fine just as appetite is susceptible to pleasure, so as to motivate a particular course of action. In this regard, there is no important difference between the workings of spirited desire and appetite, respectively.

The question now is why reason values the fine. Indeed, why does it not value pleasure equally much, or equally little? Yet again, Aristotle is not particularly explicit, but it is likely that the different attitudes reason has towards pleasure, and towards the fine, respectively, comes with the very nature of these values. Reason values what is good for human beings, which is to say that which realises someone’s full potential as a
rational being. The fine has a bearing on the human good in at least two ways. First, through spirited desire’s drive for the fine, a reflective outlook on life and the self is developed. This reflective outlook, in turn, is indispensable if practical wisdom is to develop. For practical wisdom is conditional on the power of deliberation (*bouleusis*), that is, the capacity to deliberate about what is good for oneself in general, in the sense that it contributes to well-being, or a happy life.\(^{xxxix}\) If such deliberation is to be successful, it is crucial that the self is taken stock of in the broadest possible perspective. And secondly, the fine character is also a prerequisite for realising human beings’ potential for theoretical knowledge (*episteme*) and reflection (*theoria*). Indeed, as Cooper suggests, spirited desire’s striving for the fine in terms of order (*taxis*), symmetry (*summetria*) and determinateness (*horismenon*) in action, prepares the soul for values that are pivotal for theoretical reason.\(^{xl}\) Spirited desire’s sense of the fine, thus, has an important part to play in turning the soul towards the good.\(^{xli}\)

None of this implies that spirited desire itself is responsible for the reflective outlook, just that in virtue of the very value involved in spirited desire, which is more complex, and touches upon more aspects of life than pleasure, a more reflective outlook on life and the self is developed. The reflective outlook is a task for the rational part of the soul, but through the strengthening of spirited desire, this part is nurtured and developed more than by appetite. This is not to say that pleasure is despised and to be avoided. The point is just that pleasure does not turn the soul towards the good, and that pleasure, to the extent that it is had at the expense of the fine, even is an impediment to the good life. For the kind of pleasure appetite strives for is intimately tied to the body, and these pleasures are a matter of momentary and isolated gratification, and do not last longer than the part of the body concerned is affected.\(^{xlii}\)
Of course, in the case of appetite, too, a certain reflective outlook can be nurtured such as figuring out schemes to maximise pleasure and minimise pain, which may require indeed complicated deliberations, as we can witness from the Marquis de Sade’s elaborate schemes for pleasure, but the scope of such reflection is narrower, and confined to the body. Generally speaking, the three kinds of desire differ in regard to their relative dependence on deliberation for their satisfaction. By and large, satisfying appetites requires less calculation than obtaining the fine does, let alone obtaining the good. For instance, it is, relatively speaking, easier to spot a partner for sexual pleasure, than someone to be proud of, let alone someone to lead a happy life with.

*Educating desires through habituation*

In the virtuous person, the desires of the non-rational part of the soul agree with reason, and spirited desire plays the crucial part in this regard. In now remains to flesh out the process, or mechanism by which the non-rational part is made to agree with reason, without presupposing any amount of reasoning of the non-rational part of the soul. Aristotle puts the mechanism in terms of habituation (*ethismos*), and it can be likened to the training of a sense. By way of an analogy, it is an indispensable part of musical education to train the student’s sense of tunes, rythms, and harmonies. The way to train this sense is by exposing the student to pieces of music. This process must be allowed to take time, for the student must cultivate the sense by repetition so as to gradually learn to recognise different tunes, rythms, and harmonies. The student cannot be introduced to musical theory, such as harmonics, before he or she has a firm grasp of the phenomenon through the senses. And that grasp is gained through experience, not through reasoning.
Turning now to the ultimate sources of motivation in human beings, namely, the desires, the importance of habituation, and the part played by spirited desire can be seen particularly clearly in the upbringing of the developing individual. For to the extent that children have no sense of whatever reasons there are for acting in a certain way, there are two ways of accustoming the child to proper conduct. The brute way is to persuade the child to act properly by promising it something pleasant, sweets say, or to threaten it with punishment. This is to appeal to the child’s sense of pleasure and pain; the child adjusts its conduct in order to achieve pleasure and to avoid pain. However, we may also encourage good behaviour by appealing to the child’s sense of the fine. The child may not understand why, for instance, honesty is a good thing, but by being told that acting in an honest way makes him or her a better person, the child’s spirited desire takes command and motivates honest behaviour. This is the point of exhortations like “Be a good girl, and admit what you have done!” Gradually, as the child’s spirited desire is nurtured through habituation, its outlook on the world, and its place in it, will grow richer and more complex than if it had been trained merely to achieve pleasure and to avoid pain.

