ARISTOTLE'S AKRATIC: HEALING MORALLY BAD CHARACTER

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Abstract

Aristotle lists six different *hexeis* (stable states of the soul) in *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VII. The three to be avoided are *akrasia* (lack of self-control), vice, and beastliness. Their mirrors, the three to be praised, are *enkrateia* (self-control), virtue, and superhuman virtue. While the beastial and superhumanly virtuous fall out of discussion, the other four remain a focus for most of Book VII. Aristotle thinks that he has described four reliable ways in which people act always or *hōs epi to polu* (for the most part). However, I argue that he has only given us enough information to delineate three *hexeis*. On my interpretation, the *akratēs* (person lacking self-control) and the *enkratēs* (self-controlled person) are the same kind of person, they differ only in degree. They exist on a spectrum, while the other two *hexeis* are distinct kinds of people.

While this is hardly the received view, I am convinced that it is consistent with the text. By his own lights, Aristotle does not have a description of the *akratēs* as differing from the *enkratēs* making a mistake. Therefore, I want to group them together, rather than draw a bright line between them. First, the mistake of the *akratēs* is very narrow. She does not know, or knows only in the way the drunk person knows, the conclusion to the good practical syllogism. Second, *akrasia* is only about an excess of the bodily pleasures associated with food and sex. Aristotle lists eleven other areas where her behavior is undetermined. Third, the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* lack the psychological unity that I argue the virtuous and vicious each possess. Therefore, I conclude that the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* are the same kind of person. The upshot of my view is that, because it focuses on the positives rather than the negatives, it exhorts us to be better people.

Committee: Richard Bett, Hilary Bok, Lucy Allais, Howard Curzer, Karen ní Mheallaigh

For Nana and Auntie

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Contents

Introduction

After a lengthy discussion of virtue, Aristotle dedicates most of Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* not to vice or *enkrateia* (self-control), but to *akrasia* (lack of self-control).[1] What is interesting about the focus on the *akratēs* (person lacking self-control) is that she, unlike the other three agents Aristotle mentions most often, the virtuous, the *enkratēs* (self-controlled person), and the vicious, is defined by her failings rather than what she does always or *hōs epi to polu* (for the most part). In examining Book VII to see what is so special about *akrasia* that it warrants such detailed attention, I have discovered a problem with Aristotle's account, one not discussed in the secondary literature. He does not, by his own lights, have a description of the *akratēs* that is distinct from that of the *enkratēs* who makes a mistake. I will argue that the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* are the same kind of person, they differ only in degree. Certainly, there could be chronically akratic people. However, there is nothing that Aristotle says that makes it the default view. My interpretation fits with what Aristotle says and makes sense of how it is that we heal morally bad character.

At the opening of *NE* VII, Aristotle states that he will make a fresh start and discuss the states of character that ought to be avoided. They are *akrasia*, vice, and beastliness. Their mirrors, *enkrateia*, virtue, and superhuman virtue, are the praiseworthy states of character. The following quote is from where the canonical division is drawn:

[1] I leave *akrasia* and its cognates untranslated throughout. I reject translations such as 'weakness of will.' The best English translation is 'lack of self-control' because, as David Pears puts it, the "literal meaning of the Greek word is 'lack of strength or power', but since the un-negated root is the ordinary word for victory or domination, the implication is that what is lacking is power or control over something else" (*Motivated Irrationality*, 23).

> For the *enkratēs* and the temperate person are both the sort to do nothing against reason because of bodily pleasures, but the *enkratēs* has bad appetites, whereas the temperate person has none. The temperate person is the sort to take no pleasure against reason, but the *enkratēs* is the sort to take pleasure in such things but not to be led by them. Similar too are the *akratēs* and the intemperate person, though they are different, they both pursue bodily sources of pleasure. But the intemperate person also thinks it is right, while the *akratēs* does not (*NE* 1151b35-1152a6).[2]

This can be represented clearly in the following chart:

	Knows what is right	Desires what is right	Does what is right
Virtue	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enkrateia	Yes	No	Yes
Akrasia	Yes	No	No
Vice	No	No	No

For example, the virtuous person knows that grapefruit is good to have for breakfast, desires grapefruit, and eats grapefruit. The *enkratēs* knows that grapefruit is good to have for breakfast, desires cake, and eats grapefruit. The *akratēs* knows that grapefruit is good

[2] ὅ τε γὰρ ἐγκρατὴς οἷος μηδὲν παρὰ τὸν λόγον διὰ τὰς σωματικὰς ἡδονὰς ποιεῖν καὶ ὁ σώφρων, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν ἔχων ὁ δ᾽ οὐκ ἔχων φαύλας ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος οἷος μὴ ἥδεσθαι παρὰ τὸν λόγον, ὁ δ᾽ οἷος ἥδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴ ἄγεσθαι. ὅμοιοι δὲ καὶ ὁ ἀκρατὴς καὶ ὁ ἀκόλαστος, ἕτεροι μὲν ὄντες, ἀμφότεροι δὲ τὰ σωματικὰ ἡδέα διώκουσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν καὶ οἰόμενος δεῖν, ὁ δ᾽ οὐκ οἰόμενος. For all translations to follow, unless otherwise noted, I have consulted the Loeb editions for the Greek text.

to have for breakfast, desires cake, and eats cake. The vicious person mistakenly thinks that cake is good to have for breakfast, desires cake, and eats cake.

Ordinarily, scholars wish to draw a bright line between *enkrateia* and *akrasia,* placing the virtuous and the *enkratēs* in one group and the *akratēs* and the vicious in another group. They do this because they put too much emphasis on the action done and not enough emphasis on the state of the soul doing it. However, I argue that we should draw two bright lines, one between virtue and *enkrateia* and one between *akrasia* and vice. The virtuous and vicious are each their own kind of agent. However, the *enkratēs* and *akratēs* are the same kind, they differ only in degree. So, instead of describing four different *hexeis* (stable states of the soul), I believe Aristotle has only given us enough information to distinguish three.

It is important to understand the people who occupy this in-between state, because that is where most of us fall:

> The person who is prone to be overcome by pleasures is the *akratēs*, the one who overcomes it is the *enkratēs*. The one overcome by pains is soft; and the one who overcomes them is endurant. The *hexis* of most people is in between, though indeed they may incline more towards the worse ones (*NE* 1150a13-16).[3]

[3] τούτων δ᾽ ὁ μὲν περὶ ἡδονὰς ἀκρατὴς ὁ δ᾽ ἐγκρατής, ὁ δὲ περὶ λύπας μαλακὸς ὁ δὲ καρτερικός. μεταξὺ δ᾽ ἡ τῶν πλείστων ἕξις, κἂν εἰ ῥέπουσι μᾶλλον πρὸς τὰς χείρους.

> *Akrasia* and *enkrateia* are about what exceeds the *hexis* of most people; the latter stands fast more than most people are capable of doing, the former less (*NE* 1152a25-27).[4]

A truly virtuous or truly vicious person is hard to come by. But *enkratēis* and *akratēis* are in abundance.

The *akratēs* and the *enkratēs* are the same kind of person because the *akratēs* only makes a very specific mistake in a very specific aspect of her life. Her mistake is that she does not know or knows only in the way the drunk person knows the conclusion to the good practical syllogism. The good practical syllogism is the one that the virtuous person follows. For example:

1. One should have a healthy breakfast to start the day.

2. Grapefruit is a healthy breakfast.

3. I should have grapefruit. [1,2]

The *akratēs* has both premises but either lacks or has in a weakened sense the conclusion.

To know in the way that the drunk person knows is to be stuck at Second Potentiality/First Actuality with respect to that knowledge. There are three stages of potentiality and actuality for Aristotle. For example:

<u>First Potentiality</u>: Not knowing philosophy/mathematics/physics/etc.

[4] ἔστι δ᾽ ἀκρασία καὶ ἐγκράτεια περὶ τὸ ὑπερβάλλον τῆς τῶν πολλῶν ἕξεως· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐμμένει μᾶλλον ὁ δ᾽ ἧττον τῆς τῶν πλείστων δυνάμεως.

Second Potentiality/First Actuality: Knowing philosophy/mathematics/physics/etc.

Second Actuality: Doing philosophy/mathematics/physics/etc.

Before taking a class, we are potential knowers. We have the capacity to receive knowledge. Once we have taken a class, we become actual knowers, in a sense. We have received some knowledge. We are at the highest level of actuality when we actualize our knowledge, e.g., during an exam. The *akratēs* is stuck at the middle level. She knows that cake is not a good breakfast, but cannot actualize this knowledge. It is locked away for a temporary period of time.

The *akratēs* does not make this mistake all of the time. She has trouble with the same things that the intemperate person has trouble with, the tactile pleasures associated with food and sex. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle lists twelve areas of our lives where we need to hit the mean. Pleasure is only one of them. In the other eleven areas, the *akratēs* could be doing just fine. Strictly speaking, *akrasia* and *enkrateia* are only about pleasure. It is for this reason that the *akratēs* is really the same kind of person as the *enkratēs*, they differ only in degree.

Moreover, the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* both lack a psychological unity that the virtuous and vicious people each possess. The virtuous and vicious people each possess an inner harmony where their reason accords with their desire. The *enkratēs* and *akratēs* lack this because they do not desire what they know is good. For example, they both know that cake is a bad breakfast. However, they both desire to have cake for breakfast. The only difference is that the *akratēs* usually gives in to her desire while the *enkratēs* usually manages to control herself and have grapefruit instead.

Now, there is nothing that Aristotle tells us that separates the *enkratēs* making an uncharacteristic mistake from the *akratēs*. Therefore, I propose that the two exist on a spectrum. One can be enkratic most of the time and slip up occasionally, what I will call the intermittent *akratēs*, or one could be chronically akratic. There is little difference between someone who makes a mistake one time out of ten and one who makes a mistake three times out of ten. Recall that the *akratēs* is only making her mistake with respect to the tactile pleasures associated with food and sex. So, she will not necessarily be making mistakes nine times out of ten. There are eleven other areas in which her behavior is undetermined.

I will begin by elucidating *akrasia*. In Chapter One, I argue that the *akratēs* is best understood by looking at the comparison Aristotle makes between her and the drunk. Like the drunk, the *akratēs* is stuck at Second Potentiality/First Actuality with respect to her knowledge of what the right thing to do is, she is insincere in her utterances, she acts voluntarily, and is responsible for getting herself into such a situation. Next, I explain how narrow her mistake is. In Chapter Two, I argue that the only facet of her life that *akrasia* affects is regarding the tactile pleasures associated with food and sex. Next, I give more evidence for my claim that the *enkratēs* and *akratēs* differ only in degree. In Chapter Three, I argue that the virtuous and the vicious are each unified in their own ways, something that the *enkratēs* and *akratēs* lack. Having explained *akrasia* and the narrow mistake of the *akratēs*, I turn to the cure for *akrasia*. In Chapter Four, I argue that curing *akrasia* with medicine and therapy, because it is a physiological condition, will show that the *akratēs* is identical to the *enkratēs* in the time in between akratic episodes. Finally, I defend my approach to use Aristotle's system, rather than another ancient system. In

Chapter Five, I will argue that, while I have presented a specific interpretation of Aristotle, I am not straying from the original text. I compare Aristotle's system to that of Plato and the Stoics to show that Aristotle's is superior.

Chapter One: The *Akratēs* and the Drunk

At *NE* 1147a14 Aristotle compares the *akratēs* (person lacking self-control) to the sleeping, mad, and drunk. Later, he compares the *akratēs* to the student (*NE* 1147a21) and the actor (*NE* 1147a24). I will argue that Aristotle makes these comparisons because each of these classes of people fulfills at least two of the following conditions for being like the *akratēs*, who herself fulfills all four:[5]

ACTUALITY: While in this state, she is halted at First Actuality qua knower.

INSINCERITY: While in this state, she is insincere in her utterances.

RESPONSIBILITY: She is responsible for getting herself into this state.

VOLUNTARY: She acts voluntarily and is blamed for her wrongdoing.

Ranked below in order of how similar they are to the *akratēs* are each of the comparisons that Aristotle makes in *NE* VII.3. I will first explain how the *akratēs* exhibits each of these behaviors. Next, I will explain how far each of the comparisons approximates the behavior of the *akratēs*. As the charts suggests, the drunk is the most like the *akratēs*.

	ACTUALITY	INSINCERITY	RESPONSIBILITY	VOLUNTARY
Mad	Yes	Yes	No	No
Student	No	Yes	No	Yes
Asleep	Yes	Yes	No	No
Actor	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Drunk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Akratēs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

[5] Aristotle does not explicitly state these four conditions. This characterization is my own. However, he does state things that commit him to believing that these four conditions obtain in the *akratēs*.

Understanding that the *akratēs* is most like the drunk will be important for understanding her particular epistemic failing, where she is said to know in the way that the drunk person knows, and why, ultimately, she is the same kind of person as the *enkratēs* (self-controlled person). Just as the drunk has her moments of sobriety, the *akratēs* has her moments of *enkrateia* (self-control), which can be what she is like most of the time.

I. The Four Conditions

It will be useful in discovering what the *akratēs* is like in her characteristic state to see how she fulfills the four conditions I have outlined above. ACTUALITY examines what the *akratēs* knows to be true and whether she can actualize that knowledge. INSINCERITY examines whether her utterances can be taken seriously. RESPONSIBILITY examines her previous actions that have led up to her current ones. Finally, VOLUNTARY examines whether she can be blamed for her current actions. Seeing how she fulfills these four conditions will make clear what Aristotle says about her. At times, what he says can be rather opaque. The comparisons he makes of the *akratēs* to others are not very helpful in isolation. My aim here is to make them more useful by giving the big picture of which I argue they are a small part.

