

“Virtue Makes the Goal Right”: Virtue and *Phronesis* in Aristotle’s Ethics

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1. Virtue makes the goal right, *phronesis* [practical wisdom] the things toward (τὰ πρὸς) the goal. (*EE/EN* 1144a7-9)¹
2. Decision (προαίρεσις) won’t be right without *phronesis* nor without virtue: for the one makes us do the end and the other the things toward it. (1145a5-7)
3. Does virtue make the goal right or the things toward the goal? We suppose the goal, because there is no syllogizing or *logos* about this. Instead, this must be laid down as a starting-point (ἀρχή). (*EE* 1227b23-25)
4. Virtue and vice respectively keep healthy, and corrupt, the starting-point, and in actions the that-for-the-sake-of-which is the starting-point, just as in mathematics the hypotheses are. Neither indeed in that case is the *logos* instructive (διδασκαλικός) of the starting-points, nor in this case, but virtue either natural or habituated [is instructive] of right belief (τοῦ ὀρθοδοξεῖν) about the starting-point. (1151a15-19)

Virtue makes the goal right; *phronesis* is responsible only for what contributes to the goal. That is, practical intellect does not tell us what ends to pursue, but only how to pursue them; our ends themselves are set by our ethical characters.

So Aristotle evidently says, again and again. And yet a formidable array of interpreters have refused to take him at his word. The claim that virtue makes the goal right is “misleading” (Cooper, Hardie); on the *prima facie* reading “absurd” (Broadie); it “risks obscuring” Aristotle’s genuine view (McDowell); it “must be modified” (Greenwood), or “must be treated as a lapse on Aristotle’s part” (Joachim); given his other commitments, Aristotle “is wrong to claim that there is no reasoning about ethical first principles” (Irwin).² For despite what Aristotle seems to say in these passages, these interpreters insist, he must in fact hold that intellect plays a crucial role in identifying our ends: either (despite his apparent denials) we do after all reason about ends, or (despite his apparent silence on the point) we grasp them through some function of intellect distinct from reasoning – dialectic, or “intuition” (*nous*).³

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Aristotle means in these passages just what he says. The ultimate goal each person pursues is happiness (*eudaimonia*) as he or she views it, and we each reach our view about what happiness consists in – virtuous activity, for example, or

¹ *EE* = *Eudemian Ethics*, *EN* = *Nicomachean Ethics*; when citing passages from the common books I will in what follows omit the titles. Translations throughout are mine except where otherwise noted. I join many modern translators in rendering τὰ πρὸς as “things toward,” in order to avoid the (as I will argue) overly-narrow implication of “means”.

² Cooper (1986), 64; Hardie (1968), 213; Broadie and Rowe (2002), 49; McDowell (1998), 30; Joachim (1951), 218; Greenwood (1973), 51; Irwin (1975), 578. Other influential opponents of the face-value reading of the claim include Allan (1977), Gauthier and Jolif (1958-9), and Wiggins (1980).

³ For the first kind of view see Irwin (1975) and Wiggins (1980); for versions of the latter see Cooper (1986), Dahl (1984), and Reeve (1992). Some take 1143a35-b5 as evidence that ends are grasped by *nous*, but I will argue below that this is a misreading.

the life of pleasure or of honor – not by any intellectual process, but instead through the non-rational habituation of the non-rational part of the soul.

Those who resist this reading do so mainly because they think that taking “virtue makes the goal right” at face value turns Aristotle, in effect, into Hume: if reason plays no role in setting our ends, the job must fall to desire.⁴ And indeed, most of the claim’s few defenders have attributed to Aristotle just this view.⁵ But the inference from the face-value reading of “virtue makes the goal right” to Humeanism turns, I will argue, on an anachronistic conflation: the equation of the non-rational with the non-cognitive. Character has the power to set our ends, on Aristotle’s view, because it is more than a purely conative force: it involves something that he thinks must precede and underlie all rational cognition – non-rational cognition, i.e. perception and quasi-perceptual “imagination,” *phantasia*.⁶

I begin by showing, against putative textual evidence to the contrary, that the face-value reading of “virtue makes the goal right” is borne out by Aristotle’s characterization of virtue throughout the ethical works: he defines virtue as a non-rational state (section I), and characterizes it as literally supplying the contents of our goals (section II). In the remainder of the paper I argue that there are no good reasons to reject this straightforward interpretation: the burden of proof lies on those who oppose it. Contrary to widespread opinion, Aristotle does not characterize *phronesis* in such a way that it must include a grasp of ends (sections III-IV). Moreover, because ethical character involves non-rational cognition of ends, Aristotle can restrict practical intellect to reasoning about “things toward the end” without embracing a Humean view of motivation or moral judgment – that is, without abandoning his view that we desire our ends because we find them good (section V).

I. Virtue is non-rational

Let us use the label ‘Intellectualists’ for those who think that Aristotle grants the task of setting ends not to character but to intellect. There are two Intellectualist strategies for accommodating the Goal passages (1-4). One is to allow that virtue plays a crucial role in giving us our goals, while insisting that it can do so only because it is in part an intellectual state.⁷ The other is to accept that virtue is non-rational, while denying that it literally supplies our goals. I consider this

⁴ For clear expression of this worry as a motive for the intellectualizing reading, see for example Sorabji: if we deny intellect a role in choosing goals, “Aristotle is assimilated to Hume and the emotivists” (Sorabji, (1980), 209). See also Allan (1977), and Cooper (1986), 62-3. Compare Irwin’s discussion of the tension between Humean and non-Humean elements in Aristotle’s ethics, in Irwin (1975), 568 and throughout.

⁵ See especially Zeller (1897), vol II, 159-160 with 182-188; Allan and Sorabji also attribute Humeanism to Walter (1874).

⁶ In making this claim I am in large part agreeing with, and hoping to revive, the interpretation of Burnet (1900), 64-68. Others have given related interpretations: see Achtenberg (2002), and Fortenbaugh (1964). My aim is to give the face-value reading of “virtue makes the goal right” a more thorough and sustained defense than it has hitherto received, both by showing that it is the natural reading of the texts and by explaining how it can accommodate what its opponents have considered powerful textual and philosophical arguments against it.

⁷ Irwin (1975); Engberg-Pedersen (1983), 126-7. See also a recent paper by Lorenz (2009), which argues that this is Aristotle’s view of virtue in the *EN*, although not in the *EE*; while I agree that the *EE* is more explicit in its characterization of virtue as non-rational, I do not see sufficient evidence for attributing to Aristotle a change of mind on this point, for, as I argue below, the apparently intellectualist passages from the common books (*EN* V-VII/*EE* IV-VI) can be read as consistent with the clearly non-intellectualist earlier books of the *EE*.

second and more common strategy in section II; in this section I argue against the first. Virtue – or at the very least the kind of virtue which “makes the goal right” – is exclusively a state of the non-rational part of the soul: the appetitive and passionate part which can obey reason but does not exercise it.⁸

To many this will seem obvious: on the standard reading of the ethical works, virtue – that is character virtue (ἠθικὴ ἀρετή), by contrast with intellectual virtue⁹ – is the excellent condition of the non-rational part of the soul. That is how Aristotle introduces virtue in both ethical works:

5. There are two parts of the soul, and the virtues are divided in accordance with (διήρηνται κατὰ) these, and the intellectual virtues belong to the rational part (αἱ μὲν τοῦ λόγου ἔχοντος διανοητικαί), while the others [i.e. the character virtues] belong to the part that is non-rational but has desire (αἱ δὲ τοῦ ἀλόγου ἔχοντος δ’ ὄρεξιν). (*EE* 1221b28-31; cf. *EE* 1220a8-11)

6. [There is a distinction between the part that exercises reason and the part that obeys it], and virtue is also defined in accordance with (διορίζεται κατὰ) this same difference: for we call some of the virtues intellectual and others ethical. (*EN* 1103a3-5)

The *EE* passage is unambiguous in its claim: intellectual virtues belong to the rational part of the soul, character virtues to the non-rational.¹⁰ The corresponding passage in the *EN* says only that the virtues are “defined in accordance with (διορίζεται κατὰ)” the distinction between the two parts of the soul; especially given the similarity to the *EE*’s language, however (virtues are “divided in accordance with (διήρηνται κατὰ)” the parts), it is very natural to read this passage as making the same point, and this is how it is taken by the vast majority of commentators. That character virtue is a state of the non-rational soul is also very strongly implied by many other passages: the argument that virtue is the product of habituation in actions and passions (see discussion below), and the descriptions of character-states as dispositions to feel passions in particular ways.¹¹ Moreover, if Aristotle in fact thinks character virtue in part intellectual then the ethical works’ whole project of contrasting intellectual virtues, acquired through teaching, with ethical ones, acquired through habituation, is awkward, misleading, and

⁸ This is the standard interpretation, held by the ancient commentators and most modern ones, but in light of the difficulties in accommodating the passages cited below – difficulties which have been forcefully urged in recent work by Irwin and Lorenz – it is worth defending at some length.

⁹ Here and throughout the paper I follow Aristotle in using the unqualified term ‘virtue’ (ἀρετή) as shorthand for ‘character virtue’ (ἠθικὴ ἀρετή).

¹⁰ See also *MM* 1185b5-12 for an equally explicit claim using ἐν. ‘Unambiguous’ is perhaps too strong a term: Irwin urges that the virtue which perfects one part may be partly a state of another part. This may be a possible reading, but it is certainly an oblique one, and if we can show that there is no strong evidence from elsewhere which pressures us to adopt it then we should avoid it.

¹¹ See especially *EE* 1220b18-20: “Character-states (ἔξεις) are those things which are responsible for these things (the passions) being present either in accordance with (κατὰ) *logos* or in the opposite way.” Lorenz thinks that the *EN*’s revision of this definition to include actions alongside passions signals a change in Aristotle’s view: now virtue must be responsible for everything that goes into action, which includes deliberation and decision. But the *EE* clearly holds that virtues influence how we act, and it seems natural to take the *EN*’s revised definition as simply making that point explicit.

incomplete. Indeed, the interpretation on which virtue is wholly a state of the non-rational soul is so straightforward that we should only abandon it if there is clear textual evidence against it.¹²

According to the first species of Intellectualist, there is. The virtues “are decisions (προαιρέσεις), or not without decisions” (EN 1106a3-4), for an act to be done virtuously it must be “decided on” (EN 1105a31-32) and virtue is a ἕξις προαιρετική, most naturally translated as “a state issuing in decisions” (EN 1106b36, 1139a22-23, EE 1227b9; cf. EE 1228a24 and 1230a27) – while decisions are the result of rational deliberation (for example EN 1113a9-12). Virtue is a state not merely κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον, in accordance with the right *logos* (reason or rational account), but μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου, with the right *logos* (1144b26-27). And therefore it does not occur without *phronesis*, the excellence of practical intellect (1144b8-17, 31-33, EN 1178a15-19). Moreover, *logoi*, while not sufficient to instill virtue, seem to play some role (EN 1179b20 ff). All this has been taken to show that virtue is in part intellectual, in which case it must belong not exclusively to the non-rational part of the soul, but also to practical intellect (just as for example the virtue of being harmonious belongs jointly to more than one note).¹³

Is Aristotle simply contradicting himself? Or does he consistently hold one of these views about virtue, in which case the passages implying the other view are in need of careful reinterpretation? I will argue that the case for this Intellectualist interpretation is in fact quite weak: the passages its proponents cite are all either inconclusive or in fact best read as evidence for the non-Intellectualist account.

Let us begin with what has seemed one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the Intellectualist account: Aristotle’s definition of virtue as a prohairesis (ἕξις προαιρετική). This is, as I mentioned above, naturally and standardly read as implying that virtue is a state which itself issues in decisions (προαιρέσεις).¹⁴ But there is only one passage in which Aristotle himself explains the phrase, and what he says there belies this reading:

7. Since all virtue is prohairesis – and what we mean by this (τοῦτο δὲ πῶς λέγομεν) has been said earlier: that *it makes one choose everything for the sake of something* (ἔνεκά τινος πάντα αἰρεῖσθαι ποιεῖ), and *this is the that-for-the-sake-of-which, the fine* (τὸ καλόν) – it’s clear that courage, being a virtue, makes one endure fearful things for the sake of something...[i.e.] because [the action] is fine. (EE 1230a27-29)

Aristotle has defined virtue as a prohairesis at EE 1227b8; what “has been said earlier” (a27) is thus a reference to the discussion which follows that definition: a discussion

¹² This is of course compatible with virtue being rational in an extended sense: in a virtuous person, the non-rational part not only obeys reason but is in harmony with it and follows it in everything.

¹³ “Aristotle’s allocation of the virtues of character to the non-rational part of the soul, and of the virtues of intellect to the rational part, is at least misleading...he ought to have said that virtue of character involves both parts of the soul” (Irwin (1975), 576); “Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* conceives of the virtues of character as rational states, states partly constituted by a...quickness to grasp suitable reasons for acting...” (Lorenz (2009), 178).

¹⁴ Compare for example the description of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) as a ἕξις ἀποδεικτική (1139b31-2), and *phronesis* as a ἕξις πρακτική (1140b4-6). (One might try to get a non-Intellectualist reading by insisting that *prohairesis* does not have its technical meaning at all in EN II.5, but this conflicts with the beginning of III.2, which introduces the technical discussion of *prohairesis* by saying that we have already seen the importance of *prohairesis* for virtue.)

which argues that virtue “makes decision right” by making its goal right, i.e. by aiming at the mean (1227b12-1228a3, which includes one of the Goal passages, 3). Passage 7 explicitly reiterates this claim in telling us what it means for virtue to be prohairetic: it means that virtue gives one the right goal for one’s decisions – “makes one choose everything for the sake of...the fine.” And this shows that the claim that virtue is prohairetic is, properly understood, simply a reiteration of the Goal passages. Virtue is a prohairetic state in that its function is to make decisions correct (cf. 1144a86-9), although because it controls only one component of decisions it needs the help of something else – *phronesis* – to fulfill its function. (Compare “the eyes are for seeing,” which is plausibly essence-giving despite the fact that seeing also requires the cooperation of the brain.)¹⁵

This understanding of the relation between virtue and decision also undermines the Intellectualists’ interpretation of another piece of putative evidence for their account: Aristotle’s claim that for an action to be done virtuously it must be decided on (*EN* 1105a31-2). This will mean not that the reasoning which culminates in the decision is itself an exercise of virtue (as on the Intellectualist reading), but that virtue has not been manifested unless its function has been fulfilled, i.e. unless it has set a goal toward the realization of which a decision has been made. This is strongly supported by the claim that follows: that it is habituation which ensures that we decide on virtuous actions for ourselves (*EN* 1105b4-5, noted above). I will argue below that habituation is non-rational; if it can ensure that we decide on virtuous actions for ourselves, this can only mean that it ensures that our decisions have the right ends.

The other text that has seemed most strongly to support the Intellectualist account is *EE* V/ *EN* VI.13, where Aristotle distinguishes mere “natural” (φυσική) virtue from “strict” (κυρία).¹⁶ The former is found in non-rational creatures (children and beasts) as well as adults, but:

8. The strict kind does not occur (γίνεται) without *phronesis*...For virtue is not merely the state which is in accordance with the right *logos*, but that which is with the right *logos* (οὐ μόνον ἢ κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον, ἀλλ’ ἢ μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου ἕξις ἀρετῆ ἐστίν). (1144b16-27)

The Intellectualist takes this to mean that virtue includes an excellent rational state as a component: it does not arise without *phronesis* because it includes *phronesis*, and it is “with *logos*” because it is itself in part a rational state. But immediately preceding 8, Aristotle has given what is evidently a reiteration of our strongest evidence for the non-Intellectualist account, namely the distinction between character virtues and intellectual virtues made in *EE* II.1 and *EN* I.13 (5 and 6 above):

9. So that just as there are two species [of good condition] in the case of the believing part of the soul (ἐπὶ τοῦ δοξαστικοῦ δύο ἐστὶν εἶδη), *phronesis* and

¹⁵ This is further confirmed by the previous pages of the *EE*. At 1227a18-23 Aristotle argues that pleasure appears good and bad, where this means that pleasure appears good as an *end* of action (τέλος, a25), i.e. as an object of wish (1227a27-31). Immediately following, at 1227b1-5 we get: “It is clear from these things that virtue and vice are about pleasures and pains, for they are about objects of decision (προαιρετὰ), and decision is about the good and bad and what seem such, and these are by nature pleasure and pain.” Saying that virtue is concerned with decision, then, means in this context that it is concerned with the *goals* of decision – the ends, the objects of wish.