The nurturing of the child’s spirited desires is closely tied to, and dependent on, its sense of shame (aidos). Since arguments, as Aristotle puts it, are not enough to make men good, and, indeed, out of place in the case of children, it is precisely through the sense of shame that we can correct bad behaviour, and, ultimately, make the child a lover of the fine (philokalon). This is probably also what he has in mind when he points out that censure and encouragement show that the non-rational part of the soul, in a way, is persuaded by reason. For the point of encouragement is precisely that we appeal to the child’s pride and self-esteem, whereas in censuring it for bad behaviour, we are appealing to its sense of shame. By contrast, the less fortunate individuals who
are not endowed with strong spirited desires to begin with do not obey the sense of shame, and do not avoid bad actions because they are base, but out of fear of punishment.\textsuperscript{xlvii}

The crucial point of accustoming the child to virtuous conduct is that the child acquires a taste for it, such that it will act virtuously not from mere habit, but from desire for it. Here it matters a great deal what it has experienced in terms of satisfying its desires. Think of an analogy: the desire for delicious food, or good wine can be satisfied to different degrees, depending on what we are served. But the very taste for food and wine can also be cultivated in such a way that our demands increase. The crucial first step in such cultivation is that we are exposed to delicious food and good wine, and it might even take some time to learn to appreciate them. In that case, our desire for delicious food and good wine is cultivated through experience. Reading studies in gastronomy, by contrast, will not do the trick.

Now, in the same spirit, the development of the child’s character will be heavily dependent on what experience it has of satisfying its desires. To begin with, unless the child is introduced to fine conduct, it cannot develop a taste for this value. In that case, spirited desire withers, as it were. Furthermore, it is through experience that the child comes to learn the difference between apparent and real instances of different values. This is crucially so in the case of reason’s own desire, wish, and its object, the good.\textsuperscript{xlviii}

For we may err in regard to the good, and wish for what is merely the apparent good, by believing, for instance, that pleasure is the good.\textsuperscript{xlix} And as far as the child is concerned, it cannot be talked into changing its preferences; it must be exposed to real instances of the good. Once it experiences the real good, no arguments will be needed: for once it has experienced the real good, satisfaction of wish by means of the apparent good will no longer do. Extrapolating the case of spirited desire from wish, here too there is no
guarantee that the child ends up with spirited desires which strive for the truly fine. To do so, the child needs to experience the difference between truly fine actions and those that merely appear so.

Finally, Aristotle’s contention that only spirited desire can follow reason’s lead might leave us in doubt as to whether reason can have any bearing on the other kind of non-rational desire, that is, appetite. Aristotle does not say much about this question, but if I may conjecture a bit, his theoretical framework seems resourceful enough to deal with it. To begin with, the question must be considered against the background of the gradual development of the individual’s character through habituation. It is reasonable to say that the question of what impact reason has is irrelevant when it comes to infants, and it is questionable anyway if action should be attributed to infants in the first place. But at some point in one’s development, spirited desires can function as a moderating force vis à vis appetite, perhaps about the same time that we begin to attribute action to children. For instance, in correcting excessive behaviour of even a fairly small child in regard to appetites, we can appeal to its sense of shame. This sense of shame with regard to appetites helps develop the power to resist excess and, thus, is the beginning of moderation.

Some support for this conjecture can be found in Aristotle’s account of moderation (sophrosune). For he points out that in the moderate person the appetitive part of the soul is in harmony with reason in such a way that his or her appetites are ready to obey (eujpeiqev~) it. On the face of it, this seems to speak against the contention that only spirited desire, but not appetites are capable of listening to and following reason’s lead. However, Aristotle goes on and suggests that the moderate person’s appetites are in harmony with reason in the sense that both the appetitive part and reason have a common goal, namely, the fine. His account here is sketchy, but it is tempting to think
that it is precisely through spirited desire as a mediator that the appetitive part and reason are brought into harmony. For by forcing and moulding the appetites not to put the fine at risk spirited desire makes the non-rational part of the soul, the appetitive part included, more apt to follow reason’s lead.