Actuality

ACTUALITY refers to someone being halted at Second Potentiality/First Actuality qua knower. Aristotle posits three levels of potentiality/actuality that one can operate at with respect to a given capacity. For example:

First Potentiality: not knowing philosophy/mathematics/physics/etc.

Second Potentiality/First Actuality: knowing philosophy/mathematics/physics/etc.

Second Actuality: doing philosophy/mathematics/physics/etc.

We operate at First Potentiality when we have not yet learned a science. Babies and young children operate at First Potentiality with respect to most things. Once we have mastered enough of a subject to be said to know the science, then we are operating at Second Potentiality/First Actuality. This is the level that we most often operate at with respect to knowledge. When we actively engage in work on the given subject, then we are operating at Second Actuality.

To be halted at Second Potentiality/First Actuality qua knower is to know a given fact but be unable to actualize this knowledge and thereby act upon it. For example, I know that the pattern of a coral snake is red and black bands separated by smaller yellow bands. It would be good to exercise this knowledge when I am in the forest and see a snake that is red, black, and yellow. However, I might not do so, which means that I will not retreat from the snake but go towards it. Aristotle thinks it would be strange (*deinon*) for someone to be exercising knowledge of what the right thing to do is and yet act contrary to that knowledge (*NE* 1146b36). So, such behavior only makes sense if I am not attending to or acting on my knowledge.

The *akratēs* fulfills ACTUALITY because she does not act on her knowledge. While in her characteristic state, she has the relevant knowledge of what the right thing is to do in her given situation, so she is not merely a potential knower, but cannot exercise this knowledge because she is temporarily unable to move from First to Second Actuality. Basically, she has knowledge of what the right thing to do is but *cannot* act on it.

> And the *akratēs* knows that [his actions] are bad, but acts on account of his emotions (*NE* 1145b11-13).[6]

For example, the *akratēs* knows that adultery is wrong, but, overcome by her desire, she is unable to actualize this piece of knowledge and commits adultery. By definition, the *akratēs* knows that adultery is wrong, because she knows the universal premise of the good practical syllogism.

> Universal Premise: No one ought to commit adultery.
>
> Particular Premise: Having a tryst with this person would constitute adultery.
>
> Conclusion: So, I ought not to have a tryst with this person.

However, although she knows that she ought not to engage in a tryst with the person in question, she does so anyway. This is the puzzle of the *akratēs*: how can she knowingly do wrong?

I argue that the *akratēs* suffers from a temporary, physiological condition that prevents her from moving from First to Second Actuality qua knower. I am not alone in this. According to Hendrik Lorenz, the *akratēs* suffers from a condition that renders her "temporarily unable to employ whatever understanding she may have."[7] Michael Pakaluk refers to the *akratēs* as being "affected with a 'mind-altering' bodily condition."[8] David Bostock states that "the person is in such a *physical* state that, while in that state, they *cannot* attend to the knowledge they may be yet said to have."[9] Martin Pickavé and Jennifer Whiting characterize the *akratēs* as "vulnerable to bodily disturbances… [making

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[6] καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀκρατὴς εἰδὼς ὅτι φαῦλα πράττειν διὰ πάθος.
[7] Hendrik, Lorenz, "Aristotle's Analysis of Akratic Action," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Ronald Polansky (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 256.
[8] Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics: *An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 242.
[9] David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 127.

her] temporarily unable to actualize her knowledge in situations in which its use is called for."[10]

The *akratēs* is like someone whose foot is asleep or whose mouth has been numbed by the dentist. She has knowledge but is temporarily unable to exercise that knowledge due to a physiological condition. If the dentist has numbed my upper lip, then I cannot recite the tongue twister that I normally can. If my foot is asleep from sitting on it, then I cannot perform the dance routine I have memorized. I am halted at Second Potentiality/First Actuality because I am neither at First Potentiality nor Second Actuality. Being at the former level would mean that I do not know the tongue twister or dance routine. Being at the latter would mean that I am saying the tongue twister or performing the dance routine. Because I know the tongue twister or dance routine yet *cannot* actualize my knowledge, I am halted at Second Potentiality/First Actuality.

The *akratēs* is like this too because she is unable to exercise her knowledge of the universal premise of the good practical syllogism. If she knows that adultery is wrong and that engaging in a tryst with the person before her would amount to adultery, then her committing adultery can only be explained by the fact that she did not exercise her knowledge in this situation. Her desire kept her from moving to Second Actuality. Yet, she has the requisite knowledge that someone at First Potentiality does not. So, she is halted at Second Potentiality/First Actuality, which means that she fulfills ACTUALITY.

Ronald D. Milo would argue that the *akratēs* does not herself fulfill ACTUALITY, because he believes that there is another level of potentiality at which the *akratēs*

[10] Pickavé, Martin and Jennifer Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* 7.3 on Akratic Ignorance," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* XXXIV (Summer 2008): 356.

operates. Milo argues that “between the potentiality of the student of the science and the potentiality of the man who has or possesses the knowledge of the science lies another type of potentiality. This occurs in the case of the man who possesses knowledge of a science but who is asleep, mad, or drunk.”[11] Here, the student of science is operating at First Potentiality, because he is a potential knower of the science, but has not learned anything, let alone mastered the science. The man who possesses knowledge of the science is operating at Second Potentiality/First Actuality, when he is not attending to or acting upon his knowledge. When appropriate, he can move to Second Actuality and exercise his knowledge. This new level of potentiality is one where the man possesses knowledge of the science but is *unable* to move to second actuality because he is asleep, mad, or dunk.

What exactly is going on at this new level of potentiality? Milo draws a parallel between a more experienced student of geometry and the *akratēs* to explain. This student knows that all triangles have interior angles equal to two right angles but does not recognize the figure before her as a triangle. So, she does not know that its interior angles equal two right angles. Similarly, the *akratēs* knows that dry food is good for her but doesn’t recognize the food before her as dry. As such, she cannot conclude that the food before her is good for her.[12] Both the student of geometry and the *akratēs* know the universal premises of the relevant syllogisms. On Milo’s view, what they are lacking is the particular premise, and it is this gap in their knowledge that places them between First and Second Potentiality.

[11] Ronald D. Milo, *Aristotle on Practical Knowledge and Weakness of Will*, (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966), 93.
[12] Milo, *Aristotle on Practical Knowledge*, 85.

The student of geometry here is not a potential knower in the sense that we are all potential knowers in virtue of having the capacity to learn things. Otherwise, she would be operating merely at First Potentiality. Since she has begun learning geometry, she is operating at Milo's proposed Potentiality 1.5.[13] She might know plenty of geometry and be in a position to exercise her knowledge. But, as described, she does not know basic things about the triangle before her. As such, she cannot be said to be operating at the same level as someone who has mastered geometry, which would be either Second Potentiality/First Actuality or Second Actuality. She is akin to the *akratēs*, on Milo's view, because the *akratēs* possesses knowledge, so cannot be operating at First Potentiality, yet cannot draw the proper conclusion, and therefore cannot be operating at any other level of actuality either.

Even if Milo's Potentiality 1.5 solved the puzzle about how the *akratēs* can be said to know yet act against her knowledge, it does so only on pain of inconsistency with the rest of Aristotle's writings. Nowhere does Aristotle invoke anything like a third sort of potentiality that Milo advocates. We move from First Potentiality to Second Potentiality/First Actuality and on to Second Actuality in every category. The schema is the same for house-building and philosophizing as it is for knowledge. While it is true that knowledge and perception are often special cases when discussed by Aristotle, he is not completely abandoning the way he has spoken of actuality and potentiality when he claims that the *akratēs* has knowledge in the same way that the drunk, mad, and asleep do. Instead, he is depicting a specific way of operating at the level of Second Potentiality/First Actuality. When Aristotle makes claims about perception and knowledge

[13] This characterization of Milo's proposed third potentiality as 'Potentiality 1.5' is my own.

being exceptions it is not because new levels of potentiality or actuality are introduced. Instead, it is because we skip over some of the levels. For example, we are all potential knowers with respect things we do not yet know, even as babies, at the level of First Potentiality, as we possess the capacity to learn a given science yet are not yet utilizing it. However, with perception we all operate, barring a physical defect, at either Second Potentiality/First Actuality or Second Actuality. As we do not choose to activate our senses, we do not operate at the level of First Potentiality.[14] We are always receiving perceptible forms, even if we are not actively looking to do so. So, Aristotle does make exceptions when discussing potentiality and actuality, but he does not do so by introducing new levels, quite the opposite in fact.

There are a number of reasons that someone could be operating at Second Potentiality/First Actuality qua knower. One case, as I have argued, is the *akratēs*. As Aristotle notes, other cases are when someone is asleep, mad, or drunk. However, someone could also be currently operating at Second Actuality with respect to a different piece of knowledge. Or, they could be fully capable of moving to Second Actuality yet realize that the situation is not appropriate. My general point is that there are many ways of operating at Second Potentiality/First Actuality and *akrasia* can be seen as one of these without needing to amend Aristotle's entire schema of potentiality/actuality.

Again, the *akratēs* represents a special way of having and not exercising knowledge. In the more general case of someone having and not exercising knowledge,

[14] I suppose that one could be operating at First Potentiality with respect to perception if she were in a sensory deprivation tank or some similar situation. My point is not that Aristotle is correct in how he applies the potentiality/actuality distinction in these special cases, only that what he does is actually very different from what Milo proposes.

the person is usually exercising some other piece of knowledge at that time. For example, a dancer can know a routine but not activate that knowledge by performing the routine simply because she is performing a different dance routine. She is able, at any time, to stop and perform the other routine. What is also important about the condition of the *akratēs* is that it is the appropriate time to be exercising said knowledge, yet she cannot. Most of us operate at Second Potentiality/First Actuality, qua knowers, most of the time because we are usually not attending to and using everything that we know. Yet, if the situation were appropriate, we could call upon a given piece of knowledge and exercise it. During a eulogy is not the right time to perform a dance routine, but on stage during a dance competition is. So, operating at Second Potentiality/First Actuality can be because it is not the appropriate time to move to Second Actuality or because one is unable to move to Second Actuality.

It is inconsistent to choose one specific way of operating at Second Potentiality/First Actuality and claim that it is actually a sort of Potentiality 1.5 yet allow that there are many other ways to operate at Second Potentiality/First Actuality. Either there are many ways of operating at Second Potentiality/First Actuality or there are many more than the three forms of potentiality that Milo recognizes. Milo's confusion regarding his Potentiality 1.5 leads him to conclude that "Aristotle is in error when he claims that moral weakness necessarily involves some kind of ignorance,"[15] which represents a "serious defect in his account of the relationship between practical knowledge and action."[16] Milo is mistaken about this. The *akratēs* does suffer from an epistemic

[15] Milo, *Aristotle on Practical Knowledge*, 113.
[16] Milo, *Aristotle on Practical Knowledge*, 113.

deficiency where she temporarily knows only in one sense yet not in the full sense of the word. Milo's proposal of how to understand the *akratēs* does not save Aristotle from his alleged mistake but would put *NE* VII.3 in tension with every other work in which Aristotle employs his actuality/potentiality distinction. Since Milo is not convincing, the *akratēs* can still be said to fulfill ACTUALITY.

Insincerity

INSINCERITY refers to a speaker's utterances not deserving to be taken seriously.[17] Because an insincere speaker's words are not a sign of knowledge, hearers discount the utterances as hollow. The *akratēs* fulfills INSINCERITY because when she utters knowledge claims about herself, they are clearly deficient in some way.

> Evidence for the *akratēs* fulfilling INSINCERITY can be found twice in *NE* VII:
>
> To say the words that come from knowledge is no sign [of having it]. For those in the aforementioned states say the demonstrations and words of Empedocles (*NE* 1147a19-22).[18]
>
> Since the final proposition is an opinion about the perceptible, and has power over action, this is what [the *akratēs*] does not have when he is being affected. Or the way he has it is not knowledge of it, but, saying the words (*NE* 1147b9-11).[19]

The *akratēis* utter many things about what they "know". The point about the utterances of the *akratēs* "concerns only what we can *infer* from the utterances of those *akrateis* who

[17] I mean this to be a stipulative definition of insincerity. No other one-word term seems to fit.
[18] τὸ δὲ λέγειν τοὺς λόγους τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιστήμης οὐδὲν σημεῖον· καὶ γὰρ οἱ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσι τούτοις ὄντες ἀποδείξεις καὶ ἔπη λέγουσιν Ἐμπεδοκλέους.
[19] ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ἡ τελευταία πρότασις δόξα τε αἰσθητοῦ καὶ κυρία τῶν πράξεων, ταύτην <δὲ> ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐν τῷ πάθει ὤν, ἢ οὕτως ἔχει ὡς οὐκ ἦν τὸ ἔχειν ἐπίστασθαι ἀλλὰ λέγειν.

'utter the formulae that stem from knowledge.'"[20] They may well have knowledge, but since they are not exercising it, we cannot infer that they do.

We know not to take the akratic dieter at his word when he says he knows that he should not taste it, for he tastes it straightaway. J.O. Urmson writes, "perhaps the overweight man, as he takes the éclair and bites into it, will say, 'I should not be eating this'; but, if he does, he will not fully realize the import of what he says."[21] He might know full well that éclairs are best in moderation and not to be eaten by those trying to lose weight. However, his behavior contradicts what he says. So, we question whether or not he really does know. Some *akratēs* are so impulsive, that they do not even take the time to deliberate (*NE* 1150b25-28). These impetuous *akratēis* will not even know the conclusion to the good practical syllogism. So, we are right to question their knowledge claims. Therefore, both kind of *akratēis* fulfill INSINCERITY.