¹⁶ As to *EN* 1106a3-4’s claim that the virtues “are decisions, or not without decisions,” it is clear that Aristotle accepts only the latter option, which we can explain along the same lines as passage 8.

cleverness, so too there are two in the case of the character-part (ἐπὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ): natural virtue on the one hand and strict virtue on the other. (1144b14-16)¹⁷

Phronesis belongs to practical intellect, here identified as the part of the soul that has beliefs.¹⁸ Virtue, by contrast – even strict virtue – belongs to the “character” part of the soul; given that Aristotle also describes this part as the seat of natural virtue, a state found in non-rational creatures, he evidently has in mind the non-rational, passionate part.¹⁹ And thus the ensuing claims that virtue cannot exist without *phronesis* and is “with *logos*” should be taken – as they often are – to mean simply that genuine virtue is dependent on *phronesis*. “Strict” virtue is, like natural virtue, an excellent condition of the non-rational capacities for passions, in which they tend to be in a mean between extremes; the difference is that strict virtue only occurs in a soul that also possesses *phronesis*. On one version of this reading, this difference is merely extrinsic: we do not dignify someone whose non-rational soul is in good condition with the unqualified label ‘virtuous’ unless he is overall excellent, i.e. also possesses *phronesis*.²⁰ But there is a more compelling version, which makes the difference substantive rather than merely terminological: the passions and actions of a strictly virtuous person do not merely happen to coincide with what well-functioning practical intellect *would* prescribe, but they are such as to wait upon the right prescription (the ὀρθὸς λόγος) before becoming active. As the *EE* puts it with regard to one particular virtue, courage, virtue is “attendance on the *logos*” (ἀκολούθησις τῷ λογῶ) (*EE* 1229a1). And therefore strict virtue, unlike natural (or merely habituated) virtue, cannot exist without *phronesis*.²¹ We can make the point clearer by way of one of Aristotle’s own analogies for the relation between the rational and non-rational parts of the soul: a servant who receives no instructions, or no good instructions, from his master, might nonetheless tend to do the right thing, but will be in a state very different from that of a servant practiced in obedience to an excellent master. The former acts on his own impulses; the latter takes the lead from his superior. And it would be reasonable enough, if somewhat odd to our ears, to say that only in the latter case is the servant truly (or ‘strictly’) an excellent one.²²

¹⁷ I have translated ἐπὶ with the genitive as “in the case of”; we get even more direct support for my reading if we take it as “in” (following for example Irwin’s translation).

¹⁸ This part is δοξαστικόν, believing (1140b26-27) (by contrast with ἐπιστημονικόν, knowing – 1139a12), because it is about things that could be otherwise; earlier Aristotle has called it the calculating part (λογιστικόν) on the grounds that it is the part which deliberates (βουλευέσθαι) (1139a12-13).

¹⁹ The Intellectualist must claim that τὸ ἠθικόν refers to a compound of the non-rational part with some aspect of the intellectual part; this seems to me too strained a reading of the sentence to be credible.

²⁰ See Greenwood: “combination with” natural virtue makes cleverness (δαινότης) – the quality of being good at deliberating toward any given end, regardless of its value (1144a24-27) – into *phronesis*, and combination with cleverness makes natural virtue into strict virtue (1973, 56).

²¹ This is, I think, what Aquinas has in mind when he says that “when we act repeatedly according to reason, a modification is impressed in the appetite [the non-rational part of the soul] by the power of reason. This impression is nothing else but moral virtue” (commentary on *EN* 1103a18-26, trans. Litzinger). This view of virtue is compellingly defended by Smith, who aims to reconcile the Goal passages with the evidence that virtue “seems to be a matter of following the dictates of wisdom” (Smith (1996), 58).

²² I take this to fit with Smith’s interpretation. On this view, there is an intrinsic difference between natural and strict virtue, but also (as on Greenwood’s) an extrinsic one: strict virtue, unlike natural, is dependent on the presence of *phronesis*.

It is true that Aristotle uses 8's phrase "with *logos*" (μετὰ λόγου) elsewhere in the ethical works to mean something like "intrinsically rational."²³ But this is not decisive. Aristotle first introduces the non-rational part of the soul as μετέχουσα πη λόγου (partaking in a way in *logos*) (*EN* 1102b14, cf. *EE* 1219b27); the phrase μετὰ λόγου may be meant as a reference back to this. Moreover, the *Rhetoric* characterizes as μετὰ λόγου certain appetites (ἐπιθυμῖαι) which result from "having listened or been persuaded (ἀκούσαντες καὶ πεισθέντες)" (*Rhetoric* 1370a18-27), a description which strongly recalls the virtuous non-rational soul's obedience to the rational in *EN* I.13. If an appetite counts as "with *logos*" insofar as it is influenced by listening and being persuaded, then so too does a non-rational character-state. Aristotle's point in V/VI.13 will thus be that character-states that are κατὰ λόγον merely happen to coincide with what *logos* would command, while those that are μετὰ λόγου actually result from obedience to *logos* – just the contrast the non-Intellectualist finds here.

Thus the passages which have most seemed to cast doubt on the non-Intellectualist account of character virtue can be accommodated.²⁴ Moreover, this is, as I argued above, the most straightforward reading of the ethical works. Finally, the view is a philosophically defensible one. Lorenz resists attributing it to Aristotle on the grounds that it would be "repellent for a theory of virtue to deny that having an outstandingly good character in important part actually consists in being disposed to grasp reasons" (Lorenz (2009), 178). But in excluding an intellectual element from what *he* calls character (ἠθικὴ ἕξις), Aristotle is in no way denying that the grasp of suitable reasons for actions is part of the condition that Lorenz is evidently think of as character (plausibly in keeping with modern usage): overall excellence in matters to do with action. It is simply that Aristotle construes that overall excellence as a composite state made up of two excellences: excellence in practical reasoning, and excellence of non-rational character. As he puts it in the *EE*, after distinguishing the rational and non-rational parts, "just as good [bodily] condition (εὐεξία) is composed of the virtues of the parts, so also is the excellence of the soul (ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετὴ)" (*EE* 1220a3-4).²⁵

²³ See for example *EN* 1140a6-8, and 1140b20-2, 1140b33, and especially *EE* 1220a4-12, which characterizes the intellectual virtues as "with *logos*" and argues on that basis that they belong to the rational part of the soul; Lorenz rests much on these passages.

²⁴ Lorenz also cites the claim that temperance and courage "seem (δοκοῦσι) to be the virtues of the non-rational parts" (*EN* 1117b23-4), which arguably implies that the other character virtues are not. The "seem", however, is often taken as a significant rather than a casual one, indicating an *endoxon* which Aristotle rejects. See Burnet's note *ad loc.*, drawing attention to the plural "non-rational parts" (ἀλόγων μερῶν): "sc. θυμοῦ καὶ ἐπιθυμίας. Aristotle starts as usual from τὰ δοκοῦντα, in this case the Platonic view. Aristotle did not himself believe in 'parts of the soul.'" (For this strategy see also for example the commentaries by Taylor, Gauthier and Jolif, and the anonymous commentator.) Alternately, Aristotle may be saying that everyone recognizes that courage and temperance are concerned with passions, while in the cases of the other virtues (for example justice) this is far less obvious; thus only courage and temperance "seem" non-rational.

²⁵ Lorenz also objects that separating virtue from *phronesis* "seems to introduce a gap between virtue and action. It seems to remove, say, courage from the courageous person's thoughtful and intelligent activity in the course of which they implement a suitable way of achieving the goal of, say, rescuing the children left behind in the burning building. That activity itself turns out to be, it seems, not an exercise of courage, but of cleverness [i.e. δεινότης] or *phronesis*" (Lorenz (2009) 203). But this, I take it, far from being an objection to the non-Intellectualist interpretation, is precisely Aristotle's point in distinguishing virtue from *phronesis*. The idea is that it is one thing to have the right goal, the proper feelings about it, and the proper responsiveness to reasoning about how to achieve it, and another thing to be good at the actual reasoning. Courage will still be manifested during the implementation of the goal – the

In sum, then, the burden of proof is squarely on the Intellectualists: on a straightforward, textually and philosophically defensible reading of both ethical works, virtue is solely a non-rational state.

Now I come to the second main argument of this section, which shifts attention from what Aristotle means by ‘virtue’ in general to what he is doing in the Goal passages. I want to show that even if someone is willing to shoulder the burden of proof – even if someone insists that there remain reasons for thinking Aristotelian character virtue a partly intellectual state – she should nonetheless concede that what does the work of making the goal right is a state of the non-rational soul.

The evidence for this claim comes from passage 4 above, from *EN VII/EE VI*’s discussion of *akrasia*: what instructs us in right opinion about the goal, according to this passage, is “virtue, either natural or habituated (φυσικὴ ἢ ἐθιστὴ)” (1151a18-19). There are two ways to read this qualification: either Aristotle is explaining more fully than he does in the other Goal passages what he means by ‘virtue’ – all virtue is either natural or habituated, and either type can make the goal right – or he is restricting the work of making the goal right to two species of virtue among several. Leaving open for now which he intends, the claim is that the state which makes the goal right is either one acquired by nature or one acquired through habituation. What sort of states might these be?

The case of natural virtue is straightforward: all the other passages which mention it explicitly characterize it as non-rational. Natural virtue is a condition which resembles but falls short of genuine or “strict” (κυρία) virtue; at least one reason that it falls short is that it is neither “with” nor even “in accordance with” *logos*:

9 [expanded]. Natural virtue bears this same relation – not identical, but similar – to strict virtue (τὴν κυρίαν). For our characters seem to belong to all of us by nature in a way, for we are just and temperate and brave and have other states straight from birth. But nevertheless we are looking for something else to be what is good in the strict sense, and for these characters to belong to people in another way. For the natural states belong also to children and beasts, but are manifestly harmful without *nous*.²⁶ At any rate it seems this much can be seen: just as it happens to a powerful body without sight that in moving it stumbles heavily, on account of not having sight, thus also here. But if one acquires *nous*, it makes a difference in action.²⁷ And this state which is similar [to natural virtue] is virtue strictly. So that just as there are two species [of good condition] in the case of the believing part of the soul, *phronesis* and cleverness, so too there are two in the case of the character-part: natural virtue on the one hand and strict

courageous person persists in his determination to save the kids even if reasoning reveals it to be harder or more dangerous than he first thought – so it is not that character virtue simply lies dormant after the goal is set. But figuring out how to achieve the goal is not itself an expression of courage; it is an expression of *phronesis*. Courage is manifested in having the right goal, caring about it, and feeling the right feelings throughout the process of implementing it, but not in the reasoning that goes into figuring out how to do so.

²⁶ We can leave it open for now whether this is meant as practical *nous* in a technical sense, or simply some input from intellect in the broad sense of rational cognition.

²⁷ Or possibly “one does very well in action” (ἐν τῷ πράττειν διαφέρει).

virtue on the other, and of these the strict does not come to be without *phronesis*. (1144b2-17)

10. Each virtue exists both by nature and in another way, with *phronesis* (ἐκαστη πως ἀρετὴ καὶ φύσει καὶ ἄλλως μετὰ φρονήσεως). (EE 1234a29-30)

11. The courage on account of spirited passion (θυμὸν) seems most natural (φυσικωτάτη), and when decision and the that-for-the-sake-of-which are added, [seems really] to be courage (EN 1117a4-5; cf. EE 1229a20-28)

Naturally virtuous agents fall short of full virtue, either because they lack intellect and reasoning altogether (as with children and beasts), or because they fail to exercise it in the proper way: fail to make decisions at all, fail to decide on the fine, or fail to be practically wise (*phronimos*). I have argued above that the contrasting state of strict or genuine virtue itself merely depends on, rather than includes, intellectual excellence; in any case, however, the status of *natural* virtue is clear: it is solely a state of the non-rational part of the soul, a condition of the passions without any intellectual component at all.

What about habituated virtue, the other state mentioned as “making the goal right” in passage 4? Here the story is somewhat more complicated, but I will argue that on any viable interpretation this too is a state of the non-rational soul alone.

Both ethical works introduce character virtue as a state acquired through habituation:

12. Intellectual virtue for the most part has its origin and growth from teaching...while character virtue arises from habit...By doing just actions we become just, by doing temperate ones temperate, by doing brave ones brave.... (EN 1103a14-17; a25-6; b1-2)

Moreover, Aristotle seems to hold not merely that habituation is necessary for virtue, but that it is sufficient:

13. By nature we are able to receive the virtues, and we are completed (τελειουμένοις) through habit. (EN 1103a25-6)

14. The lawgivers make the citizens good by habituating them. (EN 1103b-4)²⁸

Intellectualist interpreters who accept the clear implication of these passages that habituation is sufficient for virtue must therefore argue that habituation has an intellectual component: it involves learning explanations of why certain actions and reactions are appropriate, why they are good.²⁹ But this fits poorly with the distinction Aristotle draws between acquiring

²⁸ Lest one think that habituation is only part of the lawgiver’s tactic, supplemented by some kind of intellectual teaching here unmentioned, consider a passage from the *Politics*: “the law has no force for persuading other than habit (ἔθος)” (1269a21-22). And as I pointed out above, even with regard to what has seemed the most intellectual component of virtue – that for an act to be done for example justly or temperately it must be “decided on, and decided on for itself” – Aristotle says that this “arises (περιγίνεται) out of frequently doing just and temperate things,” i.e. from habituation (EN 1105a31-b5).

²⁹ See for example Cooper: “Now, though he is not careful to say so, this process of training is not the purely mechanical thing it may at first glance seem:...the habituation must involve also

states through habituation and acquiring them through teaching or *logos* (passage 12; cf. *Pol.* 1334b8 ff.). Moreover, his extensive discussions of habituation not only make no mention of any intellectual aspects, but explicitly present the repetition of actions and passions as what does the work:

15. By acting in dangerous situations and by becoming habituated to fearing or feeling bold (ἐθιζόμενοι φοβεῖσθαι ἢ θαρρεῖν), some become brave and others cowardly – and it is similar for things concerning appetites and angers....And in one word, the character-states (ἔξεις) come to be from the similar activities (ἐνεργειῶν).³⁰ (*EN* 1103b16-21; cf. 1104a33-b2).

It is by doing the actions and feeling the passions that one attains the corresponding state. The same is implied by the passages which describe habituation as working mainly by means of pleasure and pain: see for example *EE* 1237a1-7 and *EN* 1104b8-1. Thus habituation is a non-intellectual process (although not, as I will argue in section V, a non-cognitive one). But it is very difficult to see how non-intellectual training can on its own yield an excellent intellectual state, and thus we should conclude that the virtue which results solely from habituation is itself non-intellectual, a disposition to feel the right passions and motivations in the right ways – which is precisely how Aristotle seems to be describing virtue at many points in *EN* II and *EE* II. If habituation is sufficient for virtue, virtue must be a state of the non-rational soul alone.