**Virtue, the good, and community**

The distinctive feature of Aristotle’s conception of virtue of character is the idea that the rational part of the soul instils this virtue into the non-rational part by educating the desires of the latter. And it is an important fact about human nature that the first and crucially constitutive steps of such education cannot be initiated by the rational part of the developing individual itself. For the proper development of the rational part of the individual requires that the non-rational part has reached a certain level of development in the first place. Therefore, guardians who can give the developing individual the proper lead are indispensable. This means that in respect of virtue, the individual is not self-sufficient; instead, the community introduces each of us to morality.iii This, as we shall see, has some rather important bearings on Aristotle’s conception of virtue, and on human nature as such.

The importance of community is not limited to the education of the non-rational desires. For even when it comes to the desire of reason itself, that is, wish, and its object, the good, guardianship is crucial. To begin with, considering the fact that the good is the ultimate end of human activity, reason itself, in virtue of harbouring the desire for the good, is not just one source of motivation among others, but even the source of motivation in human life. But since the good is the least apparent of the three values that the three different kinds of desire are respectively set upon, it takes more reasoning to hit the mark with regard to the good than with regard to the objects of the
non-rational desires. Hitting the right mark with regard to pleasure, for instance, is more or less a matter of bodily instincts, and does not require much of reasoning, if any.

This is not to say that a guardian can expose instances of the good to the developing individual in the same way that he or she can expose instances of the fine. For achieving the good is conditional on exercise of the reasoning power characteristic of practical wisdom, namely, deliberation.\textsuperscript{iii} But if the deliberative exercise is to have a point, then some grasp of the ultimate end is required. For however cumbersome it might be to figure out what course of action will contribute to the good life in the individual case, at least we must have some sense of what we are striving for. So, the ultimate end cannot be established through deliberation, for it serves as the starting point for it. In this respect, there is a parallel between practical wisdom and theoretical knowledge: just as the axioms of demonstrative sciences cannot be demonstrated, but must be grasped through other means, in that case through induction (\textit{epagoge}), so the ultimate end of practical reason cannot be established by means of deliberation, but only through habituation.\textsuperscript{iv}

What is more, it should not be denied that the good can be articulated, or that conceptions of it can be justified dialectically in ethical enquiry. The point is just that such articulation and justification require that we already have a grasp of the good, and that that grasp must be established in some other way.\textsuperscript{v} Aristotle’s answer is that the grasp of the good is based on an inborn, and uniquely human sense of this value.\textsuperscript{vi} But just as in the case of spirited desire, it takes instruction and experience to cultivate this sense.

In regard to the good, guardians can merely get the individual started in the right direction. For since the good is conditioned by facts about ourselves and the particular circumstances in which we happen to live, to a great extent we will have to figure out
for ourselves what to do, and to learn from experience. Indeed, our deliberative skills will improve as we go along, and so will our grasp of the good. In regard to the first steps in such development, spirited desire has a particularly important part to play. For it is precisely by strengthening the desire for the truly fine that the grasp of the good is at the same time improved. That is, since to become truly fine is a matter of perfecting human nature as far as possible, and perfecting human nature is a matter of hitting the mark in regard to the good, spirited desire crucially prompts the rational part of the soul to figure out what the truly good is for the person in question.

By comparison, the person whose character remains uneducated, or is corrupted, risks achieving what is bad for himself, despite the fact that he might be good at calculating how to achieve his ends, because he is set upon what merely seems to be good. In these cases, one might suspect that things went wrong at the level of spirited desire. For to experience truly fine actions requires superiors who nurture and adjust the non-rational desires in such a way that they come to direct the person towards the truly fine. Only then can he or she start to develop the skills needed to hit the mark with regard to the good. In other words, only to the extent that the child is fortunate enough to have such superiors, does it gradually, through experience, learn to appreciate, and, indeed, even to take pleasure in truly fine, and, in the end, virtuous action. Of course, not all human beings are equally fortunate in this regard, which also explains why some people never become virtuous.