Responsibility

RESPONSIBILITY refers to an agent's current actions being the result of something she did to herself. For example, the prankster gets herself into trouble but someone who is drugged against her will does not. The *akratēs* is responsible for her actions because she has habituated herself to act in this way.

Aristotle opens *NE* Book II with a discussion of how the virtues of character come about: neither by nature nor against it. The virtues not arising by nature means that we are not born with the virtues, only with the ability to *become* virtuous. Unfortunately, this

[20] Pickavé and Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 on Akratic Ignorance," 344-345.
[21] J.O. Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 94.

means that we are born with the ability to become less than virtuous as well. So, how is character acquired? By habituation. Habituation does not mean to form a habit by mindlessly engaging in a rote process. This issue is widely agreed upon by readers of Aristotle,[22] but Jennifer Welchman phrases it best.

> While habits are tendencies to repeat the same *act* in the circumstances that trigger the habit, our dispositions are tendencies to respond with the same *concerns* or interests in circumstances that provide that disposition an outlet. So, for example, if I am a generous person, coming upon people in need doesn't trigger performance of the same action over and over again. Rather, if I am a generous person recognizing people in need prompts my generous nature to look for appropriate outlets for action, although which particular act I will be disposed to perform may never be the same twice.[23]

This training to be virtuous takes the same shape as training to develop a *technē* (*NE* 1103b1-2). An artist need not ever play the same song more than once, or paint the same scene more than once, or sing the same song more than once in order to have habituated herself to her current behavior. She need only respond to similar stimuli in the same way.

Habituation is not only how good character is formed, but bad as well. For Aristotle, bad actions beget bad character. The bad person has herself to blame.[24] It is not that we are born disposed to become lazy or unjust. Instead, having repeatedly acted lazily or

[22] See Annas (2003).
[23] Jennifer Welchman, *The Practice of Virtue: Classical and Contemporary Readings in Virtue Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), xx.
[24] Of course, her parents, caregivers, and role models are partly to blame as well. Our character is, up to a certain point, up to us.

unjustly we begin to form a disposition to act that way on most occasions. The *akratēs* is like this.

> But they themselves are responsible for becoming like this by living carelessly, just as they are responsible for being unjust by being undisciplined, doing wrong by spending time drinking. For each activity produces the corresponding character (*NE* 1114a5-8).[25]

She was not born akratic. Instead, she has repeatedly engaged in akratic action so often that it has become second nature to her.

Voluntary

VOLUNTARY refers to an agent's action being under her control. If an action is voluntary, then we can be praised or blamed for it. However, involuntary actions receive neither praise nor blame because we are not the originator of them.

According to Aristotle, an action is involuntary only if it is done due to force or ignorance (*NE* 1110a1).[26] Being forced does not mean forced in the way Sophie was forced to make a choice regarding which one of her children would live. Instead, Aristotle "is referring to actual physical force exerted on the person in question, whether it be applied by men or nature, not such things as pressure of circumstances."[27] Indeed, Aristotle states several times in *NE* III.1 that an agent who is forced contributes nothing. For example, if the car behind me slams into me so hard that I hit the car in front of me,

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[25] ἀλλὰ τοῦ τοιούτους γενέσθαι αὐτοὶ αἴτιοι, ζῶντες ἀνειμένως, καὶ τοῦ5 ἀδίκους ἢ ἀκολάστους εἶναι, οἱ μὲν κακουργοῦντες, οἱ δὲ ἐν πότοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις διάγοντες· αἱ γὰρ περὶ ἕκαστα ἐνέργειαι τοιούτους ποιοῦσιν.
[26] δοκεῖ δὴ ἀκούσια εἶναι τὰ βίᾳ ἢ δι᾽ ἄγνοιαν γινόμενα.
[27] Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics,* 43.

then I have not acted voluntarily. Likewise, if a tornado makes my car crash into a house. In both these circumstances something beyond my control has forced me to act contrary to how I wish to act. Therefore, I have not acted voluntarily and I am not blameworthy.

The ignorance which excuses us is of a very specific kind. No one is allowed to be ignorant of universal moral laws. The only ignorance that is excusable is ignorance of particulars (*NE* 1111a2).[28] 'This glass contains water' and 'This glass contains poison' are examples of particular facts. 'Poisoning another person is wrong' is an example of a universal fact, our ignorance of which is not excused. So, if I give someone a glass with poison in it because I want them to die, then I have acted voluntarily. However, if I give them a glass with poison in it because I believe it to be filled with water, and there is no reason for me to think otherwise, then I have not acted voluntarily. In the former case I am blameworthy but not in the latter.

The *akratēs* fulfills VOLUNTARY because she acts willingly. While in her characteristic state, she is not forced to behave in this way and she does not do so based on ignorance of particulars. That the *akratēs* is not forced is clear. No outside force or other agent causes her to act as she does. Her actions are her own doing. It is less clear that the *akratēs* is not ignorant of particulars. To be ignorant of particulars would be to be ignorant of the particular premise of the good practical syllogism. However, this is not the case. She knows full well the particular premise. What she has trouble with is the conclusion. As this matter is not settled in the secondary literature, it will take some arguing.

[28] ὁ γὰρ τούτων τι ἀγνοῶν ἀκουσίως πράττει.

Aristotle says that what the *akratēs* does not know or knows only in a weakened sense is the final proposition (*teleutaia protasis*) of the good practical syllogism.

> Since the final proposition is an opinion about the perceptible, and has power over action, this is what [the *akratēs*] does not have when he is being affected. Or the way he has it is not knowledge of it, but, saying the words (*NE* 1147b9-12).[29]

By definition, the *akratēs* knows the universal premise of the good practical syllogism. If she did not, then she would be the vicious agent (*NE* 1144a34, *NE* 1151a16). So, the only two propositions left are the particular premise and the conclusion. I argue that the *akratēs* is not ignorant of particulars, because she has that perceptual knowledge. What she lacks is the prohibition of the akratic action.

On one side of the secondary literature are those like Price and Bostock who hold that, because of how Aristotle uses *protasis* elsewhere, he must mean the particular premise. In contrast, those like Charles and Lorenz hold that we can only make sense of Aristotle's claims here if he is referring to the conclusion.[30] While both camps have compelling evidence, I must side with those who hold that Aristotle is talking about the conclusion of the good practical syllogism.

According to Alfred. R. Mele, the traditional interpretation of the epistemic failing of the *akratēs* that Aristotle describes at *NE* 1147b10-11 is that such an agent fails to realize that what is expressed by the particular premise is the case and is "another step removed from occurrent or conscious knowledge—his knowledge is like the geometrical

[29] ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ τελευταία πρότασις δόξα τε αἰσθητοῦ καὶ κυρία τῶν πράξεων, ταύτην <δὲ> ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐν τῷ πάθει ὤν, ἢ οὕτως ἔχει ὡς οὐκ ἦν τὸ ἔχειν ἐπίστασθαι ἀλλὰ λέγειν.

[30] There is a sort of third response in the literature that I reject, that of Anthony Kenny in *Aristotle's Theory of the Will*. There, he states that the *teleutaia protasis* differs from case to case (164).

knowledge of the sleeping geometer."[31] On this account, the agent knows that what lies before her is a doughnut, but fails to exercise this knowledge. Mele rejects this interpretation, yet still holds that the epistemic deficiency of the *akratēs* is with respect to the particular premise of the practical syllogism. Mele argues that the epistemic deficiency of the *akratēs* is a failure to focus her attention on the particular premise and to understand how it connects to the universal premise.[32] On Mele's account, it is not that the *akratēs* is simply failing to attend to the fact that what lies before her is a doughnut, but that she is not paying *enough* attention to this fact and she fails to realize that eating it will be contrary to her other ends. This sort of interpretation seems to be widespread, but is there evidence for such a reading?

A.W. Price also holds that the *akratēs* lacks the particular premise of the practical syllogism. More specifically, he argues that she lacks the last clause of the particular premise, e.g. 'This is an éclair.'[33] However, Price looks to Aristotle's other writings for clues as to how to interpret *teleutaia protasis*. He notes that *protasis* can indeed sometimes mean 'proposition', which supports the opposing argument that Aristotle is referring to the conclusion of the practical syllogism. However, Price believes that a *protasis* "remain[s] apt to be premised rather than inferred,"[34] citing that there is no precedent for taking it to mean 'conclusion.' As his focus is not on this issue, he dedicates only a paragraph to this discussion. He does have an interesting footnote though. He states that, in *Prior Analytics* I.24, Aristotle uses *protasis* in contrast to *sumperasma*, with

[31] Alfred R. Mele, "Aristotle on Akrasia, Eudaimonia, and the Psychology of Action" in *Aristotle's* Ethics: *Critical Essays*, ed. Nancy Sherman (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 198.
[32] Mele, "Aristotle on Akrasia, Eudaimonia, and the Psychology of Action", 198.
[33] A.W. Price, "Acrasia and Self-control," in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, ed. Richard Kraut (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 242.
[34] Price, "Acrasia and Self-control," 242.

the former meaning ‘premise’ and the latter meaning ‘conclusion’.[35] Since Aristotle uses *protasis* and not *sumperasma* at *NE* 1147b10-11, Price believes that Aristotle cannot be referring to the conclusion of the practical syllogism.

On its own, however, Price’s observation is not enough evidence to support a reading of *protasis* at *NE* 1147b10-11 as ‘premise.’ The passage Price cites from *Prior Analytics* is about the ratio of premises to conclusions, of things required to infer something and things inferred.

> If then syllogisms are taken with respect to their main *protaseis*, every syllogism will consist of an even number of *protaseis* and an odd number of terms (for the terms exceed the *protaseis* by one), and the conclusions will be half the number of *protaseis* (*Prior Analytics* 42b1-4).[36]

Aristotle is noting how many terms, premises, and conclusions a syllogism contains. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that he uses two very different terms here to distinguish premises from conclusions. If I am differentiating between two gray shirts, then I might consider one charcoal and the other heather. However, if I am trying to delineate them from my black shirts, then I might refer to them both as gray. Doing so would make sense given my intentions and would not be inconsistent. Similarly, Aristotle can refer to the premises and conclusions in one way when he needs to distinguish between the two and in another when he does not. Premises and conclusions are all propositions, but that

[35] Price, “Acrasia and Self-control,” 251n25.
[36] Κατὰ μὲν οὖν τὰς κυρίας προτάσεις λαμβανομένων τῶν συλλογισμῶν, ἅπας ἔσται συλλογισμὸς ἐκ προτάσεων μὲν ἀρτίων ἐξ ὅρων δὲ περιττῶν· ἑνὶ γὰρ πλείους οἱ ὅροι τῶν προτάσεων.

is not what is important in this passage. What is important is that they have very different roles in the practical syllogism.

Aristotle isn't differentiating the propositions as having different roles in *NE* VII.3. He is simply referring to the one that the *akratēs* lacks or has knowledge of only in this weakened sense. He does not need to make differentiations as to what is premised and what is inferred as he does when he is explaining the practical syllogism. Moreover, the passage from *NE* VII.3 does not use merely *protasis*, but *teleutaia protasis*, the *final* proposition. The passage from *Prior Analytics* does not include *teleutaia*, which makes a difference. This is how Aristotle differentiates the conclusion from the premises in *NE* VII.3, by referring to it as the *final* proposition. If it could be shown that *teleutaia protasis* refers elsewhere to a premise, then this would be stronger evidence for such a reading. However, this is not what we find in *Prior Analytics.* As it stands, Price's evidence is not very persuasive.

David Bostock also looks to what Aristotle says elsewhere to support the reading of *teleutaia protasis* as the particular premise of the practical syllogism. Like Price, he notes that Aristotle does use *protasis* to mean 'proposition', specifically throughout *Topics*.[37] However, he adds that "at *Prior Analytics* 42a32 the word simply *must* mean 'premiss'."[38]

> This being evident, it is clear that a syllogism proceeds from two *protaseis* and not from more than two for the three terms make two *protaseis* unless a new *protasis*

[37] Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 132n24.
[38] Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 132n24.

> is assumed, as was said at the beginning, to complete the syllogisms (*Prior Analytics* 42a33-36).[39]

Here, Aristotle does indeed use *protasis* to mean 'premise,' as he is using *sumperasma* for 'conclusion' in the very next sentence.

> It is clear that any syllogistic argument the *protaseis* by which the legitimate *sumperasma* is reached (I say 'legitimate' because some of the earlier conclusions are necessarily *protaseis*) are not even in number, then it has not been proven syllogistically or it has set forth too many [*protaseis*] to prove the thesis (*Prior Analytics* 42a36-42b).[40]

Finally, Bostock does not think that *protasis* can refer to a conclusion because it literally means "what is held out *in front.*"[41] This reasoning mimics what Price said about there being no reason to take *protasis* to mean something that is inferred.