A more promising strategy for Intellectualists, then, is to argue that despite the implications of *EN* II.1 and *EE* II.1-2, habituation is not in fact sufficient for virtue.³¹ If this is right, then habituated virtue, the state paired with natural virtue in passage 4, is not itself full or “strict” virtue, but instead is a species of the same genus as natural virtue: a state of the non-rational soul which resembles full virtue but falls short of it due to the agent’s intellectual deficiency. One passage from the end of the *EN* strongly suggests this reading:

16. Some think people become good by nature, some through habit, and some through teaching (διδασχῆ)...But *logos* and teaching do not have force in every case, but the soul of the hearer has to have been prepared beforehand by habits toward rejoicing and hating things in a fine way, just like the earth that is to nourish a seed. For the one who lives according to passion would not listen to a dissuading *logos*, nor again would he understand it...A character proper to virtue must then somehow be there beforehand (δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἦθος προὔρχειν πῶς οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς), loving the fine and being disgusted by the shameful. (*EN* 1179b20-31)³²

(though Aristotle does not explain how it does so) the training of the mind. As the trainee becomes gradually used to acting in certain ways, he comes gradually to understand what he is doing and why he is doing it” (Cooper (1986), 8). In section V I argue that this presents a false dichotomy: between intellectual and “mechanical” training there is a middle ground, the shaping of non-rational cognition.

³⁰ Ἐνεργεῖα covers passions as well as actions.

³¹ “A reader of Book II might have thought that virtues of character are acquired by learning to enjoy and want to do virtuous actions...But we must now agree that non-intellectual training is insufficient for real virtue, which requires wisdom” (Irwin (1975), 571); cf. Sorabji (1980), 211).

³² There are striking similarities here to Plato’s description in the *Republic* of the cultural upbringing (“musical education”) that is a necessary preparation for virtue: someone raised with the right artistic influences would “praise fine things and enjoy them, and receiving them into his

On one reading, this passage says that habituation yields a character which is akin to virtue, but virtue itself comes only with the aid of “*logos* and teaching”.³³ If this is indeed Aristotle’s view, the “habituated virtue” of passage 4 is a necessary condition for virtue rather than genuine virtue itself: it is *mere* habit-virtue. The person with mere habit-virtue, like the one with mere natural virtue, is inferior to the truly virtuous person because the truly virtuous person is also *phronimos* (has *phronesis*). This reading seems to fit well with the *Politics*, which distinguishes the virtue of a citizen – a virtue instilled by correct habituation through good laws (see for example 1269a2-1) – from “complete” (τελείαν) virtue, the virtue of a ruler or “good man,” who is a *phronimos* (*Pol.* 1276b34-5, 1277a15). On the other hand, since this reading of the passage conflicts so strongly with the account of habituation in Book II (see passages 12-15), it is worth considering an alternative interpretation: given that the purpose of the whole discussion of which 16 is a part is to argue that *logoi* are not sufficient for instilling virtue (see 1179b4 ff), and given that this discussion nowhere says that they are necessary, Aristotle’s view might be that they are simply an optional aid.³⁴ (I say more about the nature of the *logoi* in question below.)

There is evidence on both sides, then, and I will not try to settle the issue of whether Aristotle’s “habituated virtue” is identical with strict virtue itself, or merely a preparation for it. For on either interpretation, the point crucial for my purposes holds: habituated virtue, like natural virtue, is a non-rational state. And thus when Aristotle says that “virtue, natural or habituated, teaches us right opinion about the goal” (4), he means that what makes the goal right is solely a state of the non-rational soul.

What about the earlier Goal passages? These clearly refer to ‘strict’ virtue, by contrast with natural virtue (and by contrast with mere habit-virtue, if there is such a thing): this is particularly clear for 1 and 2, which come in the context of the very discussion which makes strict virtue dependent on *phronesis* and thereby distinguishes it from natural virtue, in *EN VI/EE V* 12-13. The Intellectualist must thus insist that Aristotle changes his mind: in these passages he says that what makes the goal right is a partly intellectual state, while in 4 it is a solely non-rational one. But this is a very uncharitable reading indeed: the language of 4 is so similar to that of the earlier passages that the Intellectualist winds up attributing to Aristotle a stark inconsistency.

Finally, consider an Intellectualist willing to bite this bullet. Even she must accommodate the fact that Aristotle draws sharp contrasts between virtue and *phronesis* – and does so particularly, as we have seen, in the passages which distinguish what makes the goal right from what makes the things toward it right. The unreconstructed Intellectualist will have to explain the contrast as part-whole: while virtue is a state of both practical parts of the soul, *phronesis* is just one aspect of this state, the intellectual aspect. The Goal passages certainly do

soul would be nourished by them and become fine and good, and would censure shameful things correctly and hate them while he is still young, before he is able to grasp the *logos*, and when the *logos* does come would welcome it, recognizing it through its kinship (οικειότητα)” (*Rep.* 401e4-402a4). The *Republic* makes very clear that the upshot of this musical education is a necessary preparation for virtue, but not sufficient for it: to become truly good one needs in addition the *logos*, i.e. the intellectual grasp of the Form of the Good.

³³ This is not evidence that virtue itself is partly a rational state; it is apparently a version of *EE V/EN VI.13*’s claim that there is no virtue without *phronesis*, and the non-Intellectualist can accommodate both claims in the same ways (see below).

³⁴ Compare Protagoras’ position in the *Protagoras*: an ordinary upbringing is sufficient to instill virtue, but Protagoras’ teachings can expedite or embellish the process.

not sound as if they are contrasting a whole with one of its parts.³⁵ Even if they are, however, “virtue makes the goal right, *phronesis* the things toward the goal” will entail that the non-rational aspect plays a *necessary* role in determining the goal, while the intellectual aspect is sufficient to determine the means. (Compare “That suit makes him look handsome, and the jacket makes him look tall,” which clearly implies that the pants as well as the jacket are responsible for making him look handsome.) Thus we would still need an account of how non-rational character contributes to our conception of the goal.

There are Intellectualist strategies for explaining this; in the next section I will argue that they fail.

II. Making the goal right

Most Intellectualists belong to the second camp. They accept that virtue is non-rational; what they deny is that it literally supplies the content of one’s view of the end. This is a privilege they reserve for *phronesis* (so that, despite the apparent division of labor in the Goal passages, it is *phronesis*’s task to grasp the end as well as the “things toward it”); virtue’s role is purely conative. Aristotle says that temperance (σωφροσύνη) “preserves *phronesis* (σώζουσιν τὴν φρόνησιν)” because “to someone corrupted by pleasure or pain, straightaway the starting-point [i.e. the proper end] does not appear” (1140b11-19 – passage 29 below): this allegedly shows that virtue “makes the goal right” only in that the appetites and passions which constitute character determine whether or not the end, which is dictated by intellect, is “preserved” – i.e., whether or not the agent keeps it as an end. Either (a) virtue ensures that one will *want* the goal which one intellectually judges best, or (b) virtue preserves that goal in that non-virtuous desires would prompt intellect to change its view of what is best.³⁶

These interpretations are problematic in their own right: why should virtue play this role for ends but not also for “things toward them”? (If I can be easily tempted away from wanting to save a drowning baby, surely I can be all the more easily tempted away from wanting to do it precisely by jumping in myself when deliberation has shown that that is the best means.) But most importantly, they simply do not capture what the Goal passages seem to say at all. Those passages describe parallel roles for *phronesis* and virtue: whatever it is that *phronesis* does in relation to the things toward the goal (“make it right” (1-2), “make us do it” (3)), virtue does in relation to the goal itself. And surely what *phronesis* does in relation to the things toward the end is literally identify them – tell us what they are. Thus the clear implication of the Goal passages is that virtue dictates what the goal is. This is very nearly explicit in passage 4: virtue is διδασκαλικός of – teaches us – the goal.

Moreover, that virtue literally supplies the content of the goal is strongly – I would say conclusively – supported by the analogy that Aristotle draws between practical and theoretical reasoning, mentioned in passage 4. It is worth laying out that analogy in some detail, since it will prove crucial for a full understanding of the Goal passages.

³⁵ See in particular a passage from later in the *EN*: “*Phronesis* is yoked to virtue of character, and this to *phronesis*” (1178a16).

³⁶ For version (a) see for example Allan (1977), 74-5 (which provides a good history of the dispute between those who accept the straightforward reading of the Goal passages and those who oppose it); for version (b) see for example Irwin’s commentary on *EN* 1140b11 ff. But there is a readily available non-Intellectualist reading of the “preservation” passage: without the right end, which can only be supplied by virtue, practical intellect will lack the proper starting-points and so cannot achieve true excellence.

As is well known, Aristotle holds that deductive theoretical reasoning – demonstration of mathematical or scientific truths – must always take as its ultimate starting-points or bases (ἀρχαί) truths that are not themselves the product of reasoning. (See 1139b29-31, with *Posterior Analytics* I.3 and II.19.) These starting-points – geometrical postulates, for example – are the hypotheses which form the premises for demonstrations. Although undemonstrated – not derived from other knowledge – they are nonetheless known. We know them through *nous*, an intellectual state or faculty contrasted with reasoning, sometimes called “intuition” or “understanding.”³⁷

When we turn to Aristotle’s theory of practical reasoning – deliberation about what to do – we find him not only making closely parallel claims, but explicitly drawing attention to the parallel:

17. For just as in theoretical sciences the hypotheses are our starting-points, so in the productive ones the end (τέλος) is a starting-point and hypothesis. ‘Since that person needs to be healthy, it’s necessary for this thing to be, if that is to come about,’ just as there [in the theoretical realm] ‘If the triangle is [equal to] two right angles, it’s necessary for this thing to be’. (EE 1227b28-32; cf. passage 4)³⁸

Practical reasoning, like theoretical, begins from hypothesized starting-points – accepted premises on which the rest depends. In the practical case, these are statements (or cognitions) of the goal or end of action, that for the sake of which one is acting. *Given* that I am to φ , I can best do so by.... Moreover, just as the starting-points of theoretical reasoning (demonstration) are secured by something other than reasoning, so the starting-points of practical reasoning (deliberation) are secured by something other than reasoning: as Aristotle repeatedly claims, “there is no deliberation of ends” (EN 1112b11-16, 33-34; EE 1226b9-10, 1227a7-8). In the practical case, however, Aristotle does not say that we know the starting-points through *nous*. What he says instead is what we have already seen:

3. Does virtue make the goal right or the things toward the goal? We suppose the goal, because there is no syllogizing or *logos* about this. Instead, this must just like a starting-point (ἀρχή) be laid down (ὑποκείσθω). (EE 1227b23-25)

4. Virtue and vice respectively keep healthy, and corrupt, the starting-point, and in actions the that-for-the-sake-of-which is the starting-point, just as in mathematics the hypotheses are. Neither indeed in that case is the *logos* instructive of the starting-points, nor in this case, but virtue either natural or habituated [is instructive] of right belief about the starting-point. (EN 1151a15-19)³⁹

³⁷ This is a narrow and technical sense of *nous*; Aristotle frequently uses the word in a broader sense in which it covers all rational cognition. One passage of the *EE/EN* introduces a technical sense for *nous* in the practical realm; I discuss this below.

³⁸ The present passage is concerned with “productive” (ποιητική) reasoning, but the context makes very clear that its conclusions apply to strictly practical reasoning as well, and this is confirmed by passage 20 below.

³⁹ See also “*Phronesis* is yoked to virtue of character, and this to *phronesis*, since the starting-points of *phronesis* are in accordance with (κατὰ) the character virtues, and the correctness (τὸ δ’ ὀρθόν) of the character virtues are in accordance with *phronesis*” (EN 1178a16-19).

The role played by *nous* in the theoretical case – laying down the starting-points for reasoning – is played in the practical case by ethical character. And this means that what virtue is doing in “making the goal right” is *supplying* the goal: giving us the true view of the end at which our actions aim, just as *nous* gives us the true view of the premises from which our theoretical demonstrations follow.

A third plank of support for this reading of “makes the goal right” comes from Aristotle’s systematic correlation of character with views of the end. Consider the following passages, to which we will return in section V:

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

19. And suppose someone said that everyone longs for the apparent (φαινόμενον) good, but they are not in control of the appearance (φαντασία): whatever sort of person one is, in that way the end appears (φαίνεται) to one. (EN 1114a31-b1)⁴⁰

20. Practical syllogisms have a starting-point: “Since the end and the best is of such a sort...”. And this does not appear (φαίνεται) except to the good man. For vice perverts, and makes us be deceived (διαψεύδεται) about the practical starting-points. (1144a31-36)

How the end appears – i.e. what appears (ultimately) good to one, i.e. what forms the object of one’s wishes (βουλήσεις) – varies with one’s ethical character: it is the virtuous person who reliably has a correct view of the end. Of course given the co-dependence of virtue and *phronesis* it is possible to construe these passages as attributing that correctness to the latter, but this is not at all the straightforward reading: had that been Aristotle’s point, he should have substituted ‘*phronimos*’ for words like ‘virtuous’ and ‘good.’

That character supplies ends is further supported by a natural reading of a much-debated passage on decision:

21. [The efficient cause] of decision is desire (ὄρεξις) and the *logos* that is for the sake of something. Wherefore decision requires *nous* and thought, and also a character-state (οὗτ’ ἄνευ νοῦ καὶ διανοίας οὗτ’ ἄνευ ἠθικῆς ἐστὶν ἕξις ἢ προαίρεσις). (1139a32-34)

Decision is the result of a desire for an end – a wish – and deliberation about how to achieve it (see for example *EE* 1226b5-6 with 1226a5-8, and less explicitly *EN* 1111b19-20 and 1113a2-12). An Intellectualist reading of the passage must insist that the identification of the end, as well as of the means, is a function of “*nous* and thought”, leaving the character-state responsible only

⁴⁰ This is a complicated argument for the conclusion that we should be held responsible for our moral characters. For my purposes, what is crucial is the correlation of the way the end appears with the kind of ethical character one has, and it is clear that Aristotle takes this as established: what is up for debate in the passage is whether or not we have control over our characters, which would give us indirect control over the appearance of the end.

for motivation.⁴¹ But if character is the source of wish, and wishes are for ends, then the claim that decision requires “*nous* and thought and also a character-state” is most naturally taken to mean that it requires character as the source of the end, and intellectual cognition (*nous*, in the broad sense, *i.e.* thought) as the source of the “*logos* for the sake of something” – that is, of the deliberation which shows how to achieve the end.⁴² In other words, 21 is a version of the Goal passages.

Thus we have strong support from three sources – the Goal passages’ division of labor, the analogy between theoretical and practical reasoning, and Aristotle’s consistent correlation of ends with character – for a robust reading of “virtue makes the goal right.”⁴³

There remains an important question about the scope of “goal.” There are more and less general ends, and Aristotle does not make particularly clear which level he has in mind in the Goal passages. Certainly he must think that virtue makes right one’s particular goals in particular situations, for it is a mark of doing particular actions virtuously that one decides on them “for themselves” (*EN* 1105a32): contrast, for example, the wasteful person who has an “appetite for giving” with the genuinely virtuous (liberal) person who “aims at the fine” (*EN* 1121b2, discussed below). (As this example brings out, the same action may be aimed at under different descriptions, and so virtue may make the goal right even if a non-virtuous person would have

⁴¹ See for example Irwin’s note *ad loc.*: “We need virtue of thought to find the true reasoning, and we need the right sort of character if we are to follow true reasoning in our actions;” cf. Cooper (1986), 63.

⁴² That the *logos* in question is deliberative rather than an articulation of the end, should be clear: recall “there is no *logos* of the starting-points” (3), and note the equation of deliberation with reasoning (λογίζεσθαι) a few lines before the present passage, at 1139a12-13. Intellectualists will attribute the *logos* to thought (διανοία) alone, taking *nous* in a special sense as intuition of the end. I hope to have shown that in the absence of evidence from elsewhere that Aristotle uses *nous* in this special sense, this is an oblique reading of the passage; at the end of the paper I will argue that there is no good evidence from elsewhere.