Furthermore, it is a crucial tenet of Aristotle’s conception of deliberation, or practical reasoning, that it is restrained by the desire of reason itself, that is, wish for the good. For by directing man towards the good, the desire of the rational part of the human soul as it were provides the space of reasons for practical reasoning to operate within. For the very rationale of human activity is to accomplish what is good for human beings, and
there is no point in practical reasoning unless it is restrained by that goal. Hence, with regard to the rational nature of human beings, the part played by human desires is not just a matter of providing practical reasoning with starting points to work on. Rather, human desires are constitutive in this regard, and the part played by practical reasoning conditional on that. So, although the power of deliberation is a characteristic of man as a rational being, it is not basic in that regard.

Now, suggesting that virtue of character has a certain priority over practical wisdom, in the straightforward respect that unless the starting points of the deliberative exercise are correct ones, nothing good can be accomplished, is not say that human virtue basically is a matter of perfecting human beings’ emotional nature as opposed to their rational nature. First, although the beginning of virtue of character is developed through habituation, and not through exercises of deliberation, further development requires deliberation. For in view of the complexities and contingencies of human life, hitting the mark with regard to the good requires that the situation at hand is penetrated by means of deliberation before we can reach a sound decision as to what to do. Second, even though in the individual the beginning of virtue of character is not conditional on practical wisdom of that same individual, it is dependent on the practical wisdom of that individual’s guardians.

It should also be borne in mind that for Aristotle, the values which motivate human beings are not beyond rational justification. Some values are right, others wrong, and the test lies in whether or not they contribute to the good for human beings. This is why virtue as a whole, comprised of both virtue of character and intellectual virtue, is a realisation of the rational nature of human beings. For to become fully rational, human beings must be motivated by values, the pursuit of which contributes to the good for them. And those are inborn values of human reason itself.
List of works cited


—— *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca [CAG]*, xx. (Berlin, 1892).


i Nicomachean Ethics vi. 9, 1142b17-20; 12, 1149a29-36.

ii Nicomachean Ethics vi. 13, 1144b30-32; x. 8, 1178a16-19.

iii Eudemian Ethics ii. 1, 1220a4-12.

iv Eudemian Ethics ii. 2, 1220b5-6. I take it that reason (logos) here refers to that part of the rational part of the soul, which is responsible for practical reasoning, and of which practical wisdom is the virtue. Cf. Nicomachean Ethics vi. 1, 1139a11-15; 5, 1140a24-28.

v Nicomachean Ethics i. 13, 1102b13f; 31; i. 7, 1098a4; i. 13, 1102b26; 33.

vi Nicomachean Ethics i. 13, 1102b29-33; vii. 6, 1149a25-32.

vii This distinction may lie behind a few lines from Hesiod cited at Nicomachean Ethics i. 4, 1095b10-14, which, in prosaic translation, run: “This is the altogether excellent: he, who figures out everything for himself/excellent too is the one, who obeys the one speaking well./But the one who neither figures out for himself, nor listening to another/takes [the advice] to his heart – that is a useless man indeed.” (Works and Days, 293-297.)


In what follows, I will speak of parts of the soul without taking a stand on the ontological status of these parts, or, perhaps, aspects of the soul. At *Nicomachean Ethics* i. 13, 1102a28-32 Aristotle himself points out that in this context the ontological questions make little difference.

*Nicomachean Ethics* i. 13, 1102b29-31.

Cooper, “Aristotle’s Moral Psychology,” 33f.

*Nicomachean Ethics* i. 13, 1103a1-3.

There is an implicit tendency towards this reading in scholarly commentators such as J. A. Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1892), 167 and R. A. Gauthier & J. Y. Jolif, *L’Éthique à Nicomaque*, 2nd edn., ii. 1 (Louvain/Paris, 1970), 97. A further, even more untenable option is provided by F. Dirlmeier in *Aristoteles – Nikomachische Ethik* (Berlin, 1969), 292f: the reason-responsive part too is divided into two parts, one belonging to the non-rational part, the other to the rational part of the soul.

Of course, there are other divisions to be made in regard to the rational part, such as that between the part of theoretical knowledge (*to epistemonikon*) and the calculative part (*to logistikon*), the latter of which is responsible for deliberation. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* vi. 1, 1139a3-15.