Like Price, Bostock points to a small amount of evidence in a different work of Aristotle's to support his reading. Unfortunately, a few passages in which the goals of the discussion are completely different from those of the passage in *NE* VII.3 under scrutiny are not sufficient to argue for such a reading. Yes, when Aristotle uses *protasis* in contrast to *sumperasma* he is using it to mean 'premise.' However, Aristotle does not use *sumperasma* in *NE* 1147b10-11. So, there is no reason to compare these uses of

[39] Τούτου δ' ὄντος φανεροῦ, δῆλον ὡς καὶ ἐκ δύο προτάσεων καὶ οὐ πλειόνων (οἱ γὰρ τρεῖς ὅροι δύο προτάσεις), εἰ μὴ προσλαμβάνοιτο, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐλέχθη, πρὸς τὴν τελείωσιν τῶν συλλογισμῶν.
[40] φανερὸν οὖν ὡς ἐν ᾧ λόγῳ συλλογιστικῷ μὴ ἄρτιαί εἰσιν αἱ προτάσεις δι' ὧν γίγνεται τὸ σημπέρασμα τὸ κύριον (ἔνια γὰρ τῶν ἄνωθεν συμπερασμάτων ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι προτάσεις), οὗτος ὁ λόγος ἢ οὐ συλλελόγισται ἢ πλείω τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἠρώτηκε πρὸς τὴν θέσιν.
[41] Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 132.

protasis. Again, it is perfectly consistent to refer to two things by the same name when comparing them and to use two different names when contrasting them. In the passages from *Prior Analytics* cited by Price and Bostock, Aristotle is contrasting two sorts of propositions. However, in *NE* 1147b10-11, he is merely picking out one of the three propositions in question.

So far, I have argued that the evidence that Price and Bostock present in support of their reading is insufficient. Aristotle does use *protasis* as 'premise' in other works. However, his goals are different in those passages than in *NE* VII.3. I will now look to evidence that Charles and Lorenz present in favor of the reading I support.

David Charles argues that, while there are many passages where *protasis* can be understood as 'premise', there is no passage where it cannot be read as 'proposition.' Indeed, sometimes it seems as though Aristotle's use of *protasis* trades on the ambiguity of whether it means 'proposition' or 'premise.'[42] When Aristotle uses *protasis*, sometimes he is referring to propositions in general and sometimes to specific propositions used to infer something else, i.e., premises. Charles concludes that "no change of meaning is required to account for the fact that this term sometimes refers to premises, because there are contextual indicators in each case to show when this is what is occurring."[43] When Aristotle is discussing syllogisms, then he is using *protasis* to refer to a premise. *Prior Analytics* 42a32 and 42b1-4, which Price and Bostock cite as evidence for their favored interpretation, are two such passages.

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[42] In *Rhetoric* 1377b, Aristotle states that a *protasis* is the subject and source of an enthymeme. Here, it seems as though we should want to translate protasis as both 'proposition' and 'premise', because either term properly picks out what it is that enthymemes are comprised of and give rise to. Cf. 1378a.
[43] David Charles, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3: Varieties of *akrasia,*" in *Aristotle*: Nicomachean Ethics, *Book VII Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. Carlo Natali (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69.

Charles draws attention to passages which give the general meaning of *protasis*, such as the following.[44]

> A *protasis*, then, is a statement affirming or denying something of something (*Prior Analytics* 24a16).[45]

> The *protasis* is the one part of a contradiction, one thing said of one (*Prior Analytics* 72a10).[46]

Here, it is obvious that *protasis* must be understood as 'proposition.' Yet, there are also passages where Aristotle is speaking specifically about syllogisms.[47]

> If then the universal statement is opposed to the particular, we have stated when a syllogism will be possible and when not; but if the *protaseis* are similar in form, I mean both negative or both affirmative, a syllogism will not be possible at all (*Prior Analytics* 27b9-11).[48]

Here, Charles does agree that *protasis* can be understood as 'premise.' However, as a premise is just a special sort of proposition, he argues that there is nothing inconsistent about reading *protasis* as 'premise,' when appropriate, and, at other times, reading it as 'proposition.' Again, I can refer to my shirt using either 'charcoal' or 'gray,' because 'charcoal' simply means, in this context, a specific shade of gray. Since he holds that

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[44] According to Charles, see also *Prior Analytics* 24a30, 24b16, 25a1-25b25, and *Int*. 20b22-20b24 (67).
[45] Πρότασις μὲν οὖν ἐστι λόγος καταφατικὸς ἢ ἀποφατικὸς τινὸς κατά τινος.
[46] πρότασις δ' ἐστὶν ἀποφάνσεως τὸ ἕτερον μόριον.
[47] According to Charles, see also *Prior Analytics* 27b35, 32a6, 32a17, 32b35, 33a15, 32b25, and 44b1 (68).
[48] Ὅταν μὲν οὖν ἀντικείμενον ᾖ τὸ καθόλου τῷ κατὰ μέρος, εἴρηται πότ' ἔσται καὶ πότ' οὐκ ἔσται συλλογισμός· ὅταν δὲ ὁμοιοσχήμονες ὦσιν αἱ προτάσεις, οἷον ἀμφότεραι στερητικαὶ ἢ καταφατικαί, οὐδαμῶς ἔσται συλλογισμός.

protasis means, at its core, 'proposition,' Charles also holds that the *teleutaia protasis* referred to at *NE* 1147b10-11 is the conclusion of the practical syllogism.[49]

Hendrik Lorenz, citing Charles's appendix on *protasis* as evidence, begins his argument with the assertion that Aristotle uses *protasis* to mean 'proposition.' He then presents several good reasons for taking *teleutaia protasis* to refer to the conclusion of the practical syllogism; I will mention two.[50] First, the conclusion is the most recently mentioned proposition. As *teleutaia* means final or last, it makes sense for Aristotle to be referring not only to the final proposition of the practical syllogism, but to the most recently mentioned proposition in the discussion, the conclusion. Second, the last proposition controls action. Lorenz concludes that, not only does it simply make sense that the conclusion controls the action, but at *NE* 1147a25-31 we are more or less told how it does. "That some particular object should be avoided is a determinate, situation-specific prescription, and as long as such a prescription is an item of occurrent, active understanding ("contemplation"), Aristotle thinks, the person in question will necessarily act on it, unless she is externally prevented from doing so."[51] Since only an external impediment could prevent a reasoner from acting upon a conclusion she has drawn, the conclusion can certainly be said to control action. Lorenz contends, and I agree, that it is unclear how a perceptual observation of the form 'This is an x' could even be said to control action. However, it is easy to see how something of the form 'I should not eat x' does. The former can only control action in the sense that, when combined with a universal premise, it can issue an action that should be undertaken. But the conclusion is

[49] Charles, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3: Varieties of *akrasia,*" 41.
[50] Lorenz, "Aristotle's Analysis of Akratic Action," 256-7.
[51] Lorenz, "Aristotle's Analysis of Akratic Action," 257.

the statement of that very action. As such, it makes more sense for the proposition that controls action to be the conclusion.

Typical akratic action is usually described as someone saying ‘I know that I should not do x’ while doing x or saying ‘I know that I should do x’ while refraining from doing x. This sort of language is in keeping with how the conclusion of the practical syllogism is worded, not the particular premise. The conclusion is always worded as a command to do or not to do a specific thing. Consider the following practical syllogism.

> Universal Premise: Humans should not eat ten doughnuts in a sitting.
>
> Particular Premise: I am a human and this would be my tenth doughnut in a row.
>
> Conclusion: I should not eat this doughnut.

Here, the conclusion is a command to refrain from eating this doughnut, for the time being. The particular premise is merely a perceptual observation. It states that what lies before me is a doughnut which, if eaten, would be my tenth in a row. Since the *akratēs* is defined by her epistemic failing, what she claims to know while acting qua *akratēs* is important. If the *akratēs* claims to know that she should not eat the doughnut, and then eats it anyway, then what she does not fully know is the conclusion of the practical syllogism.

If the *teleutaia protasis* to which Aristotle is referring is the particular premise, then the akratic should say something like ‘I do not know that this is a doughnut’ or ‘I do not know how many doughnuts I have eaten’ when she acts. However, this is not the case. Instead, she says something more like ‘I know I should not eat this’ or ‘Eating this would be bad’, because she knows that what lies before her is a doughnut. Aristotle does state that the *teleutaia protasis* “is an opinion about the perceptible” (*NE* 1147b10), which might

seem to support the view that he is referring to the particular premise. However, the conclusion *is* about something perceptible, because it is forbidding or endorsing a specific thing, not something universal. The universal premise is the only part of the practical syllogism that is not about a something perceptible, being, in this case, about humans and doughnuts in general. The conclusion of the given practical syllogism is about a specific person and a specific doughnut, both objects of perception.

I am not alone in holding that looking to what the akratic says while acting supports a reading where Aristotle uses *teleutaia protasis* to refer to the conclusion of the practical syllogism. As Urmson points out, "Aristotle explicitly says that weakness of will does not destroy one's understanding of the universal premiss; so it will not destroy the knowledge that sweet things are bad for the health. Nor, clearly, can it destroy the knowledge that chocolate éclairs are sweet and that this is an éclair, for both of these facts are part of the considerations that give the weak-willed man his appetite to taste."[52] If the akratic dieter fails to grasp that éclairs are sweet and that this is an éclair, then how can he be said to have a desire for the éclair? He cannot. And yet he *must* have a desire for the éclair, as, in virtue of being the *akratēs*, he must have a desire that drives him towards what his reason is telling him to avoid. Again, without this feature, the agent would be vicious rather than akratic. The *akratēs* having full knowledge of the particular premise makes sense given what she says while in her characteristic state. Moreover, it is also the only way to make sense of the internal struggle, which is very real, that Aristotle describes the *akratēs* as suffering.

[52] Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 94.

The *akratēs* is blamed for her wrong actions because she is neither being forced nor doing so because of ignorance of a particular. She knows that overindulgence is wrong, that she has already eaten too many doughnuts, and that having another would be wrong, yet she eats it anyway. She is not ignorant of the fact that before her is yet another doughnut. If she were ignorant of such a fact then her behavior would be excused, but it is not. It might be pitied, but it is not excused. So, she fulfills VOLUNTARY.

II. The Five Comparisons

Now that it is clear how the *akratēs* fulfills the four conditions, I will examine how close the comparisons that Aristotle makes in *NE* VII.3 come to approximating her characteristic state. He compares the *akratēs* to the mad, the student, the sleeping, the actor, and the drunk. Again, in isolation, these comparisons are not very helpful. However, looking at them together to see the big picture is. The first three are rather weak comparisons, fulfilling only two of the four conditions that the *akratēs* fulfills. The actor fulfills three of the four conditions and the drunk fulfills all four. Since the drunk is the most like the *akratēs*, understanding the drunk will be most helpful in better understanding the *akratēs.* Since drunkenness can be either a *diathesis* (bodily condition) or *hexis* (stable state of the soul), *akrasia* can be either as well.

First, however, a word on comparisons that are absent in *NE* VII. Martin Pickavé and Jennifer Whiting note that Aristotle does not compare the *akratēs* to beasts and children.[53] I believe that Aristotle avoids these comparisons for two reasons. First, the *akratēs* is not in such a bad state as children and beasts are. In other words, there are

[53] Pickavé and Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* 7.3 on Akratic Ignorance", 326.

much worse states one could be in, including beastliness. However, *akrasia* (lack of self-control) is not that bad, and I think that by avoiding such comparisons Aristotle is sympathetic to that idea. Second, comparing the *akratēs* to beasts or children will not help elucidate any of the four conditions that obtain in the *akratēs*. Beasts definitely do not fulfill ACTUALITY or INSINCERITY. Even if we allow that they might fulfill RESPONSIBILITY and VOLUNTARY, there is nothing about being a beast that will help explain how the akratic fulfills those two conditions. Being a child also does not offer any special perspective about the *akratēs*, apart from children being the most obvious ones who come to mind when discussing students. Again, they might fulfill some of these conditions, but it is only insofar as they are active learners not simply children.

The Mad

The mad person is one of the weaker comparisons Aristotle makes to the *akratēs*, for she only fulfills two of the four conditions. This is surprising because she is mentioned four times in *NE* VII. However, while in her characteristic state, a mad person will fulfill only ACTUALITY and INSINCERITY. She will not fulfill RESPONSIBILITY and VOLUNTARY. Madness, like *akrasia*, prevents an agent from exercising her knowledge, which is why her utterances are no sign of it. Unlike *akrasia*, madness is involuntary and the agent in question has not made the mistake of getting herself into this state.

Aristotle says that the *akratēs* is like the mad person in that they both have knowledge in a way and do not have it (*NE* 1147a12-14).[54] Here, Aristotle is not referring to the angry person, for he does not use the word *orgē*. Instead, he uses the word

[54] ἐν τῷ γὰρ ἔχειν μὲν μὴ χρῆσθαι δὲ διαφέρουσαν ὁρῶμεν τὴν ἕξιν, ὥστε καὶ ἔχειν πως καὶ μὴ ἔχειν, οἷον τὸν καθεύδοντα καὶ μαινόμενον καὶ οἰνωμένον.

mainomenon, which is better understood to mean the insane. The other three times he discusses the mad person it is in relation to beastliness, not *akrasia*. However, we can come to understand what madness means for Aristotle by considering these passages. Madness (*manian*) can cause unnatural appetites, as can beastliness and disease (*NE* 1148b26). Madness (*manias*) can also cause someone to become irrational (*aphronōn*) (*NE* 1149a13). Finally, madness (*mainomenoi*) is a diversion from nature (*eksestēke tēs phuseōs*) (*NE* 1150a1). So, it is clear that Aristotle does not mean what he means by anger (*orgē*), which is a natural impulse accompanied by a desire for revenge.[55]

The insane person has knowledge in a way, because, prior to her fit of madness, she knows that what she is about to do is wrong. However, once overcome, she cannot exercise her knowledge. Consider Hercules, who kills his wife and children because Hera made him temporarily mad. Before the madness overcame him, he knew that this was wrong. But, in his weakened state, he cannot exercise this knowledge. As such, he fulfills ACTUALITY, for he is halted at Second Potentiality/First Actuality with respect to this knowledge.