⁴³ There is one passage from the *EE* which might seem to contradict all this: “Courage is the following of *logos* (ἀκολουθήσις τῷ λόγῳ), and the *logos* commands that one choose the fine (τὸ καλὸν αἰρεῖσθαι κελεύει)... And the *logos* does not command one to endure painful and destructive things unless they are fine” (*EE* 1229a1-9). Aristotle frequently tells us that virtue aims at the fine (see for example 1115b13-14, 1120a23-4, and passage 7); this passage seems to say that it is intellect which commands the virtuous person to aim at the fine, while character merely follows intellect’s lead. (For this interpretation see Smith (1996).) But this is contradicted not only by all the evidence we have seen above that it is character which sets our goals, but also by passage 16 above from *EN* X.9, and the lines which follow it: even before he listens to *logos* a properly habituated person “loves the fine” (is φιλόκαλον, 1179b8), and while *logos* urges the decent person to pursue the fine (προτρέπεσθαι τοῦ καλοῦ χάριν, 1180a7), he will obey only because he is *already* “living for the fine” (πρὸς τὸ καλὸν ζῶντα τῷ λόγῳ πειθαρχήσειν, 1180a10-11). Thus we should seek an alternative interpretation of *EE* 1229a1-9, and the last lines of the passage suggest one: intellect’s role is to tell us *which* things are fine, *i.e.* which things count as fine in a given situation. A person with good character will wish for the fine, but without the right *logos* (*i.e.* without *phronesis*) may wind up (for example) pursuing extreme dangers to no-one’s benefit, and hence acting rashly instead of courageously. (I discuss this role for *phronesis* at length in the next section.) Thus the point of the passage is to show that intellect directs us toward the things that are actually fine, *i.e.* that are actually fulfillments of the goal; this is compatible with its being virtue, not intellect, which provides the fine as a goal in the first place.

produced the same outcome.) But Aristotle never qualifies the Goal passages by restricting their application to particular goals: he seems to mean that virtue also “makes right” that ultimate goal of paramount importance, namely happiness (*eudaimonia*) as one views it.

Intellectualists try to accommodate this by saying that while happiness as a general, indeterminate goal is an undeliberated starting-point of deliberation, any specification of it (as for example pleasure or wealth or virtuous activity) must be the result of deliberation.⁴⁴ But if I am right that virtue “makes goals right” by literally supplying the content of the goal, this is nonsense: it does not require virtue to be right that the ultimate end is happiness *generally* conceived, for on this point “most people virtually agree” (*EN* 1095a17-18). Where virtuous people differ from others is in having the right specification of the end: in identifying the end as excellent rational activity rather than as for example pleasure or wealth (*EN* 1095a20-25). And it is a very natural inference that they differ in this way precisely *because* they differ in their ethical characters (cf. 18-20).

There is one strong piece of evidence in favor of the Intellectualist’s line on happiness: Aristotle speaks of people “deciding on” (προαιρούμενοι) a specific way of life (the life of pleasure, politics, or philosophy) at *EN* 1095b19-22 and *EE* 1215a35-b1. But there is so much countervailing evidence that views of happiness are instead among the undeliberated starting-points of practical reasoning that I am inclined to treat these as non-technical uses of προαίρεσθαι. Consider a discussion in *EE* II.10, which begins with the claim that decision (and hence deliberation) is not of ends:

22. (a) But before the process [of deliberation] begins there will be the that-on-account-of-which (ἐκ προτέρου δὲ μᾶλλον ἔσται τὸ δι’ ὃ), and this is the that-for-the-sake-of-which, for example wealth or pleasure or any other such thing which happens to be the that-for-the-sake-of-which.

(b)...And by nature the end is always good...but contrary to nature and by perversion not the good but the apparent good....

(c)...And the cause [of this kind of error, i.e. error about the end] is the pleasant and painful. For things are so constituted that (οὕτω γὰρ ἔχει ὥστε) the pleasant appears good to the soul, and the more pleasant better, and the painful bad and the more painful worse. (*EE* 1227a13-b1)

Pleasure, wealth and honor – specifications of happiness – are goals laid down before deliberation begins, not goals reached through deliberation (22a). 22c supports this by suggesting that we value these things not on the basis of (faulty) reasoning but simply because we are by nature attracted to pleasure and repelled by pain.⁴⁵

Further evidence comes from a passage from the *Politics*, to which we will return below:

23. Well-being (τὸ εὖ) for everyone depends on two things: one is the goal and end of actions being laid down rightly, the other is finding the actions that lead to that end (πρὸς τὸ τέλος φερούσας)...Sometimes people make errors in both, as for example in the medical art: for sometimes doctors neither discern finely what

⁴⁴ See Irwin and Wiggins, quoted in section IV below.

⁴⁵ I will argue in section V that the ‘appears’ in 22c and similar passages is a reference to non-rational *phantasia*.

a healthy body should be like (ποῖόν τι δεῖ τὸ ὑγιαῖνον εἶναι σῶμα), nor hit on the things productive of their undertaken mark. (*Pol.* 1331b27-38)

The example of health as an end is typical (see for example *EN* 1111b26-29): Aristotle more than once groups health with happiness as examples of undeliberated objects of wish. The first line of 23 (and the context within the *Politics*) shows that he has that analogy in mind here too. So it is notable that health is here described not as a general and indeterminate end but as a quite determinate one: being right about the end of health is a matter not simply of wanting to produce *whatever* health turns out to consist in, but of “discerning what a healthy body should be like.”⁴⁶ And thus the health/happiness analogy implies that being right about the end of happiness is a matter of “discerning what a happy life should be like” – of having a fairly fleshed-out view of the good life, such as that it consists in virtuous activity.

Consider also a claim from early in the *EE*:

24. It would be superfluous to examine all the beliefs (δόξας) that people have about happiness. For many things appear to children and the sick and the insane which no-one having any sense would puzzle about: for these people are not in need of *logoi*, but the first need time in which to change, and the second need medical or political discipline...Likewise [it would be superfluous to examine] the beliefs of the many...For it is absurd to apply *logos* to those who have need not of *logos* but of experience (ἄτοπον γὰρ προσφέρειν λόγον τοῖς λόγου μηδὲν δεομένοις ἀλλὰ πάθους). (*EE* 1214b28-1215a3)

It is not *logos* (argument or reasoning) that gives one correct judgment about happiness; instead it is time and experience. And since the relevant experience will surely include the experience of the right kind of activities – that is, habituation – this fits very well with the idea that it is virtue, the product of habituation, which makes the goal right. Two passages confirm this by drawing a direct link between habituation in a certain way of living and the adoption of that way of living as one’s ultimate goal:

25. The many and most vulgar not unreasonably seem *on the basis of their lives* to suppose (ἐκ τῶν βίων ὑπολαμβάνειν) that the good, i.e. happiness, is pleasure. (*EN* 1095b14-19, emphasis mine)⁴⁷

26. The *that* (τὸ ὅτι) is first and a starting-point. And of starting-points, some are grasped (θεωροῦνται) by induction, some by perception, some by some sort of habituation (ἐθισμῶ τινί), and others in other ways. (*EN* 1098b3-4)⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Compare an example of deliberation from the *Metaphysics*: “Since *this* (τοῦδὶ) is health, if the subject is to be healthy this must first be present...” (*Met.* 1032b6 ff.). Again we have as a starting-point for deliberation something more specific than “Health is the goal.”

⁴⁷ The point is made more general if we follow Irwin in transposing 1095b16 with what follows (b17-19): he translates “people quite reasonably reach their conception of the good, i.e., of happiness, from the lives [they lead]; for there are roughly three most favored lives: the lives of gratification, of political activity, and, third, of study. The many, the most vulgar, would seem to conceive the good and happiness as pleasure...”.

⁴⁸ Some argue that the starting-points Aristotle attributes to habituation at 1098b3-4 are instead claims to the effect that certain actions are fine and just (see Burnyeat (1980), 72-3; Burnyeat is following the ancient commentators Aspasius, Eustratius and Heliodorus). I think it more

Habituation shapes character (see section I); in so doing, according to these passages, it also gives one a corresponding view of happiness. (I return to this claim in section V.)

I have argued, then, in this section and the previous, that when Aristotle says that virtue makes the goal right, his statement is neither ‘misleading’ nor a ‘lapse.’ He means just what he seems to say: that each person selects her ends, including her ultimate end, not by any intellectual process, but instead through the non-rational habituation of the non-rational part of her soul. In the next sections I turn to consider why this view has seemed so objectionable to many interpreters. I lay out the motives for doubt, and argue that they are misguided.

III. *Phronesis* and ends

The major motivation for the Intellectualist interpretation of the Goal passages, as the Intellectualists themselves make very clear, is the worry that taking these passages at face value turns Aristotle, in effect, into Hume (or rather, into a crude Humean of the kind that Hume himself may not have been). If practical reason cannot provide goals, the thought goes, our goals are set by mere desire.⁴⁹

But what is so bad about interpreting Aristotle as a Humean? The Intellectualists make two sorts of objections. First, they think that Aristotle holds the very un-Humean view that we desire our ends because we find them *good*. This, I will argue in section V, is absolutely correct, but does not in fact support the Intellectualist reading over the non-Intellectualist reading at all. Second, they think that Aristotle characterizes *phronesis* in such a way that it must be responsible for more than working out the means to independently given ends – i.e. must also be responsible for setting the ends in the first place. Is there any truth to this? In this section and the next I will argue that there is not.

The Goal passages are not the only evidence that Aristotle restricts *phronesis* to deliberation about things toward ends. In his discussion of *phronesis* in V/VI Aristotle several times identifies the *phronimos* as the one who is able to deliberate well: see e.g. 1140a25-31 (culminating in “so that in general the *phronimos* would be the one able to deliberate (ὁ βουλευτικός)”), and 1141b9-10 (“we say that this is the function of the *phronimos* most of all, to deliberate well”). He also claims that *phronesis* is concerned most of all with particulars (1142a14), where this means particular actions or objects to be acted on. Other passages go even further. *Phronesis* is “*about* (περί) things about which there is deliberation (περί ὧν ἔστι βουλευσασθαι)” (1141b8-9) – which implies that it is not about things about which there is no deliberation, e.g. ends. And practical intellect, the part of the soul of which *phronesis* is the virtue, gets labeled the λογιστικόν (rational or calculative part), “because deliberation and

plausible to follow Burnet in holding that the starting-points in question here are those that Aristotle attributes to virtue – views of the ultimate end, i.e. awareness *that* happiness consists in such-and-such a life. The lines come immediately after the famous function argument: the whole context is a determination of what the end is, i.e. of what constitutes *eudaimonia*. In the lines that follow (the start of *EN* I.8) Aristotle says that we should inquire about the starting-point, and then launches a defense of the definition of *eudaimonia* he has just given. Moreover he elsewhere claims that *eudaimonia* is a starting-point, not only in the Goal passages but also in *EN* I.12: *eudaimonia* is the starting-point and cause of all other goods, “for it is for the sake of *eudaimonia* that everyone does everything else” (1102a2-4). But even the rival reading supports my general account of the Goal passage, although in a way that makes a claim only about particular goals in particular situations: for the virtuous person recognizing some particular action as fine *is* recognizing it as a (possible) goal, and hence as a starting-point for deliberation.

⁴⁹ See for example Allan (1977), Cooper (1986), and Sorabji (1980).

calculation are the same (τὸ γὰρ βουλευέσθαι καὶ λογίζεσθαι ταῦτόν)” (1139a12-13): the implication is that the function and essence of this part is to deliberate, and nothing more. Finally, when Aristotle explicitly defines *phronesis*, he names as its province “what is good and bad for man” (1140b5-6).⁵⁰ Intellectualists take this to mean the intrinsically good and bad, i.e. what is good and bad *qua* goal, but this is undermined by comparison with his other statements of this point: what is distinctive of the *phronimos* is “to be able to deliberate finely about the good and advantageous (ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα) for himself” (1140a26-7), to be concerned with “what is healthy and good” (ὕγιεινὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν) for men” (1141a22-23), or to know “the advantageous for himself” (1141b5-6). That ‘good’ is paired in two of these passages with the obviously instrumental ‘advantageous’ and ‘healthy,’ and replaced entirely by ‘advantageous’ in the third indicates that in saying that *phronesis* is concerned with the good Aristotle all along meant the instrumental good rather than the good *qua* goal. All these passages suggest, then, that in the ethical works Aristotle is working with precisely the same definition of *phronesis* which he gave in the *Rhetoric*: “The virtue of thought by which people are able to deliberate well about the goods and bads we have mentioned with a view to (εἰς) happiness” (*Rhet.* 1366b20-22).⁵¹

Against all this evidence that *phronesis*’s domain is things toward ends, there is only one passage which Intellectualists cite as explicitly claiming that *phronesis* gives us our view of the end itself. Aristotle is concluding his discussion of *euboulia* (good deliberation) in V/VI.9:

27. If then deliberating well belongs to the *phronimoi*, good deliberation would be the rightness that accords with what is advantageous toward the end of which *phronesis* is true supposition (ἢ εὐβουλία εἴη ἂν ὀρθότης ἢ κατὰ τὸ συμφέρον πρὸς τὸ τέλος, οὗ ἢ φρόνησις ἀληθοῦς ὑπόληψις ἐστίν). (1142b31-33)

On the standard reading, the claim of the passage is that *phronesis* is (among other things, surely) the state which provides a true view of the end – despite all the implications to the contrary in the Goal passages, and despite total silence on the connection between *phronesis* and goals anywhere else (see below). But it is not at all clear that this is what Aristotle means.

For one thing, as is frequently noted, the antecedent of the “of which” (οὗ) might be “what is advantageous toward the end,” rather than “the end,” in which case 27 is consistent with the Goal passages, and makes no claim about *phronesis* grasping the end.⁵² Intellectualists argue

⁵⁰ *Phronesis* is a “true practical condition, with *logos*, about the good and bad for man (ἔστιν ἀληθῆ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικὴν περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά)”.

⁵¹ This definition of *phronesis* as restricted to deliberation also has historical precedent: see Democritus, fragment 2, 119, and the other texts cited in Gauthier and Jolif’s commentary on 1140a30-31. It is clearly different from Plato’s conception of *phronesis*, which includes knowledge of what the Good itself is, but given Plato’s lack of distinction between practical and theoretical wisdom this is just what we should expect.

⁵² This reading originates with Walter (1874, 470-472). It is worth noting, arguably in its support, that the passage as I have given it above follows what is now the standard text, Bywater’s, but Bywater is following only one manuscript; the others all have the indefinite τὸ τέλος (“some end”) rather than τὸ τέλος (“the end”). If we follow the other manuscripts (with Bekker and Grant), we get: “good deliberation would be the rightness that accords with what is advantageous toward some end, of which *phronesis* is true supposition.” “Toward some end” looks very incidental, simply a way of explaining what “advantageous” means (what it is to be advantageous, or a “thing toward the end”, is to be advantageous with reference to some end or other); if this is right, we should follow Walter’s reading.

that this reading cannot make sense of the passage in context.⁵³ This argument is inconclusive, but even if we accept their favored reading the case is not as simple as one might think. For consider Aristotle’s use of a phrase very similar to “true supposition of the end” in a passage earlier in the *EE*, which has not to my knowledge been noted in this connection:

28. [D]ecision is not present in the other animals nor in people of every age nor of every state. For neither is deliberation [present], nor *supposition of the that-on-account-of-which* (ὕπόληψις τοῦ διὰ τί), but nothing prevents many from being able to opine (δοξάζειν) whether something is to be done or not to be done, while not yet doing this through reasoning (διὰ λογισμοῦ). For the deliberative capacity of the soul (τὸ βουλευτικόν) is the capacity contemplative of a certain cause (τὸ θεωρητικὸν αἰτίας τινός). For the that-for-the-sake-of which (ἡ οὐ ἔνεκα) is one of the causes, because the that-on-account-of-which (τὸ διὰ τί) is a cause... Wherefore those for whom no goal is laid down are not able to deliberate (οἷς μηθεὶς κεῖται σκοπός, οὐ βουλευτικοί). (*EE* 1226b20-30, emphasis mine)

“That-on-account-of-which” is another label for “that-for-the-sake-of-which,” i.e. the goal;⁵⁴ thus 28’s “supposition of the that-on-account-of-which” should be taken as a notational variant on 27’s “supposition of the end.” But such supposition, the latter passage strongly suggests, is simply *the recognition that one is working towards a given end* – a recognition which is a necessary condition of deliberation, i.e. practical reasoning (λογισμός). “Those for whom no goal is laid down” – animals, children, and wanton adults – do something that resembles deliberation: they opine about whether or not to do something. But they are not actually deliberating, i.e. not “doing this through reasoning,” and this is because a crucial part of what it is to do something through deliberation is to recognize what one is doing as being for the sake of an end, and to use that end to guide one’s deliberations. (Aristotle goes on to elaborate this point a few lines below, in passage 22a and the lines that follow: deliberation is about means rather than ends, but “before the process [of deliberation] begins there will be the that-on-account-of-which (ἐκ προτέρου δὲ μᾶλλον ἔσται τὸ δι’ ὅ), and this is the that-for-the-sake-of-which ... For the one who deliberates, if he has carried his inquiry back from the end, deliberates about what is toward it, in order to bring the process back to himself, or what he can do himself towards the end” (*EE* 1227a13-18, based on Woods’ translation).)