The conjecture is possible on paleographical grounds. Either a ligature like ∣ for ει has been mistaken for ο, or the common abbreviation of ε[cein], that is, ε[ε] has been mistaken for the common abbreviation of ε[con], that is, ε[ε]. I’m greatful to Denis Searby for help with the paleographical considerations.
Aristotle elsewhere uses the expression *dittovn* for linguistic ambiguity. See *Sophistici elenchi* 19 and *Posterior Analytics* i. 10, 77b24-26.

H. Heylbut (ed.), *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* [CAG], xix. 1 (Berlin, 1889), 36.

Heylbut (ed.), *CAG*, xix. 2. 25, 7-14. On authorship and date, see Gauthier & Jolif, *L’Éthique à Nicomaque*, i. 1, 106f and D.M. Nicol, “A paraphrase of the *Nicomachean Ethics* attributed to the Emperor John VI Cantacuzene,” *Byzantinoslavica*, 28 (1968), 1-16. The only thing we know for sure, really, is that the paraphrase is earlier than 1367. The suggested authors, namely, Andronicus of Rhodes, Olympiodorus of Alexandria, the Byzantine Emperor John VI Cantacuzene, and the otherwise unknown Heliodorus of Prusa gives a time span between the first century BC and the 14th century.

Heylbut (ed.), *CAG*, xix. 2. 25, 11-12. Eustratius’ 11/12th century Byzantine commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, on the other hand, testifies to the received MSS, the oldest of which is the codex Laurentianus of the 10th century. For from the distinction between the two ways of having reason he concludes that the rational part (*logikon*) too is double. See Heylbut (ed.), *CAG*, xx. (Berlin, 1892), 120, 3-8.

*Nicomachean Ethics* i. 13, 1102b31-33. As far as having the *logos* of the father is concerned, Aristotle is playing on the idiomatic expression *lovgon e[cein tino~*, “to have regard to someone.” Cf. Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, 166.

Cf. Aspasius, in *CAG*, xix. 1. 36, 2-5. The expression *tw`n maqhmatis`n* at 1102b33 raises questions of both grammar and content. If the grammatical construction is analogous to that in the first part of the sentence, then mathematicians are intended. In that case, the point is likely to be that we have the *logos* from the mathematician in the sense that he or she demonstrates the claims in such a way that we can take part not
only of the claim, but of the proof as well. However, the genitive here is most often
taken to indicate the subject matter of mathematics, thus suggesting that this way of
having *logos* is the way in which *logos* is had in mathematics, allowing, without
necessitating, the reading that it is the very producing of the proof that Aristotle has in
mind. However, the point is more likely to be that this way of having *logos* amounts to
being able to follow, rather than producing the proof.

xxvi *Nicomachean Ethics* i. 13, 1102b33-1103a1.

xxvii LSJ has a persuasive list for this use in Sophocles (*Trachiniae* 1178), Aristophanes
(*Ecclesiazusae* 762), Plato (*Republic* vii. 538C6-E4) and, not least, in Aristotle himself
(*Politics* ii. 4, 1262b3).

xxviii At *Gorgias* 454E3-455A7 Plato pinpoints a similar kind of ambiguity between two
types of persuasion: one producing conviction without knowledge, the other providing
knowledge as well.

xxix *Nicomachean Ethics* i. 13, 1102b13-28. So, the non-rational part of the akratic person
also has a share in reason, but dispensable for my point here, I leave this somewhat
more complicated case out for now, and return to it in the next section.

xxx *Nicomachean Ethics* i. 13, 1102b28.

xxxi For the different kinds of desire, see *De anima* ii. 3, 414b2; iii. 9, 432b3-7; *De motu
animalium* 6, 700b17f; *Eudemian Ethics* ii. 7, 1223a26f; ii. 10, 1225b24-26; *Rhetoric* i.
10, 1369a1-4.

xxxii *Nicomachean Ethics* vii. 6, 1149b1-3.

xxxiii The aesthetic aspect of *to kalon* is important, but for convenience I henceforth
render it with ‘the fine.’ The attribution of *to kalon* to spirited desire is far from explicit
in Aristotle, but I find Cooper’s arguments for this attribution, based on *Nicomachean*
See, also, Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to be Good,” 79-86.

xxxiv Nicomachean Ethics vii. 6, 1149a25-b3.