The mad person fulfills INSINCERITY because her words are not a sign of knowledge. Listeners do not attribute knowledge to her based on her utterances, because she is so far removed from reality that she cannot be said to *know* what is going on around her. Medea might have been having veridical perceptions all the while plotting to murder her children. However, no one would mistake her words for being signs of knowing the result of her actions. Recall that the mad know that what they are about to do is wrong,

[55] *On the Soul* 403a30-31 and *Rhetoric* 1378a31-33.

but that they cannot exercise this knowledge. Since this knowledge cannot be exercised, their words cannot be taken seriously, because these words ring hollow. Medea can say that she loves her children, but will not be taken seriously.

Because madness overcomes a person for only a short time, and she eventually returns to sanity, she is not responsible for getting herself into this state. So, she does not fulfill RESPONSIBILITY. If Aristotle was referring to someone getting very angry, then the mad person would be responsible for getting herself into this state, because she would have habituated herself to get too angry too often. However, Aristotle is here referring to insanity, which is against nature and makes one irrational. So, being overcome by an unnatural state that gives rise to irrational impulses is not one to which we can habituate ourselves. Instead, it is a condition that we cannot control, like getting cold or hungry.

While the mad person is the originator of her actions, she does not fulfill VOLUNTARY. According to Kent Dunnington, “epilepsy and madness are such that they temporarily or permanently render the human person entirely a patient, removing all agency.”[56] Anthony Kenny agrees. For him, “if incontinence is like madness, it is hard to see how it is voluntary and blameworthy.”[57] Recall that, for Aristotle, an action is blameworthy only if it is voluntary and an action is voluntary only if it is done neither from force nor ignorance of particulars. Unfortunately for the mad person she is ignorant of particulars.

For an agent acts involuntarily if he is ignorant of one of these particulars.

Presumably, then, it is not a bad idea to define these particulars. They are: who

[56] Kent Dunnington, *Addiction and Virtue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 39.
[57] Kenny, Anthony, "The Practical Syllogism and Incontinence" *Phronesis* 11, no. 2 (1966): 175.

> is doing it; what he is doing; about what or to what he is doing it; sometimes also what he is doing it with—with what instrument, for example; for what result, for example, safety; in what way, for example, gently or hard. Someone could not be ignorant of all of these unless he were mad (*NE* 1111a2-6).[58]

Again, consider Hercules. He thinks that his children are the children of his rival, Eurystheus. He is not ignorant of what he is doing, but to whom he is doing it. Since he is not having veridical perceptions, he does not fulfill VOLUNTARY.

What becomes clear about the *akratēs* from considering the mad is that the *akratēs* suffers from a *temporary* condition.[59] She has her wits about her most of the time, but, once overcome by desire, she loses access to her knowledge and acts against what reason prescribes. Once the madness or *akrasia* subsides, the person is herself again. Madness can define one's life but need not. One can be temporarily insane. One can also be temporarily akratic. One can be chronically akratic or one can slip up every now and again, but these episodes are both separated by a period of full rationality where the *akratēs* has her wits about her. Otherwise, she would not come to regret her actions as she does.

The Student

[58] ὁ γὰρ τούτων τι ἀγνοῶν ἀκουσίως πράττει. ἴσως οὖν οὐ χεῖρον διορίσαι αὐτά, τίνα καὶ πόσα ἐστί, τίς τε δὴ καὶ τί καὶ περὶ τί ἢ ἐν τίνι πράττει, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ τίνι, οἷον ὀργάνῳ, καὶ ἕνεκα τίνος, οἷον σωτηρίας, καὶ πῶς, οἷον ἠρέμα ἢ σφόδρα. ἅπαντα μὲν οὖν ταῦτα οὐδεὶς ἂν ἀγνοήσειε μὴ μαινόμενος.

[59] Of course, Aristotle listing *akrasia* as a *hexis* to be avoided means that he thinks that she acts this way always or *hōs epi to polu* (for the most part). However, this is where I disagree with him. By his own lights, he does not describe the *akratēs* any differently than the *enkratēs* making a mistake. Therefore, I conclude that *akratēis* are of two kinds: intermittent and chronic. Both, however, are still of the same kind as the enkratēs. More on these two kinds of *akratēis* can be found in Chapter Four.

Like the mad person, the student only fulfills two of the four conditions. This is no surprise, though, as the student is only compared to the *akratēs* once in *NE* VII.3.[60] While still learning a science, the student will fulfill INSINCERITY and VOLUNTARY, but will not fulfill ACTUALITY and RESPONSIBILITY. Being in the early stages of learning is like *akrasia* in that it is voluntary and an agent's utterances are not taken to mean that the agent in question actually knows what she is saying. Learning is unlike *akrasia* in that students have not made any mistake to get them into their state of ignorance and they are not prevented from exercising knowledge because they do not yet possess it.

The student fulfills INSINCERITY because her words are not a sign of knowledge, only correct opinion at best.

> First time students do not know, though they put together the words. For it is necessary to grow into them and this stands in need of time (*NE* 1147a21-3).[61]

A student will not be sincere in her utterances, for she is merely parroting what she has heard her instructors say. Someone who is learning multiplication can say '3 x 3 = 9' but does not understand what she is saying. She is merely memorizing facts. Once she learns the science, then she will be sincere in her utterances, for they will be a demonstration of her knowledge. Pickavé and Whiting agree. Students "do not yet possess the sort of knowledge their utterances ordinarily express. So *their* utterances *cannot* be taken as any sign that *they* are actualizing the relevant knowledge, which *ex hypothesi* they do not

[60] In fact, according to Pickavé and Whiting, the student is not really added to the "list of paradigms" from *NE* 1147a10-15. They believe that only the actor is being added to that list. Even if Aristotle only mentions it in passing, I believe that it is worth investigating because the student, like the actor, fulfills INSINCERITY, which is the topic of discussion at 1147a19-24.

[61] καὶ οἱ πρῶτον μαθόντες συνείρουσι μὲν τοὺς λόγους, ἴσασι δ' οὔπω· δεῖ γὰρ συμφυῆναι, τοῦτο δὲ χρόνου δεῖται.

even possess."[62] Since students do not yet know the full purport of their utterances, they are not taken seriously when they recite things like multiplication tables.

Students act voluntarily, because they are the originators of their actions and are neither forced nor ignorant of particulars. The student is learning the universal premise of the syllogism in question. For example, she has the perceptual knowledge that before her is a triangle but is still learning what all triangles have in common. This is the knowledge that takes time to grow into her. The perceptual knowledge of particulars comes much more easily. Therefore, she is not ignorant of particulars. Nor is she forced, even though school is often compulsory. Recall that force is something external to the agent and schooling requires participation from the student. So, the student fulfills VOLUNTARY.

The student does not fulfill ACTUALITY because she has not yet reached Second Potentiality/First Actuality. She is, by definition, halted at First Potentiality until she is no longer a student. Since the student does not have the universal premise of the syllogism, she cannot be said to know the science in question, e.g., geometry. She cannot be in a state where she is prevented from actualizing her knowledge if she does not have the requisite knowledge to activate. ACTUALITY is about the knowledge of the conclusion of the good practical syllogism, which the student does not have because she lacks the universal premise.

Finally, the student will not fulfill RESPONSIBILITY because she has not done anything to get herself into this state. In fact, she is actively trying to get out of it. The student has not habituated herself into her current state. Instead, she is in the process of

[62] Pickavé and Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 on Akratic Ignorance", 344.

habituation. The student cannot be blamed for her current state of ignorance, because she is in the process of eliminating it. We all start out ignorant of many things. So, we cannot be responsible for being ignorant, up to a certain point. If someone refuses to learn necessities—refuses to grow up—then they are responsible for being in a state of ignorance. The student is not like this because she is, by definition, making efforts to no longer be ignorant. Once she comes to know a science, that state is something for which she is responsible, not her current one of ignorance.

What becomes clear about the *akratēs* from considering the student is what weight her words have. The *akratēs* says things compatible with what reason prescribes, e.g., 'I ought not to engage in a tryst with this person', but she acts contrary to her utterances. This is the puzzling thing about the *akratēs*: how she can purport to know something yet act contrary to that knowledge. What the student tells us about utterances is that sometimes they are not signs of knowledge. Students parrot back what their elders say without having their correct opinions count as knowledge. The *akratēs* is like this because her words do not demonstrate to others that she knows better, even though she might. Her words are hollow, because she is unable to access her knowledge while in her characteristic state.

The Sleeping

Even though the *akratēs* is compared to the sleeping person twice in *NE* VII.3, and once in *NE* VII.10, she too only fulfills two of the four conditions. While in her characteristic state, a sleeping person will fulfill ACTUALITY and INSINCERITY but will not fulfill RESPONSIBILITY and VOLUNTARY. Being asleep is like *akrasia* because the two agents are suffering from physiological conditions that prevent them from exercising their knowledge

and any utterances are not taken seriously. Being asleep is unlike *akrasia* in that the sleeping agent does not get herself into this state and is not blameworthy for her actions.

According to Liddell, Scott, and Jones, sleeping (*katheudonta*) is, for Aristotle, the opposite of to be in action (*energein*). So, properly speaking, the sleeping person does not act. Therefore, it might seem strange to assess her in terms of INSINCERITY and VOLUNTARY. However, sleepwalking and talking during sleep does sometimes occur. Indeed, "Aristotle himself allows even sleepers some fairly sophisticated activities: some, for example, can answer questions when asked."[63] So, we must take these phenomena into account when assessing the sleeper as similar to the *akratēs*.

The sleeping person will fulfill ACTUALITY because she maintains her knowledge of a given science yet cannot exercise said knowledge. Therefore, she is also stuck at Second Potentiality/First Actuality. This is the condition that the sleeping person fulfills about which Aristotle is the most explicit. He says that those who are sleeping have knowledge in a way and do not have it (*NE* 1147a14),[64] they recover their knowledge once their characteristic physical state has been resolved (*NE* 1147b8),[65] and that the sleeping do not attend to their knowledge (*NE* 1152a16).[66] I am still a philosopher when I am asleep; I just cannot do philosophy right at that moment. I do not need to relearn philosophy upon waking. I am simply then in a position to exercise my knowledge again.

[63] Pickavé and Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 on Akratic Ignorance," 345.
[64] ἐν τῷ γὰρ ἔχειν μὲν μὴ χρῆσθαι δὲ διαφέρουσαν ὁρῶμεν τὴν ἕξιν, ὥστε καὶ ἔχειν πως καὶ μὴ ἔχειν, οἷον τὸν καθεύδοντα καὶ μαινόμενον καὶ οἰνωμένον.
[65] πῶς δὲ λύεται ἡ ἄγνοια καὶ πάλιν γίνεται ἐπιστήμων ὁ ἀκρατής, ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος καὶ περὶ οἰνωμένου καὶ καθεύδοντος καὶ οὐκ ἴδιος τούτου τοῦ πάθους, ὃν δεῖ παρὰ τῶν φυσιολόγων ἀκούειν.
[66] οὐδὲ δὴ ὡς ὁ εἰδὼς καὶ θεωρῶν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ὁ καθεύδων ἢ οἰνωμένος.

The sleeping person will also fulfill INSINCERITY because she is not taken to be having veridical perceptions corresponding to her utterances. A sleeping person's utterances will not be taken seriously, because she does not know what is going on around her. A sleeping person cannot tell me how many fingers I am holding up before her. If she ventures a correct guess, then no one would actually think that she *knew* I was holding up, say, four fingers. Because her senses are incapacitated while sleeping, any passing utterances, like telling me to empty the dishwasher, are not taken to be a sign of knowledge. She might have already emptied the dishwasher before she went to bed. Again, even if she had not, then telling me while sleeping is not a sign that she *knows* anything about the dishwasher in her state. She may as well tell me to empty the garden for all the import her words have.

The sleeping do not fulfill VOLUNTARY because they act involuntarily. Like the mad person, she is ignorant of particulars, because her senses are temporarily incapacitated. A sleepwalker will attack someone who tries to wake them because they perceive that person as a threat. They are ignorant of their surroundings. As such, they are ignorant of particulars, which we grasp by perception. So, the sleeping, when they act, do not do so voluntarily.

RESPONSIBILITY will also not be fulfilled because we are not responsible for sleeping, we end up in this state because of a bodily necessity (*On Sleep* 454b3-4). We can habituate ourselves to get up earlier or later, but we cannot habituate ourselves into a state where we do not need to sleep at all. One might be responsible for being sleepy, if she stayed up late playing video games. One can even be responsible for sleeping

because she took some melatonin. However, for the most part, we end up sleeping because our bodies require it and no amount of coffee can keep us from this eventuality.

Pickavé and Whiting hold that the sleeping geometer is the paradigm comparison that Aristotle makes to the *akratēs*.[67] They hold this because of the temporary nature of both *akrasia* and sleep. Both the sleeping and the *akratēs* are prevented "from moving at will from first to second actuality knowledge."[68] However, we can see that they are focusing only on ACTUALITY. Ultimately, the sleeping person only fulfills two of the four conditions. And I will show that there are two comparisons that have even more in common with the *akratēs*, the actor and the drunk. Therefore, the sleeping geometer cannot be the paradigm comparison that Aristotle is making here. I believe it to be the drunk.

What becomes clear about *akrasia* from considering the sleeping person is that *akrasia* is a *physiological* condition. For Aristotle, sleeping involves cooling and heating required for digestion. *Akrasia* is somewhat like this. It is not required, but it is a result of the body changing in certain ways. Aristotle "thinks that such changes can interfere with the normal functioning of perception and the other mechanisms involved in belief-formation."[69] So, *akrasia* is like sleep in that the agent is in a physiological condition which renders her unable to access her knowledge.