Thus “supposition of the end” in 28 means not the thought that goes into *determining* the end, but rather the grasping of the end *qua* end, i.e. the using of the end to guide deliberation. If we bring this passage to bear on 27, then even on the standard construal (*phronesis* is true supposition of the goal), the point is not that *phronesis* supplies the content of the goal. Instead it

⁵³ See for example Cooper (1987), 64, note: the immediate context is a distinction between good deliberation toward limited ends (for example technical deliberation) and unqualified good deliberation, which is toward the “unqualified end,” thus 27 is identifying unqualified good deliberation by saying that it is toward “the end of which *phronesis* is true supposition,” i.e. the unqualified end. This is reasonable enough, but it may be that Aristotle feels he has made that distinction sufficiently clear in the preceding lines, and is now merely summarizing the whole discussion of *euboulia*.

⁵⁴ This is clear from 28 itself; and compare the equation in later lines from the same chapter (passage 22a): “... the that-on-account-of-which, i.e., the that-for-the-sake-of-which (τὸ δι’ ὅ, τοῦτ’ ἔστι τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα)...”

is that the *phronimos* is one whose excellent deliberation is constantly guided by an excellent goal – a goal supplied, as we are frequently told elsewhere, by virtue.⁵⁵

There is one other passage which talks, indirectly, about supposition of ends: a passage on the starting-points of action which we saw in part at the start of section II. This may at first sight seem to undermine my reading of 27, but on closer inspection it fits it:

29. Temperance preserves *phronesis*. But it preserves *this* sort of supposition (ὑπόληψιν). For the pleasant and painful do not corrupt or pervert every supposition, such as that a triangle is or isn't equal in degree to two right angles, but only practical ones. For the starting-points of practical things are that-for-the-sake-of-which the practical things are, and to someone corrupted by pleasure or pain, straightaway (i) the starting-point does not appear, (ii) *nor that he should choose and do everything for the sake of and on account of this* (οὐδὲ δεῖν τοῦτου ἕνεκεν οὐδὲ διὰ τοῦθ' αἰρεῖσθαι πάντα καὶ πράττειν.) (1140b11-19)

As I noted above, Intellectualists read this passage as evidence that *phronesis* identifies ends: they take the claim to be that without *phronesis* the starting-point (the end) does not appear. But the claim is in fact more complex: having the supposition of an end *x* preserved means both (i) having *x* appear to you, and also (ii) knowing that you should be acting for the sake of *x*. We can maintain consistency with the Goal passages, and at the same time explain the idea that temperance “preserves” *phronesis*, if we take it that Aristotle means to attribute (i) to virtue and (ii) to *phronesis*. It is character that ensures (i), making one aware of the *content* of the end – that one should act finely, or that one should save the drowning baby, or whatever it may be. What *phronesis* adds is the right “supposition of the end,” where this means, as I argued above, being aware of it *as* an end, i.e. using it to guide deliberation – or as Aristotle puts it here, (ii) being aware that one should “choose and do everything for the sake of and on account of it”. Even though (i) is a function of character it is necessary for *phronesis*, for without having something as one's end in the first place one of course cannot use it to guide deliberation.

So much, then, for the most explicit piece of alleged evidence that *phronesis* identifies ends. There are however several other passages which have been taken to entail the same claim. First, the discussion of “architectonic” *phronesis* in *EE* V/*EN* VI.7-8:

⁵⁵ Broadie suggests an interpretation along these lines (although without the support of the *EE* passage): practical intellect “is active about the goal...by seeing it *as a goal*” (Broadie (1998), 296). The Intellectualist will object that the proposed interpretation does not sufficiently distinguish *phronesis* from *euboulia*, while the text clearly presents them as distinct. For the Intellectualist the distinction is clear: *euboulia* is one part of *phronesis*, the other part being insight (*nous*) into the end (see for example Gauthier and Jolif, comment *ad loc.*). But there are other ways to draw the distinction. Anthony Price has pointed out (in conversation) that Aristotle presents *euboulia* not as a virtue, like *phronesis*, but instead as a correctness or “rightness” (ὀρθότης) – analogous in the practical sphere not to wisdom but to the correctness it ensures, namely truth (see 1142b11). We know from the Goal passages that *phronesis* “makes right the things toward the goal;” *euboulia* is Aristotle's name for the kind of rightness (correctness) it thereby produces. In support of this reading, note that *euboulia* is not on the list of states (ἕξεις) concerned with particulars at 1143a25-29: unlike *phronesis*, *nous*, consideration (γνώμη) and comprehension (σύνεσις), it is not a “state” at all, and hence not a virtue – and hence need not be distinguished from *phronesis* by assigning the latter a wider province. Greenwood offers a different solution: *euboulia* is the search for practical truth, *phronesis* the state of possessing it.

30. (a) Nor is *phronesis* only of universals, but it must know particulars too: for it is practical, and action is about particulars. Which is why some who don't have knowledge (οὐκ εἰδότες) are more practical than others who do know, and in other cases too the experienced [are more practical]. For if someone knew that light meats are easily digestible and healthy, but did not know which meats are light, he would not produce health, but the one who knows that bird meats are light and healthy will produce health more. But *phronesis* is practical. So one must have both [the universal and the particular] or the latter more. And there would be an architectonic form in this case too.

(b) Political science (πολιτική) and *phronesis* are the same state (ἕξις), but their being is not the same. And of the type concerned with the *polis*, the architectonic *phronesis* is legislative science (νομοθετική), but the kind concerned with particulars gets the common name, political science. (1141b14-26)

The first point to make is that the lines which follow show, and other passages confirm, that architectonic *phronesis* is not the kind of *phronesis* required for individual virtue and happiness.⁵⁶ Aristotle emphasizes that in the political sphere it is the non-architectonic type of *phronesis*, the type concerned with particulars, that is practical and deliberative (πρακτική καὶ βουλευτική, 1141b27); meanwhile, throughout his discussion of *phronesis* he has emphasized that it is concerned with action and deliberation (see quotations at the start of this section), and immediately before introducing the notion of architectonic *phronesis* has argued that knowledge of the particular is more important to *phronesis* than knowledge of the universal, precisely on the grounds that “*phronesis* is practical” (30a). The clearest evidence for the irrelevance of architectonic *phronesis* to individual virtue comes, however, from the *EN*'s final chapter, which serves as a bridge to the *Politics*, for here Aristotle says that a grasp of practical universals is needed only for the task of making others virtuous. He begins by praising the Spartan model on which the state attends to the nurture and practices of the citizens; *only* if the state neglects this will the individual need to bring his children and friends to virtue (1180a29-32) – which implies one can be perfectly virtuous without acquiring the expertise needed to make others virtuous. Moreover, he says, if one's task is simply to make a single person virtuous then knowledge of universals may be of some help, but for the most part knowledge of particulars will suffice, just as it suffices for doctoring a single patient; only if one aims to improve several or many people must one “progress to the universal” and “attempt to acquire the legislative craft” (*EN* 1180b20-25). But this implies that individuals who wish only to know how best to live their own lives have no need of these universals.⁵⁷ For individual well-being all that is required is the non-architectonic *phronesis*, the kind concerned with particulars; universals are useful only for legislators – and, as we learn elsewhere, political philosophers.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ For this reading see for example Broadie, in her commentary on the *EN* and (despite his Intellectualism) Hardie.

⁵⁷ Lest there should be any doubt that the legislative art mentioned in *EN* X.9 is meant to be something different from the kind of *phronesis* Aristotle has been discussing up to this point, the kind necessary for individual virtue and happiness, the passage continues: “Next, then, should we examine whence and how someone might acquire the legislative art?” (*EN* 1180b28-29), making clear that this is a new topic not already covered in what came before.

⁵⁸ Aristotle calls his subject πολιτική, and says it is the most architectonic of the sciences (*EN* 1094a27); he also calls the political philosopher (τοῦ τὴν πολιτικὴν φιλοσοφούντος) the architect (ἀρχιτέκτων) of the human good (1152b1-3). Presumably political philosophy (which includes ethics) is even more architectonic than legislation; both aim at improving the many.

One might protest that the analogy between political and individual *phronesis* implies that there is a form of architectonic *phronesis* concerned only with improving oneself (although Aristotle certainly does not make this clear): knowing the universals as well as the particulars relevant to achieving one's own happiness. But this brings us to a second major problem with the Intellectualist interpretation of passage 30: nothing Aristotle says about *phronesis* in either the political or private sphere implies that the universals it grasps are ends.

In its political application, 30b tells us, architectonic *phronesis* is law-making (νομοθετική, 1141b25), but laws give guidelines for achieving the goals of a state, rather than setting out those goals. (See e.g. *EN* X.9: laws “prescribe the upbringing and practices” (τεράχθαι τὴν τροφήν καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα) of the citizens, with a view to making them virtuous and thereby happy (1179b34-35) – just as a doctor might prescribe a certain type of regimen to a whole population, with a view to making them healthy; one who wants to make the citizens better should study legislative science, because “through laws we become good” (1180b25).) And while Aristotle certainly characterizes political science as the science *concerned* with the highest human good, his point is that political science is the science which *aims at* this good – has it as its *telos* – just as medicine aims at health or economics at wealth (*EN* 1094b6-7). Political science is the science not of identifying the human good, but rather of determining which policies and laws will best promote it.

Of course this presupposes having the right conception of the human good, and the political scientist must begin by making a clear statement of it (*EN* 1094a22-25; cf. *Pol.* 1321a14-16). But this does not entail that it is political science which itself furnishes that correct conception: virtue of character is a necessary condition of political as well as of individual *phronesis* – hence Aristotle's insistence that the improperly habituated cannot be good students of political science (*EN* 1095b4-6) – and this because (as I have been arguing) it is virtue that gives one the correct view of the goal.

Thus by analogy with the political case, architectonic *phronesis* about one's own good would consist not in grasping definitions of one's end, but instead in being good at formulating general policies by which one can achieve it. And indeed this interpretation fits the only examples Aristotle gives to show that deliberation is concerned with universals: “light meats are easily digestible and healthy” (30a) gives a general guideline for achieving the goal of health, but is no more a statement of that goal than the more particular proposition “poultry is light and healthy”; likewise for the other example he gives, in a later passage: “all heavy water is foul” (1142a23-24).⁵⁹ To say that *phronesis* is concerned with universals as well as particulars, then, is simply to say that deliberation involves universal claims as well as particular ones – general rules analogous to laws as well as particular imperatives analogous to decrees. Moreover, this is just what we should expect from the context: as Burnet points out, when Aristotle says that *phronesis* is “not only about universals, but must also know particulars” (30a), this implies that what he has been discussing up to this point is the kind concerned with universals – and what he has been discussing is a state responsible for deliberation. (See for example a few lines before 30, “We say that this most of all is the function of the *phronimos*, to deliberate well” (1141b9-10).)

⁵⁹ These are presumably examples of medical deliberation, not *phronesis* proper, but the point is that they are claims about what promotes health, rather than definitions of health; the analogous universals in the *phronimos*' sphere would be claims about what promotes happiness, rather than definitions of what happiness is.

Thus even were it Aristotle's view that knowledge of universals is required for individual virtue and happiness, this would not show that it is *phronesis*'s task to set our ends.⁶⁰

Final and to my mind decisive evidence against the Intellectualist interpretation of architectonic *phronesis* comes from what Aristotle says about the practical irrelevance of universals. We can bring this out by considering the Intellectualist interpretation of a passage we saw above on why *phronesis* is required for strict virtue: natural virtue can be harmful, "just as it happens to a powerful body without sight that in moving it stumbles heavily....But if one acquires *nous*, it makes a difference in action" (from the expanded passage 9 – 1144b8-13). The passage makes very clear that *phronesis* makes a crucial difference in how we act, and this is confirmed by what Aristotle says about *phronesis* throughout the ethical works (see for example "*phronesis* is practical" in 30a). On the Intellectualist interpretation, the point of the passage is to show that without the grasp of the end which *phronesis* supplies, one's passions will lead one astray.⁶¹ *Phronesis* is necessary for acting well because it provides us with the right end, and does so by grasping the first principles of practical reasoning, the universal causes at issue in the architectonic *phronesis* and *that/because* passages. The trouble is that, as we have already seen, Aristotle denies that knowing universal causes makes one better at acting at all (see 30a). The *Metaphysics*'s discussion of craft-knowledge confirms this:

31. With regard to acting experience seems to differ from craft (τέχνη) not at all, but the experienced hit the mark even more than those who have a *logos* without experience. The cause is that experience is recognition (γνώσις) of individual things while craft is of the universal, and actions and becomings are all about the individual: for the doctor does not heal *man* except incidentally, but rather Callias or Socrates or someone else... (*Met.* 981a12-19)

The craftsman is no better at producing the desired effect than the experienced person. Grasping universal causes in the domain of one's craft makes one wiser – and therefore better able to teach others (*Met.* 981b7-10) – but has no effect on one's own productions; analogously, grasping universal causes in the domain of action will make one a better writer of ethical and political treatises, and a better lawmaker, but will have no effect on one's own actions. *Phronesis* makes us better at acting for precisely the reason we should expect: that it makes us better at grasping particular things toward the end. (I argue further for this reading of passage 9 in the next section.)

So much for Aristotle's discussion of architectonic *phronesis*; the arguments I have given here also count against the Intellectualist interpretation of two other passages. One is from *EN* I.4:

⁶⁰ Further confirmation comes from Aristotle's discussion of craft (τέχνη) in *Met.* I.1. Expert doctors differ from their merely experienced counterparts in grasping the universal as well as the particular, but this does not turn out to mean that they have a superior grasp of ends. Instead, the claim is that while merely experienced types know only that "this thing was beneficial for Callias when he was ill with this disease, and for Socrates," etc., craftsmen know the universal truth "that [this cure] benefited all people of this sort, divided off into one type (κατ' εἶδος ἐν ἀφορθηθεῖσι), when ill with this disease – for example phlegmatics or bilious people when burning with fever" (981a7-12). This is the medical analogue of a general political claim like "Depriving the guardians of personal property benefits the city as a whole"; the analogue of a definition of happiness would instead be a general definition of health. I return to this point in section V.

⁶¹ "[N]ous is of the first principle or unconditional end, *eudaimonia*. So what natural virtue lacks...is grasp of the end, grasp of where it is going" (Reeve (1992), 86); cf. (among others) Cooper (1986), 63.