xxxv The example of how spirited desire rushes to action on the grounds of an insult is but one instance, and should not suggest that the responses of spirited desire are confined only to insults by others. For this very example is designed to explain how spirited desire can be responsible for akrasia, and in that case it is a particularly belligerent and irascible kind of spirited desire that we are overcome by, namely anger (orge). Cf. Rhetoric ii. 2, 1378a30ff for a definition of orge.


xxxvii Nicomachean Ethics vi. 6, 1149a32-b1.

xxxviii Compare the case discussed at De motu animalium 7, 701a26-33. Aristotle points out that when the minor premiss is obvious to us, we may skip over it. For instances, if you entertain the premiss that taking walks is good for man, you don’t waste time on considering whether you are a man, but rather skip over the premiss “I’m a man”. Even in this case the action is said to be carried out without reasoning.

xxxix Nicomachean Ethics vi. 5, 1140a24-28.

xl Cooper, “Reason, Moral Virtue, and Moral Value,” 113. He bases his interpretation here, and at 105f on the interesting remark at Metaphysics xiii. 3, 1078a31-b6 that the fine and beautiful in terms of order, symmetry and determinateness is found both in the sphere of action and among unchanging entities.

xli The Platonic background is obvious. At Republic iii. 401D5-402A4 Socrates pinpoints the importance of music and poetry in turning the young person towards the
good in that it gives him or her a sense of fine and beautiful things even before he or she can explain why they are so. I owe this reference to Eyjólfur Emilsson. For more on thumos in Plato, see J. M. Cooper, “Plato’s Theory of Human Motivation,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 1 (1984), 3-21. Unfortunately, I got hold of H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within – Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 2006) too late for a proper treatment in this paper, but it contains much of relevance for the topic.

Of course, in view of Aristotle’s distinction between necessary and non-necessary appetites in *Nicomachean Ethics* vii. 4, this claim should be qualified. But in substance, it is not affected. In fact, on the reading suggested here, there is a straightforward answer to the questions whether, and why being overcome by spirited desire is more excusable than being overcome by any appetite, necessary or not. Being overcome by spirited desire is more excusable in both cases, because we are overcome by a value endorsed by reason itself. For discussion, see, for instance, Cooper, “Reason, Moral Virtue, and Moral Value,” 88-90, and Broadie & Rowe, *Aristotle – Nicomachean Ethics*, 56f.

Cf. Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 66 and 107-110. However, Broadie does not single out spirited desire as doing the crucial work in this regard.

I here disagree with Burnyeat’s suggestion (“Aristotle on Learning to be Good,” 80), developed further by H. J. Fossheim (*Nature and Habituation in Aristotle’s Theory of Human Development* (Oslo, 2003), 170-177) that the spirited desire is brought about and developed through a learning process in which pleasures and pains are associated with fine things. Instead, I regard spirited desire as a basic, inborn desire (*Politics* vii. 15, 1334b22-25), which only requires stimulation by means of exposure to the fine in order to be activated.
Nicomachean Ethics x. 9, 1179b4-16. See, also, Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to be Good,” 74-77.

Nicomachean Ethics i. 13, 1102b33-1103a1.

Nicomachean Ethics x. 9, 1179b11-13.

Nicomachean Ethics iii. 4.

Nicomachean Ethics i. 4.

Nicomachean Ethics iii. 10-12.

Nicomachean Ethics iii. 12, 1119b7-18.

The city, as Aristotle puts it at Politics i. 2, 1253a18-29, is in nature prior to each of us just as an organism is prior to its parts.

Nicomachean Ethics vi. 5, 1140a24-31. I here refrain from discussing the question whether deliberation is concerned with satisfying wish exclusively, as Cooper suggests (“Aristotle’s Moral Psychology,” 30, note 4), but I agree with Broadie (Ethics with Aristole, 106f; 184) that Aristotle inclines towards the view that satisfaction of wish requires deliberation.

Cf. Eudemian Ethics ii. 10, 1227a5ff; Nicomachean Ethics i. 7, 1098b3f.

Cf. Nicomachean Ethics i. 3, 1095a2-13 and x. 9, 1179b4-31, which serve as the textual starting point for Burnyeat’s account in “Aristotle on Learning to be Good.”

Politics i. 2, 1253a9-18; vii. 15, 1334b17-25.