The Actor

[67] Pickavé and Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 on Akratic Ignorance", 343.
[68] Pickavé and Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 on Akratic Ignorance", 343.
[69] Pickavé and Whiting, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 on Akratic Ignorance", 341.

Even though Aristotle only compares the *akratēs* to the actor once in *NE* VII, the actor actually fulfills three of the four conditions. An actor, while performing, will fulfill INSINCERITY, RESPONSIBILITY, and VOLUNTARY. The only condition she does not fulfill is ACTUALITY. Actors are like the *akratēis* because they are responsible for their actions, have habituated themselves into their current state, and their utterances are not taken seriously. The only difference between the two is the level of actuality at which they are operating.

The most obvious condition which the actor fulfills is INSINCERITY. Indeed, Aristotle states that "one must suppose the *akratēs* to speak just as actors playing a part" (*NE* 1147a23-24).[70] The utterances of an actor qua actor are not taken to be sincere. However, once off stage, her utterances will be taken seriously. While in character, an actor can purport to know many things, e.g., that the other actor on stage is beautiful. But, no one will say that the actor knows any of these things. This is because she is part of a farce. Even if the other actor on stage is beautiful, she says it as one character observing another character, not as one actor observing another actor. Moreover, an actor cannot be said to know things like the fact that Macbeth will soon die because there really is no Macbeth about to die. So, no matter what the actor's utterances are about, she cannot be said to know anything about those things.

It might seem trivial to say that the actor fulfills RESPONSIBILITY, but this is why she is more similar to the *akratēs* than even Aristotle realizes. The actor's previous actions are directly responsible for her current ones. The actor has habituated herself into her

[70] ὥστε καθάπερ τοὺς ὑποκρινομένους, οὕτως ὑπολῃπτέον λέγειν καὶ τοὺς ἀκρατευομένους.

current behavior. It takes practice to memorize lines and perform convincingly in a play in front of others. Even if someone is a first-time actor, she can still fulfill RESPONSIBILITY by agreeing to be in the play in the first place. In this way, her previous actions are directly responsible for her current ones on stage.

The actor fulfills VOLUNTARY because she is the originator of her actions. No outside force is acting upon her and she is not ignorant of particulars. An actor is not ignorant of particulars simply because she is on stage. To be ignorant of particulars qua actor would be to be ignorant of what the next line is to say. So long as she knows what play she is in and is saying her dialogue at the proper time, then she is not ignorant of particulars. Therefore, she acts voluntarily.

Unlike the *akratēs*, she is operating at a higher level of actuality and so does not fulfill ACTUALITY. She is operating at Second Actuality qua knower when she properly performs the play. She knows that the right thing to do is say her lines when it is the right time. If she does, then she has actualized her knowledge. Recall that the *akratēs* is *halted* at Second Potentiality/First Actuality, not merely operating there. The actor is at that stage with respect to almost all of her knowledge, but the key difference is that she is *able* to move to Second Actuality whenever she likes.

What becomes clear about the *akratēs* from considering actors is that she need not be wholly ignorant for her words not to count as a sign of knowledge. This is what comparing the *akratēs* to the student misses. Aristotle does not want to say that the *akratēs* merely has an opinion. For him, she has *knowledge*, it is merely locked away until her episode subsides. Likewise, the actor has plenty of knowledge, but her utterances to not demonstrate that knowledge.

The Drunk

The *akratēs* is compared to the drunk three times in *NE* VII.3, once in *NE* VII.8, and once in *NE* VII.10. So, it should come as no surprise that she is the most similar to the *akratēs*, for she fulfills all four of the conditions. The *akratēs* and the drunk both suffer from a physiological condition that prevents them from exercising their knowledge, are not taken seriously when they say things, are responsible for getting themselves into their current states, and are blameworthy for their actions.

The drunk will fulfill ACTUALITY because, like the sleeping and the mad, she is halted at Second Potentiality/First Actuality with respect to her knowledge. She might know full well how to calculate the tip for her bar tab, but, in this state cannot. She has, according to Aristotle, knowledge in one way and not in another (*NE* 1147a14). She has knowledge. So, she is not at First Potentiality. However, she is not attending to her knowledge (*NE* 1152a16). Therefore, she is not at Second Actuality either, because she is not exercising her knowledge. The only level left is Second Potentiality/First Actuality. She is not merely operating there and able to move on at will, though. She is halted there because of her physiological condition. The alcohol has altered her such that she cannot do the math necessary to calculate the tip, even though she knows when sober how to calculate the tip.

The drunk will fulfill INSINCERITY because her words are not a sign of knowledge. She is merely reciting a well-rehearsed line.

> Since the final proposition is an opinion about the perceptible, and has power over action, this is what [the *akratēs*] does not have when he is being affected. Or the

way he has it is not knowledge of it, but, saying the words, just as the drunk says those of Empedocles (*NE* 1147b9-12).[71]

Some people might get more honest when drunk, but this does not mean that they are being more sincere. Their words are still hollow if they are not ones that would be uttered when sober. A declaration of love from a drunk person is a good example. Even if my spouse tells me this, she is not being sincere, because her words do not demonstrate her knowledge. Instead, she is just saying empty words although she believes them when sober. Think again of the drunk person calculating the tip for her bar tab. She is not taken to be exercising her knowledge. So, even if she ventures a correct guess at what the tip ought to be, then she will not be demonstrating knowledge, merely luck.

The drunk will fulfill RESPONSIBILITY because she is responsible for getting herself into this state. She need not be a chronic alcoholic who has habituated herself into this state. Being the reason she is now in this state is enough. And, barring that alcohol was poured down her throat, the drunk person is responsible for getting drunk. She knows that a few drinks will affect her cognitive capacities. Yet, she drinks anyway. For this reason, she fulfills RESPONSIBILITY.

Finally, the drunk will fulfill VOLUNTARY, because she is the originator of her actions. Kenny agrees: "It is odd that Aristotle should have compared incontinence indifferently to drunkenness and madness, when the two are different in the crucial matter of voluntariness."[72] The drunk acts voluntarily because she is neither forced nor ignorant of particulars. Again, barring that alcohol was forced down her throat, the drunk has

[71] ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ τελευταία πρότασις δόξα τε αἰσθητοῦ καὶ κυρία τῶν πράξεων, ταύτην <δὲ> ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐν τῷ πάθει ὤν, ἢ οὕτως ἔχει ὡς οὐκ ἦν τὸ ἔχειν ἐπίστασθαι ἀλλὰ λέγειν ὥσπερ ὁ οἰνωμένος τὰ Ἐμπεδοκλέους.
[72] Kenny, "The Practical Syllogism and Incontinence", 175.

voluntarily brought herself into this state. She was not forced. But, is she ignorant of particulars? Not necessarily. One need not be blacking out to be considered drunk. A few drinks are enough to impair one's cognitive capacities. Even Aristotle allows for drunkenness to come in degrees.[73] True, the one who is near a black out is probably ignorant of particulars, e.g., that her spouse is the one standing before her. However, the run of the mill drunk is not so far gone as to be ignorant of to whom she is speaking. So, she acts voluntarily.

What becomes clear about the *akratēs* from considering the drunk is that *akrasia* is temporary and physiological. Just as alcohol affects the body temporarily so does *akrasia*. Once the haze of drunkenness or *akrasia* subsides, the agent is clear-eyed and can again exercise her knowledge of what is right. This sobering up often comes with regret, as the agent realizes that she has just acted against what she knows to be best. Like madness, drunkenness also shows us that *akrasia* need not be a chronic condition. One can be sober, sane, or enkratic most of the time. Bouts of drunkenness, madness, and *akrasia* can be few and far between. Finally, drunkenness need not destroy all of one's cognitive capacities. "A moderate intake of alcohol might render one incapable of some intellectual exercises while leaving one relatively competent at others."[74] Likewise, *akrasia* can cause one to be unable to do what she knows is right with respect to pleasure, but she might still be able to function otherwise, which is what is so puzzling about her behavior.

[73] Cf. Pickavé and Whiting (2008), 345 and Dahl (1984) 210.
[74] Gosling, Justin, "Mad, Drunk or Asleep? Aristotle's Akratic. *Phronesis*, 38 (1993), 100.

Why does it matter that the drunk is the most similar to the *akratēs*? The main reason I see is that we view drunkenness as either a *diathesis* (bodily condition) or a *hexis* (stable state of the soul). For Aristotle, a *diathesis* is something like being cold. It is temporary and subsides rather quickly. A *hexis* is more permanent than that. It is a reliable way in which one acts. Notice that a *diathesis* is something that happens to a person while a *hexis* is something that a person exhibits or exudes. Virtue, *enkrateia*, *akrasia*, and vice are all *hexeis*. If drunkenness can be either a *diathesis* or a *hexis*, then *akrasia* can be both as well. A person can get drunk once without being an alcoholic. This would be viewing drunkenness as a *diathesis*. Or a person can get drunk every night. This would be viewing drunkenness as a *hexis*. It can be both. So, why can *akrasia* not be both? It can happen one time in a hundred or fifty times in a hundred. Those agents will be radically different, even though they are both akratic during their episodes. The former is a person who rarely gets drunk and the latter is an alcoholic.

Moreover, Aristotle considers some people to be more biologically prone to becoming akratic than others:

> The quick-tempered and *melancholikoi* are most prone to be impetuous *akratēis*. The former too hasty and the latter too violent to wait for reason because they are prone to follow appearance (*phantasia*) (*NE* 1150b25-28).[75]

When Aristotle says 'melancholic', he is referring to having excessively hot black bile.[76] This is like those who have a history of addiction in their families. Something in their

[75] μάλιστα δ' οἱ ὀξεῖς καὶ μελαγχολικοὶ τὴν προπετῆ ἀκρασίαν εἰσὶν ἀκρατεῖς· οἱ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τὴν ταχυτῆτα, οἱ δὲ διὰ τὴν σφοδρότητα οὐκ ἀναμένουσι τὸν λόγον, διὰ τὸ ἀκολουθητικοὶ εἶναι τῇ φαντασίᾳ.
[76] Terence Irwin, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999), 265.

biological makeup makes them more prone to certain failings. For this reason, they should not be blamed as much as they often are. Likewise, with the *akratēis*. Aristotle lumps them in with the vicious and the bestial, but some of them are closer to the *enkratēis*.

Conclusion

I have argued that Aristotle's *akratēs* fulfills the following four conditions: ACTUALITY, INSINCERITY, RESPONSIBILITY, and VOLUNTARY. This means that she is stuck at Second Potentiality/First Actuality with respect to her knowledge of what the right thing to do is, she is insincere in her utterances, she acts neither from ignorance or force, and is responsible for getting herself into such a situation. The comparisons that Aristotle makes in *NE* VII of the *akratēs* to the sleeping, mad, drunk, actor, and student can all be seen to fulfill at least two of these conditions. The drunk is the one who, like the akratic, fulfills all four. They are the most similar because, just like drunkenness, *akrasia* can be either a *diathesis* or a *hexis*, leaving room for the *akratēs* to be the *enkratēs* most of the time.

Chapter Two: The Proper Scope of *Akrasia*

Unqualified *akrasia* (lack of self-control) is a very specific phenomenon. It is a person who knows both premises of the good practical syllogism yet cannot actualize her knowledge of the conclusion because she is stuck at Second Potentiality/First Actuality qua knower. It is not such an epistemic failing with respect to each and every sphere of *pathos* (emotion). Instead, it is such a failing only with respect to the sphere of *sōphrosunē* (temperance). Finally, it is not someone who suffers from a deficiency with respect to the sphere of *sōphrosunē*. Instead, she must suffer from an excess desire for these specific pleasures. The question that remains is whether Aristotle can coherently hold all of this. I argue that he can.

I will begin by explaining what Aristotle means when he says 'unqualified' (*haplōs*). In his other works, *haplōs* does not always mean 'in all instances'. Therefore, while it might be *prima facie* attractive, we should not think that when he uses it in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII he is characterizing the *akratēs* (person lacking self-control) as akratic in all instances. In Section II, I will explain what Aristotle means by qualified and unqualified *akrasia*. The person who knows that she should not get so angry but does so anyway is only akratic *in a sense*. The unqualified *akratēs* is one who is akratic with respect to the sphere of *sōphrosunē*. In Section III, I will argue that *sōphrosunē* is only concerned with very specific pleasures. *Sōphrosunē* does not govern all bodily pleasures, only the tactile pleasures associated with eating and having sex. Finally, I will argue that the unqualified *akratēs* suffers from an excess desire for these pleasures, not a deficiency. The person who, although she knows better, has a deficient appetite does not do anything shameful.

I. 'Unqualified'

The issue with interpreting unqualified *akrasia* as *akrasia* in every sphere of *pathos* is that this misunderstands Aristotle's use of 'qualified' and 'unqualified'. 'Unqualified' does not always mean 'in every instance'. He has other phrases for 'universal' (*katholou*) and 'predicated in all cases' (*kata pantos*). Obviously, Aristotle uses 'unqualified' (*haplōs*) in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.4 where he discusses qualified and unqualified *akrasia*. However, he also uses it in the *Topics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *On Generation and Corruption, Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII. I will address each of these texts and how he uses *haplōs* in them.

Aristotle introduces the notion of unqualified *akrasia* at the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.2, where he poses the following question:

> Further, if there is *akrasia* and *enkrateia* concerning everything, then who is the unqualified *akratēs* (*NE* 1146b2-3)?[77]

Early on in *NE* VII.3, Aristotle states the following:

> The *akratēs* in the unqualified sense is not so towards everything, but concerning the like of the intemperate person (*NE* 1146b19-20).[78]

So, the *akratēs* in the fullest sense of the word is only the person who has trouble with what the intemperate person has trouble with, the sphere of bodily pleasures. Already, we have evidence that he is not using *haplōs* to mean 'in every instance'. But, is this consistent with how he uses *haplōs* elsewhere? I will demonstrate that it is.