32. We must begin from what is known (γνωρίμων) to us. Wherefore the one who is to listen sufficiently about the fine and just and in general about political things should have been finely raised in habits (δεῖ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἦχθαι καλῶς). For the starting-point is the *that* (τὸ ὄτι), and if this were to sufficiently appear, there will be no additional need for the *because* (οὐδὲν προσδεήσει τοῦ διότι). For this type of person either has the starting-points or can get them easily. (EN 1095b3-8)

On a view we find for example in Reeve, Aristotle's point in this passage is that habituated virtue becomes strict virtue when one acquires *phronesis* by grasping the *because*; furthermore, grasping the *because* is grasping the end.⁶² But as we learn from the *Met.*'s discussion of craft, the *because* is the universal which the craftsman grasps and the merely experienced person lacks (981a28-30), and we have already seen that (a) in the practical domain grasping the universal means grasping general maxims rather than ends, and (b) a grasp of universals seems not to be a requirement for individual virtue and happiness. This encourages us to take literally 32's claim that in ethical matters someone who has the *that* has no need for the *because* – in which case the passage in no way shows that it is intellect's task to supply our ends.⁶³

The second passage is 16, from EN X.9, which arguably implies that *logoi* are necessary to produce full virtue. Those who take 32 to imply that *phronesis* involves knowledge of the *because* see confirmation in 16: they take the *logoi* in question to be something like explanations or reasoned accounts of why the things one has been habituated to admire and desire are good – *because*s to explain habituation's *thats*, and thereby to provide the intellectual component which allows merely habituated virtue to become strict virtue.⁶⁴ But 16 describes the kind of *logos* in question as one that “dissuades” (ἀποτρέποντος) from wrongdoing, suggesting that the *logoi* are exhortations rather than explanations. Moreover, this fits with Aristotle's characterization of the *logoi* relevant to moral education in the chapter as a whole. *Logoi* are not sufficient to make people virtuous because they can “encourage and urge on” (προτρέψασθαι μὲν καὶ παρορμησαί) only those who are already on the right track (1179b7); *logoi* are thought useful in bringing about virtue because

33. ...some believe that the legislators should exhort (παρακαλεῖν) people toward virtue, and urge them on for the sake of the fine (προτρέπεσθαι τοῦ καλοῦ χάριν), since those who have been well advanced through habits will listen well (ἐπακουσομένων)...For the decent person, living toward the fine, will be obedient to the *logos* (τῷ λόγῳ πειθαρχήσειν). (EN 1180a5-11)

Notably, the language Aristotle uses here to describe the relation between the educational *logoi* and their audience is precisely that he uses to describe the relation between the rational and non-rational parts of the soul in EN I.13. The non-rational, passionate part

34. in the continent person is indeed obedient to (πειθαρχεῖ) the *logos*, and in the moderate and brave person it is probably even better at listening

⁶² Reeve (1992), 30; cf. Hardie (1968), 35, and Cooper (2010).

⁶³ Compare EN 1098a33-b3: “The cause is not to be demanded in the same way in every inquiry, but it is sufficient in some to demonstrate the *that* finely, as for example with starting-points.” For a detailed argument that inquiry into universal causes of ethical facts belongs not to ethics itself but rather to metaphysics, physics and psychology, and see Achtenberg (2002), 76-95.

⁶⁴ See for example Cooper (2010).

(εὐηκοώτερόν)...And admonitions and every reproving and exhorting (παράκλησις) show that the non-rational can be persuaded in some way by *logos* (πείθεται πως ὑπὸ λόγου τὸ ἄλογον). (EN 1102b26-1103a1)⁶⁵

Thus EN X.9's claim that *logoi* are useful (or even necessary) for virtue does not show that *phronesis* supplies our ends; instead, it confirms what we see in EN I.13 and elsewhere: intellect (one's own or another's) supplements character by giving specific guidance about what to do.

There is one final piece of alleged evidence for the claim that ends are the province of intellect: an extremely difficult passage on the role of *nous* in practical reasoning. The passage comes at the end of V/VI.11, shortly before the discussion that includes several of our Goal passages. *Nous* in the rest of book V/VI refers unambiguously to theoretical *nous*, the state of grasping universal starting-points for deductions; now, however, Aristotle evidently introduces (without comment or explanation) a technical sense of *nous* in the practical sphere. He has just been emphasizing that *phronesis* is about particulars (1143a26-29); now he says the same of practical *nous*:

35. And *nous* is of the last things (τῶν ἐσχάτων) in both [the practical and theoretical spheres]. For there is *nous*, and not *logos*, both of the first terms and of the last; and the [*nous*] concerned with demonstrations is of the unchanging, first terms, while that in practical matters is of the last and changeable [term] and the minor premise. For *these things are the starting-points of the that-for-the-sake-of-which, for the universal is from the particulars* (ἐκ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα γὰρ τὰ καθόλου). Of these things therefore one must have perception, and this is *nous*. (1143a35-b5, emphasis mine)

On a widespread reading, this passage shows that we grasp the goal – the “that the-for-the-sake-of-which” – on the basis of intellectual induction. The particular facts that we grasp through practical *nous* (which is understood to be an aspect of *phronesis*) form the inductive basis for an intellectual grasp of the goal.⁶⁶ But the lines which seem to support this reading – “these things are the starting-points of the that-for-the-sake-of-which, for the universal is from the particulars” – are so compressed that we should be wary of interpreting them in a way so manifestly at odds with everything else Aristotle has said, and in particular is about to go on to say in the Goal passages which shortly follow, about how we acquire our goals. Cooper (despite his own embrace of the view that *nous* grasps practical starting-points) argues persuasively against this reading of 35, citing in his support a passage from the *de Anima* which uses very similar language:

36. The last thing is the starting-point of action (τὸ δ' ἔσχατον ἀρχὴ τῆς πράξεως). (*de An.* 433a16-17).

⁶⁵ Both passages 33 and 34 go on to compare the relation between exhorting *logos* and exhorted audience to that between father and son.

⁶⁶ See for example Greenwood (1973), 51, Sorabji (1980), 214, or Dahl (1984), 44: “...what *nous* grasps are propositions indicating what is to be done or what is good in a particular situation. These propositions are starting points for an inductive inference to universal ends. From propositions of the form ‘This Φ is good’ or ‘This Φ is to be done’ one can inductively infer universal principles of the form ‘What is Φ is good’ or ‘What is Φ is to be done’... [O]ne has inductively acquired a universal end.”

In this passage Aristotle must mean that the last thing – the particular – is that from which one begins to act when aiming at some goal; thus at 1143b4 too, Cooper argues, Aristotle is saying that particulars are starting-points not for the grasping of ends but rather “for the *attainment* of ends”.⁶⁷ Thus the passage supplies only very inconclusive support for the view that intellect provides our ends; in the absence of better evidence there is no pressure to read it this way.

Other evidence, however, is not forthcoming. What I have tried to do in this section is to place the textual burden of proof firmly on the Intellectualists’ shoulders. There are some scattered, difficult passages which *can* be read as evidence that *phronesis* provides us with our ends, but all these passages admit of alternate readings which fit better with what Aristotle says elsewhere. On the other side, there is copious and explicit evidence that *phronesis*’s task is solely to provide us with “things toward the end” (where this presupposes, as I explained above, that we are intellectually *aware* of the goal as a goal) – that it is the condition which makes one good at determining how best to achieve goals, goals which one has acquired from some other source.

IV. The role of *phronesis*

Even some Intellectualists recognize that nearly all the textual evidence is against them, but balk at drawing the natural inference: witness for example Allan’s complaint that Aristotle is “for the most part silent about the theoretical insight [i.e. knowledge of the overall goal] of the man of practical wisdom, and seems content to present him as one who...can judge what ought to be done in given circumstances.”⁶⁸ Why this insistence on privileging a few contested passages above so many clear ones? Aside from the Humean worry that restricting *phronesis* to “things toward the goal” leaves the setting of goals to desire – a worry I address in section V – I suspect Intellectualists are motivated by the corresponding worry that restricting *phronesis* in this way renders it ethically trivial.

Clearly Aristotle thinks *phronesis* of paramount ethical importance: there is no (strict) virtue without it (8), and once you have it you have all the virtues (1145a1-2). And we should grant the Intellectualists that this strongly implies that *phronesis* is excellence at something that goes beyond what a Humean would recognize as practical reasoning. Someone merely efficient at putting his plans into action – someone who can calculate the quickest route to the river where the child is drowning, or can arrange the most impressive catering for his friend’s wedding at the cheapest price – may be smarter and more effective than his bumbling friends, but we would be very wary of calling this a moral difference. But between this ultra-Humean (or sub-Humean) view of practical reason, and the Kantian one which the Intellectualists find in Aristotle, there is room to take up an interesting position.⁶⁹ And that, I argue in the remainder of this section, is just what Aristotle does. Successfully working out the things that promote an end is on his view complex, ethically demanding, and crucial to well-being – and this because “things toward the end” is a category far broader than what we think of as instrumental means.

⁶⁷ Cooper (1986), 42, note. Broadie argues for a similar reading: particulars are starting-points of the end in the sense that “they give rise to the end (i.e. to its realization) by filling out the general aim so as to convert it into a decision,” while the claim that universals come from particulars means that “generalities come into being only as particularized” (commentary *ad* 1143b3-5); for longer arguments cf. Broadie (1998).

⁶⁸ Allan (1952), 182-3, quoted approvingly by Hardie (1968, 213).

⁶⁹ “Sub-Humean” is Bernard Williams’s term, from his (1981) – a paper which provides a good model of what I am arguing is an Aristotelian view of deliberation, with “subjective motivational set” corresponding to Aristotle’s notion of character.

We can begin by noting that he claims very explicitly that getting the “things toward the end” right *is* of extreme ethical significance. Consider our first Goal passage again, along with the line which precedes it. Aristotle is arguing, against a putative objection, that *phronesis* is not idle but instead choiceworthy and indeed necessary:

1 [expanded]. Further, the [human] function is achieved in accordance with *phronesis* and character virtue: for virtue makes the goal right, *phronesis* the things toward it. (1144a6-9)

Phronesis is essential just *because* it makes things toward goals right, not for some other reason about which Aristotle is “content to be for the most part silent.”

The ethical significance of things toward the goal is further confirmed by the first lines of passage 23, from the *Politics*: “Well-being (τὸ εὖ) for everyone depends on two things: one is the goal and end of actions being laid down rightly, the other is finding the actions that lead to that end.” Being right about the things toward ends is crucial to our function, and hence crucial to our happiness.⁷⁰

Thus we should leave off wondering at Aristotle’s silence regarding the putative end-setting role of *phronesis*, and instead search his discussions for positive evidence of a suitably broad conception of “things toward ends”. One such conception has been proposed by Wiggins and McDowell: *phronesis* is a kind of moral perception, whereby “one rather than another of the potentially practically relevant features of the situation would strike a virtuous person, and rightly so, as salient, as what matters about the situation.”⁷¹ This is surely at least in part right, given Aristotle’s emphasis on *phronesis*’s concern with particulars. But there is another conception – or possibly another way of explaining this conception – much more explicitly supported by the texts. This becomes clear when we focus on a function of *phronesis* which Aristotle evidently thinks extremely important, but which has been largely ignored by those who focus on the debate surrounding the Goal passages: the function of determining the mean (μεσότης) at which virtue aims.⁷²

It is in this capacity that Aristotle first says anything substantive about *phronesis*, in his famous definition of character virtue:

37. Therefore virtue is a state issuing in decisions, consisting in a mean relative to us, determined by *logos* and by that by which the *phronimos* would determine it (ὠρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ᾧ ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν). (*EN* 1106b36-1107a2)⁷³

⁷⁰ Note also that *EE* II.10 poses as an open question whether virtue makes the goal right or the things toward it; although Aristotle goes on to argue for the former answer, the way that he poses the question shows that he does not think that the latter would obviously give virtue too trivial or non-ethical a task.

⁷¹ McDowell (1988), 29; cf. Wiggins (1980), 232-33.

⁷² Greenwood does acknowledge the importance and relevance of this role (Greenwood (1973), 58-59). But on his interpretation (a) determining the mean is only one part of deliberation, and (b) what it is to determine the mean is “to decide what moral states or moral actions are the best means toward the attainment of that final end,” the life of excellent contemplation (θεωρία). My interpretation differs significantly, as will become clear below.

⁷³ Cf. *EE* 1222b6-7, which brings in *phronesis* implicitly by way of mentioning the “right *logos*” (see discussion below).

Virtue is a mean state (μεσότης) between extremes of excess and deficiency, in that it aims at (is στοχαστική of) the mean (τὸ μέσον) in actions and passions (*EN* 1106b27-28, 1109a20-23). That is, virtue ensures that we aim at the mean – or, to use a less technical formulation which Aristotle frequently presents as equivalent, at acting “as one should” (ὡς δεῖ). But it can be difficult to know just what the mean is: it is one thing to wish to do what is right in a given situation, but quite another to know just what is right – to know “when one should [act, or feel a passion], and about what things, and in relation to whom, and for the sake of what, and how one should” (*EN* 1106b21-22). Hence the need for *phronesis*, whose function, according to this passage, is to provide the *logos* which defines or determines (ὀρίζειν) that mean.⁷⁴ As Aristotle puts it with regard to some specific examples,

38. Getting angry belongs to everyone and is easy, and so is giving and spending money; but to whom and how much and when and for the sake of what and in what way no longer belongs to everyone, nor is easy; hence doing this well is rare and praiseworthy and fine (καλόν)...; Presumably hitting the mean is difficult, and especially in particulars: for it is not easy to determine (διορίσαι) how and to whom and about what sort of things and for how long one should be angry. (*EN* 1109a26-30; 1109b14-16).

The “determine” in b15 reminds us of 37; the point of both passages is to show that *phronesis* is necessary for virtue because without it one cannot identify the mean at which virtue aims. And this explains why *phronesis* is ethically so significant – why it makes what we would call a moral difference. Someone who typically gets too angry, or angry at the wrong people, or for the wrong reasons, is making an ethical error: he lacks the virtue of mildness. Someone who goes wrong in giving and spending money is making an ethical mistake too: the generous (ἐλευθερίος) person hits the mean, but the gifts of the wasteful (ἄσωτος) person

39. ...are not as they should be (ὡς δεῖ), but sometimes they make wealthy those who should be poor, and would give nothing to those measured in character, but much to those offering flattery or some other pleasure. (*EN* 1121b5-7).

Moreover, I want now to show, it is just this sort of thing Aristotle has in mind when he describes *phronesis* in the Goal passages as what “makes right the things toward the end,” i.e. as what guarantees good deliberation. One might think – as commentators who ignore *EN* II in their discussion of *phronesis* evidently do – that Aristotle simply forgets about mean-determining when he turns to his head-on discussion of *phronesis* in *EE* V/*EN* VI. But that discussion opens with a reminder that the mean at which one should aim is “as the right *logos* (ὀρθὸς λόγος) says” and a promise to investigate the deferred question of what the right *logos* is (1138b18-25); it ends by identifying the right *logos* first as “the one in accord with (κατὰ) *phronesis*” and then (in what is presumably an overstatement) as *phronesis* itself (1144b23-27). Thus in characterizing *phronesis* as a deliberative excellence that makes the things toward the end right, Aristotle evidently takes himself to have characterized it as what determines the mean. And a careful look at his various characterizations of virtuous action show him to be, if not a model of clarity, at least plausibly justified in this assumption.

⁷⁴ More precisely, 37 says that the *logos* defines the mean which virtue *is*, but since virtue is a mean only in that it aims at a mean (*EN* 1106b27-28, 1109a20-23), we can put the point as I have done above.

The first point to note is that in saying that virtue “aims at a mean” (is στοχαστική τοῦ μέσου – for example *EN* 1106b28), Aristotle is saying that the virtuous person takes the mean as his end or goal. This is implied throughout, but most explicit in a passage from *EE* II.11:

40. Every decision is of something and for the sake of something. *That for the sake of which is the mean*, of which virtue is the cause (οὗ μὲν οὖν ἕνεκα τὸ μέσον ἐστίν, οὗ αἰτία ἡ ἀρετή)...⁷⁵ (*EE* 1227b36-38, emphasis mine)

This passage repeats the claim of the Goal passages that virtue makes the goal right: because he has a virtuous character, the virtuous person has a good goal – here characterized as “achieve the mean,” i.e. “act as one should” (ὡς δεῖ).⁷⁶

The second point to note is that Aristotle characterizes deliberation as a form of determining or defining, ὀρίζεσθαι: deliberation is about things that are as yet “undetermined” (ἀδιόριστον, 1112b9); “The object of deliberation and the object of decision are the same, but the object of decision is already determined (ἀφωρισμένον)” (1113a4), i.e. through the preceding deliberation; good deliberation cannot be identical with belief (δόξα), because “everything that is the object of belief is already determined (ὄρισται)” (1142b11).

Thus we can unify Aristotle’s various descriptions of virtuous action as follows. In a particular practical situation the virtuous deliberator begins with a goal at which he (for it will always be a he, on Aristotle’s view) is aiming, i.e. wishes (has a βούλησις) to achieve. This is a goal which can be described variously as:

- (i) the mean (passage 40)
- (ii) the fine (e.g. *EN* 1115b13-14, 1120a23-4, and passage 7)
- (iii) the major premise of a particular practical syllogism: “Avoid all unhealthy things” (or whatever Aristotle intends at 1147a32) or “I must make something good” (*MA* 701a17) – or, to use the general formula for the starting-points of practical syllogisms
- (iv) “the end and the best” (passage 20).

⁷⁵ The remainder of the sentence is contested: the manuscripts have τὸ προαιρεῖσθαι οὗ ἕνεκα, to which various emendations have been proposed. Woods’s translation follows Fritzsche and Susemihl in reading τῷ for τὸ, yielding “of which virtue is the cause by choosing”. This would provide support for version (a) of the Intellectualist interpretation of the Goal passages: virtue makes the goal right in that virtue makes us want the goal. But (as Kenny persuasively argues) this emendation is misleading and unnecessary. We should instead read with the manuscripts simply that virtue is the cause of the goal (where what this means is explained by passages like (2), which shortly precedes these lines); the remainder of the sentence will then be simply a reminder (albeit both otiose and grammatically awkward) that decision is for the sake of something; or (following Kenny, who thinks we can get this sense either without emendation or by reading τοῦ for τὸ) the sentence will read “It is the mean that virtue is the cause of the decision’s being for the sake of,” where this is a clumsy statement of “Virtue is the cause of the decision’s being for the sake of the mean” (Kenny (1979), 85-7).

⁷⁶ It is worth emphasizing that this is not a universal goal, one like happiness or “doing well” (εὖ πράττειν) which anyone who has any kind of goal has *ipso facto*. There are plenty of people who do not aim at acting as they should: witness for example wasteful people (ἄσῳτοι), who “have an appetite for giving, but the how or whence makes no difference to them” (*EN* 1121b2-3).

This goal is his starting-point; now he must deliberate about how to achieve it. His deliberation is (or yields?) a *logos*; since he is *phronimos*, and hence excellent at deliberation, it will be a “right *logos*”. And we can describe that *logos* in different ways, depending on which description of the goal we have used, as:

- (i) determining the mean
- (ii) identifying what is fine in the circumstances;
- (iii) a minor premise or chain of premises of a particular syllogism: “This is unhealthy,” or “a house is good” – or, most generally,
- (iv) “this will lead to the end and best,” i.e. identifying the things toward the end.

All these descriptions show that what deliberation does is to make determinate the indeterminate goal with which the agent began. And thus accurately working out how best to achieve that goal – working out the finest “things toward it,” i.e. deliberating well – *is* “determining the mean,” i.e. is correctly making specific the worthy but overly-general goal of acting as one should. For example, it is characteristic of the generous person to have the right goal: he “will not neglect his possessions, wishing (*βουλόμενος*) to assist someone through them” (*EN* 1120b2-3). But in order really to achieve this goal he must deliberate about how much money he should give to whom, and in what way, and so on. And getting this right, as we have seen above, *is* hitting the mean.

This yields an interpretation of *phronesis* with two important advantages. First, it gives us a unified account of *phronesis* by showing that the two apparently disconnected roles which Aristotle explicitly assigns it – determining the mean by the right *logos*, and making right the things toward ends – are in fact equivalent. Second, in identifying deliberation with mean-determination, the interpretation shows that *phronesis* as characterized in *EE* V/*EN* VI is much more than Humean instrumental reasoning, and hence merits the ethical significance Aristotle attributes to it. *Phronesis* is crucial to virtue not because virtue requires mere means-end efficiency, but because without *phronesis* the intention to do what one should cannot reliably be made specific in an appropriate way, and hence cannot reliably be focused onto an appropriate course of action.

Moreover, this makes good sense of Aristotle’s way of distinguishing between natural and strict virtue in passage 9: natural virtues are harmful without *nous*, because “just as it happens to a powerful body without sight that in moving it stumbles heavily, on account of not having sight, thus also here. But if one acquires intellect, it makes a difference in action” (1144b10-13). This claim comes in the course of an argument that the relation between natural and strict virtue – “not identical, but similar” (1144b3) – is just like that between *phronesis* and cleverness. The clever person differs from the *phronimos* in that her ends may be either good or bad (1144a23-36). The naturally virtuous person differs from the genuinely virtuous one, this passage thus suggests – especially given that it comes shortly after one of the Goal passages and shortly before another (1 and 2) – in that her “things toward the goal” may be either good or bad.⁷⁷ We saw above that practical *nous* is intellectual quasi-perception of particulars (35); this is what the person with merely natural virtue lacks. Just as a blind person may have the strength and will to walk somewhere but stumbles over obstacles because she cannot see her way, so someone with natural courage (for instance) may have the right goal in a given situation, but blunder because

⁷⁷ This reading fits also with the *Politics* passage quoted above (23), and *EE* 1227b21-23.

she cannot discern what the brave thing to do is in that situation – and thus wind up acting rashly rather than bravely.⁷⁸

After all, even those who wish to do the right thing may find it very hard in a given situation to work out just what the right thing is – and getting it wrong can be a moral failing.⁷⁹ This is an idea which a modern Aristotelian, Rosalind Hursthouse, has forcefully expressed by contrasting practically wise agents with well-intentioned adolescents who harm people they wish to help because they lack the experience necessary for correctly applying ethical concepts in particular situations. Not knowing how to benefit someone most efficiently may be an ethically neutral deficiency; not knowing what sorts of things *are* benefits in a given situation – to take one of Hursthouse’s examples, thinking that it would be kind to protect someone from a hurtful truth in a situation where it would in fact be unkind – is an intellectual failing that is at the same time plausibly a moral one.⁸⁰

The interpretation of deliberation I am presenting may look very like one familiar from the literature: the so-called “constituent means” view of deliberation famously advocated by (among others) Wiggins, McDowell, and Irwin. Drawing on a distinction between instrumental means to a goal and constitutive components of it, these interpreters have argued that deliberation can be restricted to “things toward the end” without reducing to mere instrumental reasoning. One notion of “things toward the end” is instrumental means, but:

The second notion...is that of something whose existence counts in itself as the partial or total realization of the end. This is a constituent of the end...[In the] *constituents-to-ends* case a man deliberates about what kind of life he wants to lead, or deliberates in a determinate context about which of several possible courses of action would conform most closely to some idea he holds before himself, or deliberates about what would constitute *eudaimonia* here and now, or...about what would count as the achievement of the not yet completely specific goal which he has already set himself in the given situation. (Wiggins (1980), 224-5)⁸¹

The view is indeed similar to the one I have advanced; Greenwood, one of the originators of the idea of constituent/whole deliberation, recognized determining the mean as one form of it (although Wiggins et al. make no mention of it).⁸² Like myself, the constituents-deliberation camp argue that we can do justice to the ethical significance of deliberation while respecting

⁷⁸ Hence my reading of this passage converges with the Wiggins/McDowell view of *phronesis* as moral perception, as against the Intellectualist reading quoted above.

⁷⁹ Gauthier and Jolif’s note on 1144b16-17 (from passage 9) makes this point very well; see also Kenny’s example of someone who has the worthy goal of justice, but “pursues it under the [let us grant] mistaken belief it consists in taking from each according to his ability and giving to each according to his need” (*Aristotle’s Theory of the Will*, 107).

⁸⁰ Hursthouse (1991), 231. Cf. Hursthouse (2007): “Quite generally, given that good intentions are intentions to act well or ‘do the right thing’, we may say that practical wisdom is the knowledge or understanding that enables its possessor, unlike the nice adolescents, to do just that, in any given situation.”

⁸¹ Cf. McDowell (1988), 26. Wiggins and McDowell connect this picture of deliberation to their notion of *phronesis* as the perception of morally salient particulars, mentioned above: to deliberate well is to see what, giving one’s goal of acting well, is morally salient in the situation, and this amounts to seeing “what doing well, here and now, is” (McDowell, *ibid.*).

⁸² Greenwood (1973), 58; but see the caveats about his interpretation noted above.

Aristotle's claim that it is of "things toward ends," on the grounds that "making right the things toward ends" is an ethically demanding task which involves giving specific content to a general goal.⁸³ But if we follow the constituents-deliberation view to its proponents' conclusion, we wind up giving up the game on "virtue makes the goal right" entirely. For Wiggins and Irwin use their notion of deliberation to argue that in an important sense there *is* after all deliberation of ends – and thus that giving content to the goal is an intellectual task:

[P]ractical intellect is not concerned with means *as opposed to* ends. Insofar as it is concerned with constituent 'means,' it is also concerned with ends...A virtuous man's ends are chosen by rational desires resting on deliberation about components of the final good. (Irwin (1975), 571)⁸⁴

But this is simply to obliterate the distinction Aristotle clearly thinks so important: the distinction between being right about the end and being right about the things toward it. It may be fair to say that Aristotle does not give us much guidance in drawing the line between the two, but we should nonetheless avoid an interpretation which precludes its being drawn.⁸⁵ Moreover, to say that practical reasoning can furnish specifications of ends but not ultimate ends themselves is to place a restriction on its powers that is far from arbitrary. Aristotle's claim is that while we can reason about how to live or what to care about, *given* a set of ultimate values, those ultimate values are fixed and determined by our upbringing – that is, by the affective, evaluative dispositions that our upbringings produce: our characters.⁸⁶

We should not, then, take the idea of determining or specifying ends as broadly as the constituents-deliberation camp do. We can nonetheless take it far enough to ensure that deliberation is ethically significant. Deliberation cannot teach us that *eudaimonia* consists of the life of virtuous activity – only character can do that – but it can work out the whole substance of that general goal, showing at every point what counts as an achievement of it.

I have attempted in this section to give an account of *phronesis* which allows it the ethical significance which Aristotle clearly grants it despite lacking the end-identifying role which he (almost clearly) denies it. It is compatible with my account that *phronesis* do more than determine the mean at which virtue aims: it might also for example resolve apparent conflicts between the virtues, as some argue. I see no clear evidence that Aristotle gives *phronesis* this or any similar roles, but my main point is simply that what Aristotle explicitly and unequivocally does attribute to *phronesis* – the power to determine the mean at which virtue aims, i.e. the power to "make right the things towards the end" – is sufficient to explain why *phronesis* is so important to happiness and to character. There is neither good textual evidence nor philosophical argument for thinking that it also identifies the ends.

V. Aristotle's non-Humean non-Rationalism

I have tried to allay the Intellectualist's concerns that a straightforward reading of the Goal passages renders *phronesis* ethically trivial, but there remains a corresponding concern: Aristotle

⁸³ See especially the McDowell passage cited above for an emphasis on ethical significance.

⁸⁴ Compare Wiggins (1980), 227: "It is plainly impossible to deliberate about the end if this is to deliberate by asking 'Shall I pursue the end?'...But this platitude scarcely demonstrates the impossibility of deliberating the question 'what, practically speaking, is this end?' or 'what shall count for me as an adequate description of the end of life?'"

⁸⁵ As I have urged above, he cannot mean that virtue makes the goal right simply in giving us the right very general end of happiness, for that end is common to everyone.

⁸⁶ Compare again Williams' view in his 1981.

cannot hold that non-rational passions and desires set our ends, the Intellectualists say, for he thinks that we want our ends *because* we find them good.⁸⁷

It is certainly true that Aristotle thinks our ends are ends in virtue of being found good. He characterizes the desire for ends as a special and distinctively human species of desire: wish (βούλησις). And he repeatedly claims that wish is for the good, or at least for what appears to one to be good (*EE* 1227a28 ff, 1223b6; *EN* 1113a15-31, quoted in part below (passage 18)).

But does that mean that wish is for what we *rationally* judge good? In assuming that it does, the Intellectualist is assuming an equation – one also assumed by influential non-Intellectualists like Walter and Zeller – between the non-rational and the non-cognitive.⁸⁸ That equation makes the rational part the sole source of all cognition, including all judgments of value. The non-rational part is reduced to a purely conative force, its role being to provide motivational force in support of or against such judgments.

But this is simply not how Aristotle carves up the soul. Intellect is one species of discrimination or cognition (κρίσις or γνῶσις) – one mode of receiving information about the world. But there are other forms of cognition too: perception (αἴσθησις) and what Aristotle calls *phantasia* – appearance-reception or “imagination.”⁸⁹ These other forms of cognition are non-rational: available to animals as well as to people, and also to the non-rational part of the human soul.⁹⁰

Moreover, when we turn to the few passages in the ethical works where Aristotle mentions our apprehension of the end in positive terms (rather than merely denying that it is reached through deliberation), we find that he seems to talk not about rational cognition, but instead about something that fits far better with all the evidence we have seen above that our grasp of the end is non-rational: quasi-perceptual appearances. Here are some passages we have seen above, two of them expanded:

18 [expanded]. Should we say that what is wished for without qualification is the good, but for each person the apparent good (τὸ φαινόμενον)? For the virtuous person, then, what is wished will be what really is [good/to-be-wished-for], while for the base person what is wished for is some chance thing, just as for those in good bodily condition what is healthy is what is so in truth, while for the sickly

⁸⁷ See for example Irwin (1990), 570.

⁸⁸ “Moral virtue, therefore, and insight [*phronesis*] reciprocally condition one another: the former gives the will a bent in the direction of the good, while the latter tells us what actions are good” (Zeller (1897) vol II, 187). On the Intellectualist side, compare Sorabji’s argument that habituation must involve intellect because it is “not a mindless process” (1980, 216), Taylor’s claim that the non-rational soul cannot supply first principles because its activities are “not cognitive at all, but rather affective” (2008, 211), and Cooper’s claim about “mechanical” training cited above. For compelling arguments against equating the non-rational with the non-cognitive, however, see Cooper (1999), 244-45.

⁸⁹ “Both *phantasia* and perception hold the same place as intellect [in causing locomotion], for they are all cognitive (κριτικά)” (*MA* 700b17-20). Cf. *de An.* 432a16, and 427a17-22: “thinking and understanding seem to be just like perceiving something, for in both cases the soul discerns (κρίνει) and recognizes (γνωρίζει) something of the things that are.”