[77] ἔτι εἰ περὶ πάντα ἀκρασία ἐστὶ καὶ ἐγκράτεια, τίς ὁ ἁπλῶς ἀκρατής;
[78] οὔτε γὰρ περὶ πάντ' ἐστὶν ὁ ἁπλῶς ἀκρατής, ἀλλὰ περὶ ἅπερ ὁ ἀκόλαστος.

Aristotle sometimes uses *haplōs* to mean 'in every instance'. In *Topics* III.2 he is discussing when things are better and more desirable. For example, justice is better and more desirable than courage because justice is always useful; courage is not (*NE* 117a35-37). He goes on to discuss when something is better than another thing without qualification.

> Further, if this is better than that *haplōs*, then also the best of this is better than the best of that; for example, if human is better than horse, then also the best human is better than the best horse. Also, if the best <of this> is better than the best <of that>, then also this is better than that *haplōs*; for example, if the best human is better than the best horse, then also human is better than horse *haplōs* (*Topics* 117b34-39).[79]

I take it to mean that when human is better than horse that any human is better than any horse. So, we could say that human is better than horse *in every instance*.

In *Posterior Analytics* I.2, Aristotle explains what it is to know in an unqualified sense.

> We are thought to know each thing *haplōs*, but not accidentally in the sophistical way, whenever we think we know the cause of which the thing is is its cause and it is not possible for this to have been otherwise (*Posterior Analytics* 71b10-13).[80]

So, I know in an unqualified sense not when I know every cause or everything about x, but when I have an account of the essential properties of x. Here is an instance where

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[79] Ἔτι εἰ ἁπλῶς τοῦτο τούτου βέλτιον, καὶ τὸ βέλτιστον τῶν ἐν τούτῳ βέλτιον τοῦ ἐν τῷ ἑτέρῳ βελτίστου, οἷον εἰ βέλτιον ἄνθρωπος ἵππου, καὶ ὁ βέλτιστος ἄνθρωπος τοῦ βελτίστου ἵππου βελτίων. καὶ εἰ τὸ βέλτιστον τοῦ βελτίστου βέλτιον, καὶ ἁπλῶς τοῦτο τούτου βέλτιον, οἷον εἰ ὁ βέλτιστος ἄνθρωπος τοῦ βελτίστου ἵππου βελτίων, καὶ ἁπλῶς ἄνθρωπος ἵππου βελτίων.

[80] Ἐπίστασθαι δὲ οἰόμεθ᾽ ἕκαστον ἁπλῶς, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὸν σοφιστικὸν τρόπον τὸν κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ὅταν τήν τ᾽ αἰτίαν οἰώμεθα γιγνώσκειν δι᾽ ἣν τὸ πρᾶγμά ἐστιν, ὅτι ἐκείνου αἰτία ἐστί, καὶ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι τοῦτ᾽ ἄλλως ἔχειν.

haplōs does not mean ‘in every instance’. Instead, it means that I know in the fullest sense of the word; no qualifications need to be added to explain how or under what circumstances I can be said to know.

In *On Generation and Corruption* I.2 Aristotle is discussing what previous thinkers posited about unqualified coming to be. There, he pairs *haplōs* with *teleia* (complete) (317a18-19).[81] Again, this points to the fact that *haplōs* can always be taken to mean ‘in the fullest sense of the word’ rather than ‘in every instance’, something it can be taken to mean only sometimes depending on the context. Moreover, in *On Generation and Corruption* I.3 he states that *haplōs* means either the primary within each category or the universal (317b7-8).[82] Here, we have evidence that *haplōs* does not always refer to something applying universally, although it can mean that.

Haplōs meaning ‘primary in each category’ is maintained in the *Physics*. In Book I he discusses coming to be from what is not. This does not happen without qualification; it only happens in a qualified sense (191b14-15).[83] The primary form of coming to be from nothing would be creation *ex nihilo*. A qualified way of coming to be from nothing is a thing becoming F from a state of being not-F. Again, here, *haplōs* does not mean ‘in every instance’, for he is not discussing what is always created from nothing. Instead, *haplōs* means ‘in the fullest sense of the word’. Coming to be from what is not in the fullest sense is for something to arise out of nothing. In *Metaphysics* Z, Aristotle also uses *haplōs* to mean ‘primarily’. That which is primarily, i.e., in an unqualified sense, is *ousia* (1028a30-

[81] ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἡ ἁπλῆ καὶ τελεία γένεσις συγκρίσει καὶ διακρίσει ὥρισται, ὥς τινές φασιν, τὴν δ’ ἐν τῷ συνεχεῖ μεταβολὴν ἀλλοίωσιν.
[82] Τὸ δ’ ἁπλῶς ἤτοι τὸ πρῶτον σημαίνει καθ’ ἑκάστην κατηγορίαν τοῦ ὄντος, ἢ τὸ καθόλου καὶ τὸ πάντα περιέχον.
[83] Ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ αὐτοί φαμεν γίγνεσθαι μὲν οὐδὲν ἁπλῶς ἐκ μὴ ὄντος.

31).[84] Here, *haplōs* does not mean 'in every instance' because he does not say what is in every instance but what is in the fullest sense of 'is'.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.4, Aristotle also uses *haplōs* to mean 'primarily' or 'in the fullest sense of a word'. There, Aristotle discusses different kinds of friendship. Perfect or complete friendship is between two good people who are alike in virtue (*NE* 1156b8).[85] Those who are friends without qualification are those who are friends not for utility or pleasure but for their own sake, because of their virtue (*NE* 1157b1-5). Being a friend without qualification does not mean being a friend to everyone. Indeed, Aristotle considers it impossible to have many friends (*NE* 1158a10-11). Instead, it means being a friend in the fullest sense of the word. Again, *haplōs* is paired with *teleia* to demonstrate that Aristotle is using it to mean 'primarily' rather than 'universally'.

Haplōs meaning 'in the fullest sense of the word' can best be understood in terms of homonymy. Friendships between virtuous people are friendships in the fullest sense of the word. Friendships between vicious people are not *really* friendships. They are only called so homonymously. Likewise, the *akratēs* with respect to the sphere of *sōphrosunē* is akratic in the fullest sense of the word. The *akratēs* with respect to anger is not *really* akratic. She is only called so homonymously.

In the *Categories*, Aristotle introduces the notion of homonymy. Two things are homonymous when the name is the same, but the account of the essence is different (1a1-2).[86] For example, a human and a picture of a human are both called animals, but

[84] ὥστε τὸ πρώτως ὂν καὶ οὐ τὶ ὂν ἀλλ' ὂν ἁπλῶς ἡ οὐσία ἂν εἴη.
[85] Τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίων.
[86] Ὁμώνυμα λέγεται ὧν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοὔνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος.

are only called such homonymously. They do not have the same account, for the picture is only a representation of an animal. In *Metaphysics* VII.10, Aristotle explains that a dead finger is only a finger homonymously (1035b25-26).[87] Since it has lost its function, it cannot be a finger in the fullest sense of the word. Being a finger means that the object in question can "do finger things." What does it mean to "do finger things"? This becomes clear in *On the Soul* II.1. There, Aristotle states that if an eye were an animal, then vision would be its soul. Removing vision would mean that the eye is no longer an eye, except homonymously, just like the eye of a painting or a statue (412b19-22).[88] So, for a finger or eye to function properly, whatever makes it the sort of thing that it is must be present. A finger needs to move and feel. An eye needs to see. Likewise, friendships need to be maintained for the right reasons. If a finger does not move or feel, an eye does not see, or if a friendship is maintained for the wrong reasons, then those things are only called by their names in a weaker sense of those words. A finger that cannot feel or move is only a finger in the weakest sense of the word, because it merely resembles or once was a finger. Likewise, with eyes that cannot see or friendships based on selfish reasons.

Of course, there are degrees of being between being the ideal friend, finger, eye and only being one of these things homonymously.[89] One could be a less than perfect friend, but still be a friend. Maybe Jones forgets Smith's birthday, but is otherwise sensitive to his needs. Consider a chair that has only one arm rest. It is still a chair, even

[87] οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ πάντως ἔχων δάκτυλος ζῴου, ἀλλ᾽ὁμώνυμος ὁ τεθνεώς.
[88] εἰ γὰρ ἦν ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς ζῷον, ψυχὴ ἂν ἦν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὄψις· αὕτη γὰρ οὐσία ὀφθαλμοῦ ἡ κατὰ τὸν λόγον. ὁ δ᾽ ὀφθαλμὸς ὕλη ὄψεως, ἧς ἀπολειπούσης οὐκ ἔστιν ὀφθαλμός, πλὴν ὁμωνύμως, καθάπερ ὁ λίθινος καὶ ὁ γεγραμμένος.
[89] Thank you to Howard Curzer for making this point clear.

if it is incomplete. Or, a chair with no back. It is still a fine surface for sitting. These chairs are better than a chair with no legs, which would only be a chair homonymously.

So, someone who is akratic with respect to the sphere of *sōphrosunē* is akratic in the fullest sense of the word because what makes a person akratic is fully present in her. Someone who is akratic with respect to anger is less so, because she is akratic in a weaker sense of the word. But, why does Aristotle distinguish between these "types" of *akrasia* and how does he justify the delineations? This is the topic of the next section.

II. Qualified vs. Unqualified *Akrasia*

If the *akratēs* is described as someone who knowingly does wrong, then it might seem like we can be akratic with respect to many things: anger, pleasure, honor, etc. However, for Aristotle, unqualified *akrasia*, i.e., *akrasia* in the fullest sense of the word, is only about bodily pleasures. Recall that early on in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 Aristotle states that "the *akratēs* in the unqualified sense is not so towards everything, but concerning the like of the intemperate person" (1146b19-20).[90] Aristotle is very specific here about who is contrasting the *akratēs* with. He does not contrast her with the vicious person (*kakos*). Instead, he contrasts her with the undisciplined person (*akolastos*). The undisciplined person has difficulty with appetite, the vicious with much more than that. If we understand that the unqualified *akratēs* is the one who does not act upon her knowledge of the conclusion of the good practical syllogism, then we will see that being "akratic" with respect to anger or honor is different. These types of people know the conclusion to the good practical syllogism. As such, they cannot be akratic in the fullest sense of the word.

[90] οὔτε γὰρ περὶ πάντ᾽ ἐστὶν ὁ ἁπλῶς ἀκρατής, ἀλλὰ περὶ ἅπερ ὁ ἀκόλαστος.

It might seem as though the qualified *akratēs* and the unqualified *akratēs* make the same mistake: they both have an excess desire for something that is otherwise good. Food and sex are good. But, the unqualified akratic desires too much. So, she overindulges. Likewise, one might think, getting angry when slighted and honor are both good. But, the qualified *akratēis* both desire their goals too much. So, they act wrongly. However, the picture is not so simple. In order to see why, we must investigate the practical syllogisms that each "type" of akratic follows or fails to follow.

Aristotle thinks that if the object of desire is *kalon* (fine), then an excess desire for it is not intemperate (*NE* 1148a30). According to Karen Stohr, "we cannot be incontinent about honor, because honor is *kalon*. We can have excesses about honor, insofar as we can care about it more (or less) than we should, but this is not incontinence."[91] Taking honor, children, or parents too seriously is to be avoided but is not shameful (*NE* 1148a30-1148b4). We ought not to be ashamed that we care about our children. Helicopter parenting ought to be avoided, but the desire to parent our children is not a bad one. I find this reasoning to be lacking because all of the "types" of *akratēis* are aiming at good objects.

Instead of focusing on what sort of object the qualified *akratēs* is aiming for, we ought to look at the practical syllogism she follows. Since she acts upon the conclusion, she is different than the unqualified *akratēs*, who does not. Consider the following practical syllogism:

1. I ought to aid my children when going through a stressful time.

[91] Karen E. Stohr, "Moral Cacophony: When Continence is A Virtue", *The Journal of Ethics* 7, no. 4 (2003), 351.

2. The transition to college is a stressful time.

3. So, I ought to aid my children with the transition to college. [1,2]

Here, the virtuous thing to do is to be a good parent, which entails being sensitive to the needs of our children. During stressful times, our children need us more than usual. However, the way to aid college freshmen is not to call their professors. It is to support them when they get a C on a philosophy paper. One should talk a stressed-out freshman down from dropping out over a bad grade. This desire can be too strong and the parent can want to get more involved than she should. But she knows the conclusion to the good practical syllogism. The desire to aid her child is right. This is an instance in which the child needs assistance. But too much assistance is not good.

Much the same is going on when we consider qualified *akrasia* with respect to anger. Here is the good practical syllogism:

1. When another person slights me, I ought to be angry.
2. Another person has slighted me.
3. I ought to be angry.

Someone who knows what this syllogism prescribes but fails to act accordingly is “akratic” with respect to anger. The actions of a person who gets too angry are proof that she is exercising knowledge and therefore listening to reason. Stohr agrees. “The person who demonstrates incontinence about emotion, such as someone who becomes excessively angered at an insult, judges correctly that he has reason to be angry, but his anger is disproportionate to the offense. As a result of this anger, he ends up doing what he should not. In doing so, however, he follows reason in a sense, because he correctly judges that he should be angry. The emotion itself is appropriate; the agent simply has it to an

excessive degree, and that leads him to act badly."[92] So, the qualified *akratēs* with respect to anger knows the conclusion to the good practical syllogism because she acts on it. She does go overboard, but this is proof that she is responsive to reason.