⁹⁰ For an outright equation of the ethical works’ non-rational passionate part with the perceptive and phantastic part of the psychological works see *EE* 1219b23; for extensive arguments in defense of this interpretation see Lorenz (2006).

things other than these, and likewise for what is bitter and sweet and hot and heavy and so on. For the virtuous person discerns (κρίνει) each thing rightly, and in each case the truth appears (φαίνεται) to him. For distinctive things are fine and pleasant in accordance with each character-state, and the virtuous person presumably excels the most at seeing (ὄρᾶν) the truth in each case, being like a standard and measure of these things. (EN 1113a23-33)

19 [expanded]. And suppose someone said that everyone longs for the apparent (φαινόμενον) good, but they are not in control of the appearance (φαντασία): whatever sort of person one is, in that way the end appears to one. If then each person is somehow responsible for his character, he will be responsible for the appearance as well. If not...one needs a sort of natural, inborn sense of sight (φῦναι δεῖ ὡσπερ ὄψιν ἔχοντα), by which one will discern (κρίνει) finely and choose what is really good...Whether then the end does not appear (φαίνεται) in whatever way to each person by nature, but is partly due to himself, or whether the end is natural...vice will be no less voluntary [than virtue]. (EN 1114a31-b20)

20. Practical syllogisms have a starting point: “Since the end and the best is of such a sort...”. And this does not appear (φαίνεται) except to the good man. For vice perverts, and makes us be deceived about the practical starting-points. (1144a31-36)

We wish for what appears good to us (18, 19); our view of the end is an appearance (φαντασία) (19);⁹¹ virtue is necessary for getting the goal right because what is best only appears so to the virtuous person (18, 19, 20).

Of course many will quickly dismiss these appearance-words as insignificant, objecting that Aristotle’s point in these passages is that we wish for what we *think* good (an epistemic or doxastic use of ‘appears’), and he uses ‘appears’ and variants only to emphasize the subjectivity of these thoughts.⁹² But to this we can make two replies. First, given all the evidence above that we grasp ends on the basis of a non-rational part of the soul, in conjunction with ample evidence that the appetitive or passionate part of the soul exercises *phantasia* and perception (but not of course reason), a quasi-perceptual sense of ‘appearance’ is precisely what we should expect. Second, when we examine these passages in more detail, we find that Aristotle characterizes the appearances of the end in ways that make them look much less doxastic than perceptual.

18 and 19 use perceptual metaphors: the virtuous person “sees” the truth; we grasp the end as if through a “sense of sight,” inborn or otherwise. Moreover, 18 compares virtuous and vicious discernments of value with healthy and unhealthy discernments of the bitter, sweet, hot and heavy. Sick people may well *believe* (on the basis of memory or testimony, for example) that the wine which tastes bitter to them is sweet, or the air which feels hot to them cool; what they are lacking is the ability to perceive things properly, and if their beliefs about the bitter etc. do come to differ from those of healthy people, this is *because* their perceptions do. Thus 18’s analogies strongly suggest that the kind of cognition or discernment (κρίσις) which virtue enhances and vice perverts is perceptual rather than intellectual. Note also that this passage explains the claim that “the virtuous person discerns each thing rightly, and in each case the truth

⁹¹ For an argument that despite the dialectical context Aristotle endorses this claim see note 40 above.

⁹² See for example Cooper (1996).

appears to him” by referring to affective or aesthetic reactions: “For (γὰρ) distinctive things are fine (καλὰ) and pleasant in accordance with each character-state.” If the virtuous person’s ability to discern facts about value is a matter of being pleased and pained in the right ways, or admiring and being disgusted by the right things, then this discernment is an operation of non-rational cognition.⁹³

These passages more than casually suggest, then, that one desires something as an end because it quasi-perceptually appears good. And if this is indeed Aristotle’s view, then he can perfectly well restrict practical reasoning to deliberation about what promotes ends while still maintaining that we desire our ends because we find them good.

I am aware that this suggestion will open the gates to a new flood of Intellectualist objections, and I can here indicate only briefly how they these be answered. I present a much longer defense elsewhere; others have defended versions of these claims in similar ways.⁹⁴

The first objection will be that a non-rational power like *phantasia* cannot literally grasp something as good. To this the reply is that Aristotle evidently thinks it can: hence his repeated claims not only that pleasure appears good, where this is to be understood as an appearance to *phantasia*, but also that we desire it *because* it appears good.⁹⁵

The second objection will be that non-rational cognition, even granting that it might be in some sense evaluative, could not grasp the goods that form the starting-points of deliberation. These goods can be very general – the life of virtuous activity, to take a salient example. How can *phantasia*, which preserves and reproduces particular perceptions, represent such a general, abstract goal? Moreover, Aristotle seems to say that wishes are for what we *think* good – which surely implies that they are based on thoughts rather than mere appearances.⁹⁶

To this, the reply is more complex, and I can only sketch it here. The basic idea is that Aristotle’s analogies between the starting-points of theoretical and practical reasoning extend further than he makes explicit – although not quite all the way.

In the theoretical realm, as we saw above, the starting-points for reasoning are supplied not by reasoning but by *nous*. But this is not a mystical process: *nous* does not grasp its objects out of thin air. For, as is well known, Aristotle is a thoroughgoing empiricist. *Nihil in intellectu est quod non prius in sensu*: all knowledge begins from experience, all thought is ultimately grounded in perception. More specifically, we grasp starting-points on the basis of induction (ἐπαγωγή): repeated perceptions give rise, via *phantasia* (at work in memory), to a generalized

⁹³ This is further supported by a passage from the *EE*: “The virtue concerned with each thing discerns (κρίνει) rightly the greater and the lesser – just the things which the *phronimos* would command virtue also [performs? commands?], so that all the virtues follow *phronesis*, or it follows all of them” (*EE* 1232a35-38). The κρίσις due to virtue is in accord with the commands of *phronesis* but not a function of *phronesis* itself, the passage implies; it is instead something distinctive to character by contrast with intellect – and hence non-rational.

⁹⁴ See my *Aristotle on the Apparent Good* (MS); Achtenberg (2002); Tuozzo (1994); Burnet (1900), 66-7.

⁹⁵ See especially *EE* 1235b25-27 and *de An.* 433b8-10. For detailed discussion see my (2009); cf. Cooper (1999), 243.

⁹⁶ In the *EN* Aristotle characterizes the object of wish not only as what appears good but also as what seems or is thought good (τὸ δοκοῦν, 1113a21, just before passage 18); in the *EE* he says that no one wishes for what they think (οἶεται) bad (1223b6).

but not yet explicitly universal representation – an ‘experience’ (ἐμπειρία), which is at least in part a function of *phantasia* – and this in turn forms the basis for *nous*.

In the practical realm, as we have seen, Aristotle characterizes virtue as playing a role parallel to theoretical *nous*: it provides the starting-points for reasoning (2, 4). But how does virtue get this power? Is there something in the practical case parallel to induction? There is, as many have noted: the process that produces virtue, namely habituation. (See passage 26: “of starting-points, some are grasped by induction, some by perception, some by some sort of habituation (ἐθισμῶ τινί), and others in other ways” (EN 1098b3-4).)⁹⁷

My claim – call it Practical Empiricism – is that habituation can furnish starting-points because it is a very close analogue of the first stages of induction. Through habituation in virtuous activity one repeatedly perceives or experiences such activity; the perception in question is pleasurable perception, which amounts to perception of such activity as *good*.⁹⁸ Through the work of *phantasia* these repeated perceptions or experiences give rise, just as in the theoretical realm, to a generalized representation: an appearance of virtuous activity as good. This is the appearance of the goal which character furnishes: what it represents as good is what the agent will pursue.

At this point, as in the theoretical realm, intellect steps in, assenting to and thereby conceptualizing the appearance furnished by non-rational cognition. Now our agent not only experiences an appearance of virtuous activity as the good, but also *believes* that it is so – that it is the goal. This belief is the “true supposition of the end” which constitutes part of *phronesis*: it can be expressed as the major premise in practical syllogisms, the basis from which one deliberates. Arguably it also forms the direct basis for wish, which explains the implications that wish is a distinctively human, thought-based desire.⁹⁹

Does this intellectual grasping of the end amount to intellect’s actually supplying the end? Intuitionists like Cooper think that *nous* furnishes the starting-points of practical reasoning in the same way as it furnishes those of theoretical reasoning, and this view would seem to be a natural fit with the analogy between habituation and induction I have proposed here: the intellectual grasp that forms the final stage of practical induction uncovers substantive, hitherto undetected truths about virtuous activity, and only now does the agent have a correct view of the end. Greenwood (1973) and Reeve (1992) present interpretations of just this kind. But all the arguments I have given above count against it: it is character, not intellect, that gives us our goals. Moreover, if Aristotle thinks that *nous* furnishes practical starting-points he seems to go out of his way to obscure the point: he attributes that role to virtue by explicit contrast with the theoretical case (passage 4), he says that *phronesis* “lies opposite to (ἀντίκειται) *nous*,” because *phronesis* is of the “last thing”, i.e. the particular (1142a23-25), and in the one passage where he introduces a

⁹⁷ On the interpretation of this passage see note 40 above.

⁹⁸ See *de An.* 431a8-11.

⁹⁹ This also explains how akratics and enkratics can have the right goal while lacking character virtue (see especially 1151a25-26 by contrast with passage 4, which it closely follows). Aristotle’s thought must be that even though the akratic lacks the correct appearance of the goal that would result from proper habituation, her character is good enough to make her responsive to arguments about the good life, or to make her admire virtuous people, and thus to acquire correct beliefs about the goal in these ways. She is like someone who knows her eyesight is often unreliable and so accepts other people’s judgment about what colors things are: she acquires the right belief, but not in the usual way, and thus there is dissonance between how she believes things are and how things appear to her to be.

technical sense of *nous* in the practical sphere, *nous*'s role is to grasp not the end of action, but rather the opposite: the "last thing" or "second [i.e. minor] premise," the particular facts of a situation in which one acts (passage 35).¹⁰⁰

Instead, we should take it that the intellectual grasp in no way alters one's view of the end. Character supplies the content of the goal; intellect merely renders it the sort of thing one can use in deliberations.¹⁰¹ It is virtue, as passage 4 tells us, that has taught right belief about the end.

If this is right then the last stage of practical induction is much less substantial than the last stage of theoretical induction – but in fact this is precisely what we should expect. *Phronesis* is a virtue of practical intellect rather than of theoretical, and its closest analogue is therefore not wisdom (σοφία) but craft (τέχνη). As we saw briefly in section III, craft does involve a grasp of universal causes, but these are not ultimate first principles. They are truths like "Medicine *x* benefits people of type *y* in situations of type *z*," which are merely explicit, conceptualized generalizations of what is already contained in experience ("This benefited Callias on this occasion, and Socrates on this occasion"), rather than ontological first principles like essences – for those are the province of theoretical sciences like physics.¹⁰² Analogously, we should expect *phronesis* (and especially non-architectonic *phronesis*) to involve no more than a grasp of explicit, conceptualized generalizations of truths already implicitly grasped through habituation: truths like "Virtuous activity is the end," which supplies a minimal explanation for facts like "This action was to-be-done on this occasion, and this other action on this other occasion" – but nothing more fundamental, for the deeper truths are the province of the psychologist or ethicist or metaphysician. Aristotle's insistence that the craftsman, though wiser and more able to teach than the merely experienced person, is no more effective in action, implies that in grasping the universals that constitute craft one in some sense learns nothing new. His claims that *phronesis* makes us better at acting only insofar as it makes us better at handling particulars, things toward the end, implies the same.

I will end by considering a final Intellectualist objection that may seem to count in favor of expanding the account of practical induction to include a robust final stage similar to what *nous* does in the theoretical sphere: that would give us a clear way to reconcile all the evidence for the face-value reading of "virtue makes the goal right" with an important complication I have hitherto ignored, namely *EN X*'s claim that the ultimately right goal is the life of excellent contemplation (θεωρία) (cf. *EE* VIII.3). Habituation in ethically virtuous activity cannot on its own give us any experience of contemplation, and thus cannot yield an appearance of the life of contemplation as good. It might however furnish an appearance of ethically virtuous activity as good in which intellect can somehow discern the life of contemplation as the underlying cause.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Cooper emphasizes this: although he is an Intuitionist he recognizes that this passage does not support that view, for what the passage says about *nous* is very explicitly that it is a perception-like apprehension of particulars (Cooper (1986), 42, note).

¹⁰¹ I take this view to be roughly in line with Achtenberg's (2002, 133-4) and Burnet's (1900, 67), and perhaps also McDowell's (1988, 31-33).

¹⁰² See *Met.* 981a7-12, discussed in note 60, and compare *EN* 1098a29-b3 on the difference between the carpenter and the geometer: the craftsman needs to know only *that* something is straight, leaving to the theoretician to determine "what the straight is and what properties it has."

¹⁰³ Here is one way in which this might work, perhaps implied by the final chapter of the *EE*: ethical habituation molds the non-rational part to defer to reason, and to take pleasure in letting it lead; one then grasps through *nous* that this is good *because* the very best life is the life of pure (vs. practical) exercise of the rational part – the true flourishing of this part of the soul.

If this were right then *phronesis* would after all play a role in supplying the end: it would supply the ultimate end for those few who recognize the life of contemplation as the highest human good. (This concession to the Intellectualist would be an important one, but a very limited one too: even if intellect did provide the content of the contemplator's ultimate goal in this way, it would reach this content not as the conclusion of pure practical reasoning, but only by induction from a non-rational appearance furnished by character.)

In fact, however, there is compelling evidence that Aristotle treats the contemplator as having the same ultimate goal (the same conception of *eudaimonia*) as the person who lives the life of ethically virtuous activity, with their differences lying elsewhere. Recall that the function argument identifies the correct end as excellent activity of the rational part of the soul, a definition that can apply to both kinds of lives (since the ethically virtuous life involves *phronesis* and rationally guided exercise of the passions). Some reconcile this with *EN X* by arguing that both contemplators and those who live the practical life of ethically virtuous action are achieving the goal (although the latter only "secondarily" (*EN X.8 1178a9*)). This is confirmed by the *Pol.*, where Aristotle identifies the correct end as "the activity and use of virtue" (see for example 1328a38 and 1332a9), by contrast with incorrect ends like military power or wealth, and treats this as a goal shared by contemplators and practical types alike: in speaking of their disagreement, he says,

Let us now address those who, while they agree that the life with virtue is most choiceworthy, disagree about the use of it (περι τῆς χρήσεως αὐτοῦ). (*Pol.* 1325a16-17)

The clear implication is that both share the same goal; their disagreement must then be about how best to achieve it.¹⁰⁴ If this is right then even contemplators get their ultimate goal through correct ethical habituation. If we bear in mind that correct habituation makes one take pleasure in and value one's activity *qua* excellent and *qua* fine, this becomes intelligible. It is good habituation and character that make one take excellent, fine activity as the goal, and *phronesis*, in its familiar deliberative role, that shows a few of the people who possess it that the very best specification of this goal, given their superior resources and circumstances, is contemplation rather than ethical activity. Virtue makes us aim at the fine; *phronesis* determines what is finest.¹⁰⁵

Thus arguably we do not need to make even this limited concession to the Intellectualist. In either case, however, a straightforward reading of the Goal passages is compatible with a solidly non-Humean interpretation of Aristotle. Our goals are our goals in virtue of our finding them good, and furthermore we rationally believe them good; what provides them, however –

¹⁰⁴ In fact, this interpretation is arguably necessary to reconcile the idea that virtue makes the goal right, in any sense, with the idea that contemplation is ultimately the correct end, for if contemplators really have a different goal from people who devote their lives to ethical virtue, then there will be plenty of virtuous people who do *not* have the right goal. (This on the plausible interpretation of Aristotle's view on which one can have virtue and *phronesis* while lacking theoretical wisdom, and not even wishing for the life of contemplation.)

¹⁰⁵ This way of understanding the account lets intellect play a role in orienting one towards contemplation without thereby eliding Aristotle's distinction between goals and things toward them (as Wiggins and Irwin do with their claim that deliberation is needed for *any* specification of *eudaimonia* – see section IV).

directly, or possibly in the one case of the contemplator's ultimate goal indirectly – is the non-rational habituation of the non-rational part of the soul.¹⁰⁶

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