Compare these two types of qualified *akratēis* with the unqualified *akratēs*. The unqualified *akratēs* does not follow through on the conclusion to the good practical syllogism.[93] Consider the following:

1. No one ought to commit adultery.
2. Having a tryst with this person would constitute adultery.
3. So, I ought not to have a tryst with this person. [1,2]

Because of her overwhelming desire, the unqualified *akratēs* ignores the conclusion and commits adultery. However, the qualified *akratēis* both follow through on their respective conclusions. All three *akratēis* might suffer from excess desires, but what separates the unqualified *akratēs* from the qualified *akratēis* is that the former does not listen to what reason prescribes and the latter, in some sense, do.

Since the qualified and unqualified *akratēis* differ with respect to listening to reason, there is also a difference about which sorts of *akrasia* are blameworthy. Aristotle delineates *akrasia* about appetites from *akrasia* about emotions and considers the former to be more shameful than the latter (*NE* 1149a25). Having too much of the proper emotion is not as bad as having an appetite for something that we should not. Because they listen

[92] Stohr, "Moral Cacophony: When Continence is A Virtue", 349.
[93] Indeed, she might not even deliberate at all. Aristotle distinguishes between the weak and impetuous *akratēis* at *NE* 1150b20. The weak *akratēs* is the one who deliberates and fails to act on the conclusion of her deliberation. The impetuous *akratēs* is so excited that she fails to even deliberate. Either way, the unqualified *akratēs* is different from the qualified *akratēs* because the former has a failure of reasoning while the latter does not.

to reason, qualified *akratēis* are not blameworthy (*NE* 1148b5-9). The desires that we share with animals are the ones that can lead to shame, because we have a rational part of our soul that ought to control them.

Consider a person who knows that she ought to break up with her physically abusive partner but cannot bring herself to do it because she fears for her life. She is not doing anything shameful. It is certainly not good for her to stay in this relationship, but she is doing something difficult that involves the rational part of her soul, not giving in to animal instincts. A true *akratēs* is not in control of herself with respect to the bodily pleasures that we share with animals. These pleasures fail to engage our distinctly human rational capacities, which is why following them is bad enough to warrant the shame that accompanies calling someone akratic. Failing to end a physically abusive relationship is not akin to succumbing to desires of the flesh, because the desire for self-preservation is vastly different from the desire to indulge in a tenth glass of wine. Again, there is no shame in being unable to end a physically abusive relationship. There is shame, however, in getting drunk at a work-related function.

Now that I have argued that unqualified *akrasia*, i.e., *akrasia* in the fullest sense of the word, has only to do with the sphere of *sōphrosunē*, it is time to investigate what pleasures are included in this sphere of *pathos*.

III. *Sōphrosunē*

What pleasures are included in the sphere of *sōphrosunē*? The ones we share with animals? Those of taste and touch? The pleasures associated with food, drink, and sex seems to be the typical answer. However, there are atypical views. On one hand, Young

argues that such a scope implied by the typical answer is wider than what Aristotle had in mind. Young leaves out sex and alcohol because he believes that they are not necessary pleasures. On the other hand, Curzer argues that such a scope is too narrow to capture Aristotle's view. On his account, the pleasures concerned with food, drink, and sex are merely the paradigm, and not the sole, objects of *sōphrosunē*. I will argue that both Young and Curzer fall short. Young is right to leave sophisticated pleasures of taste off the list but misses the mark by leaving out sex. Curzer is right to include the pleasures of sex but misses the mark by including more mundane pleasures, such as the pleasure we get from a back rub.

Sōphrosunē, referring to the mean between self-indulgence and insensibility, is most often translated as 'temperance'. According to David Bostock, "in ordinary Greek usage, the word has a wide range of application, and often approximates to our 'sensible'."[94] Basically, the person who exemplifies *sōphrosunē* has a good handle on the non-rational part of her soul. Michael Pakaluk renders it as 'self-mastery' and notes that it "is most characteristically shown in someone who is entirely at ease in not taking or even wanting to enjoy some pleasure that it would be unreasonable for him to enjoy."[95] So, it is not merely one who refrains from certain pleasures who demonstrates *sōphrosunē*, but one who does so without discomfort. She can recognize that heroin is desired by some without finding it desirable herself. Even if she comes across a pleasure that she does normally like to enjoy, she can refrain without being pained at her loss.

[94] Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 46n34.
[95] Pakaluk, *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, 168.

Sōphrosunē does not mean that the person in question never indulges. Instead, according to Urmson, the "temperate man will enjoy his food and other bodily pleasures so far as they are needful, fitting, and within his means."[96] So long as it is the right time and place, the temperate person can indulge in an ice cream cone. Pakaluk agrees. "*Sōphrosunē* can take the form, for instance, of hearty and vigorous revelry amidst friends at a celebration."[97] Consider a bachelorette party. This is the time to be a bit rowdy and loud. The person who enjoys her beer and her evening of fun is different from the person who overindulges by getting drunk and ruining the festivities. The former exhibits *sōphrosunē* and the latter exhibits self-indulgence.

Sōphrosunē is typically taken to govern the pleasures of touch and taste, i.e., those associated with food, drink, and sex.[98] Let us now see if this is what Aristotle says. Aristotle discusses the scope and outlook of *sōphrosunē* and its corresponding vices in *Nicomachean Ethics* III.10-12.[99] He begins by distinguishing between pleasures of the soul (e.g., learning) from pleasures of the body. However, *sōphrosunē* does not govern *all* bodily pleasures, for someone who really enjoys the objects of sight and sound, e.g., paintings or songs, is not called self-indulgent (*NE* 1118a3-9). Instead, "the pleasures concerning temperance and intemperance are the others we have in common with animals, and so appear slavish and savage. These are touch and taste" (*NE* 1118a24-26).[100] However, all of the pleasures of taste are not included either, for those with sophisticated palates enjoy discriminating flavors. Think of the pleasure that a sommelier

[96] Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 70.
[97] Pakaluk, *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, 167-168.
[98] Cf. Stoyles (197), Bostock (46n34), Walsh (91), Pakaluk (169), and Urmson (28).
[99] He also discusses it in *Eudemian Ethics* III.2. However, there are no substantive differences to speak of.
[100] περὶ τὰς τοιαύτας δὴ ἡδονὰς ἡ σωφροσύνη καὶ ἡ ἀκολασία ἐστὶν ὧν καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ζῷα κοινωνεῖ, ὅθεν25 ἀνδραποδώδεις καὶ θηριώδεις φαίνονται· αὗται δ' εἰσὶν ἁφὴ καὶ γεῦσις.

derives from correctly identifying a wine from a rather obscure region of France. This is not the pleasure that the self-indulgent person enjoys, because it is not a pleasure that can be shared with the other animals. Instead, she enjoys "the gratification that comes entirely through touch in eating and in what are called the pleasures of sex" (*NE* 1118a30-32).[101] So, the self-indulgent person enjoys too much of the tactile pleasures associated with food and sex. What else does she enjoy?

The self-indulgent person also enjoys too much the other bodily pleasures that remind her of the proper object(s) of her excessive desire for tactile pleasures associated with food and sex. In other words, she enjoys anything that will awaken her excessive desire for food and sex. For example, she is too fond of a picture or the smell of her beloved. Aristotle writes that the person who really enjoys the scent of perfume or cooking is self-indulgent because this reminds her of the object of her desire (*NE* 1118a10-14). Enjoying the smell of cooking too much obviously points to the fact that the self-indulgent person desires to consume that food. Most likely, she wants to consume it right now and wants to consume more than her fair share of it. What does it mean to enjoy the scent of perfume too much? The self-indulgent person does not desire the flowers or other things that the perfume is fashioned to mimic. Instead, she desires someone that she is thinking of amorously; perhaps, someone who wears that or a similar perfume.

In contrast to all this, Charles M. Young argues that, for Aristotle, the pleasures of sex are not governed by *sōphrosunē*. He writes, "Aristotelian temperance is not concerned with alcohol, I suggest, because Aristotle sees no physical need for alcohol in

[101] ἡ γίνεται πᾶσα δι' ἀφῆς καὶ ἐν σιτίοις καὶ ἐν ποτοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀφροδισίοις λεγομένοις.

normal human beings. So too with sex."[102] Young makes this passing comment and does not elaborate on it more. However, I can think of two different arguments that would support such a conclusion. The first turns on the assumption that sex is not a necessary desire for any animal, including humans. The second turns on the assumption that sex is not a necessary desire for humans, qua rational animals. Unfortunately for Young, both arguments are open to objections.

The first argument proceeds as follows:

1. Sex is not required for the survival of the individual animal.
2. The only desires for which there is a physical need are those required for the survival of the individual animal.
3. Therefore, there is no physical need for sex. (1,2)
4. *Sōphrosunē* only governs the pleasures of an animal for which there is a physical need.
5. So, *sōphrosunē* does not govern the pleasures of sex. (3,4)

The problem with this argument is premise 2, because it does not consider that an animal is part of a species. The desire for sex is necessary to propagate the species. So, it is necessary for survival on a grander scale. Aristotle thinks that the only way for the non-rational animals to share in the divine is to "live on" by continuing the species. Ignoring a necessary part of their functions is likely not a good characterization of what Aristotle had in mind when describing the pleasures of animals for which there is a physical need.

Perhaps, Young had in mind the following:

[102] Charles Young, "Aristotle on Temperance", *The Philosophical Review* 97 (1988): 538.

1. There is a physical need for sex only for non-rational animals.
2. Humans are rational animals.
3. There is not a physical need for sex for humans. (1,2)
4. *Sōphrosunē* governs only the pleasures for which there is a physical need shared by both the rational animals and the non-rational animals.
5. So, *sōphrosunē* does not govern the pleasures associated with sex. (3,4)

I think that this is closer to what Young has in mind. He says that "to have Aristotelian temperance, then, is to embody the recognition that one is animal in genus and rational in species."[103] The argument fails because it focuses too much on our rational nature to the exclusion of our animal nature. *Sōphrosunē* is about controlling our animal urges without discomfort, not viewing them as unnecessary. If they were unnecessary, then we would not need to control them so often. However, most people have desires for sex and many people need to control that desire.

> For everybody takes pleasure from cuisines and wines and sexual pleasures, though not always in the right way. (*NE* 1154a18-19).[104]

If only a few people desired sex, then controlling that urge would not be such an issue. Indeed, the impressive thing about *sōphrosunē* is that the desire for sex *is* necessary, yet one can overcome the urge without pain.

Moreover, contra Young, many others agree that sex, according to Aristotle, is a necessary desire for human beings and, therefore, that it is governed by *sōphrosunē*.

[103] Young, "Aristotle on Temperance", 542.
[104] πάντες γὰρ χαίρουσί πως καὶ ὄψοις καὶ οἴνοις καὶ ἀφροδισίοις, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς δεῖ.

Devin Henry holds that "the affections of hunger and sexual appetite are both natural desires that promote our (biological) well-being."[105] J.J. Walsh agrees. "To determine the subject matter of *akrasia*, Aristotle divides the sources of pleasure into two classes. The first he associates with the body and calls "necessary" (ἀναγκαῖα). Examples are food and sexual relations."[106] Finally, Hendrik Lorenz states that "in writing of necessary things that give us pleasure, Aristotle seems to have in mind types of activities that our nature forces upon us, such as eating and having sex."[107] Not only is sex a pleasure that Aristotle discusses when he is outlining what *sōphrosunē* governs, but it is clear that our animal nature does indeed necessitate our desire for it. So, Young is mistaken about eliminating sex from the list of pleasures that *sōphrosunē* governs. But what does Young get right?

Young is right about one thing: leaving sophisticated tasting off the list of pleasures that *sōphrosunē* governs, for this is consistent with what Aristotle writes. Aristotle states that taste is a very little part, if a part of all, of what the self-indulgent person desires (*NE* 1118a26-27).[108] Taste might be described as a form of touch (*On the Soul* 414b7), but, according to J. O. Urmson, "the critical use of taste, as in judging wine or cookery, is something quite different, and irrelevant to temperance."[109] Recall that the discrimination of flavors performed by the sommelier is not what the self-indulgent person enjoys. Instead, she enjoys the pleasures of eating and feeling full.[110] The pleasures of the

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[105] Devin Henry, "Aristotle on Pleasure and the Worst Form of Akrasia", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5 (2002): 258.
[106] J.J. Walsh, *Aristotle's Conception of Moral Weakness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 87.
[107] Lorenz, Hendrik. "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.4: Plain and Qualified *akrasia*", in *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, *Book VII*, edited by Carlo Natali (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 77.
[108] φαίνονται δὲ καὶ τῇ γεύσει ἐπὶ μικρὸν ἢ οὐθὲν χρῆσθαι·
[109] Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 69.
[110] I think this distinction is lacking in Austin's criticism of Aristotle ("A Plea for Excuses", 24n13). Wanting to have another segment of ice cream because it was delicious is distinct from wanting to have more

sommelier are not shameful, but the pleasures of the self-indulgent person are. The difference will become clear if we attend to the words that Aristotle uses when describing those who lack *sōphrosunē*.

Throughout *NE* III.10-III.12, Aristotle uses the word *akolastos* to describe the person who lacks *sōphrosunē*. However, when he wants to differentiate the one with the excess desires, the self-indulgent person, from the one with the deficient desires, the insensible person, he uses other terms. The insensible are called *anaisthētoi*. In *NE* III.10, when Aristotle describes a character who wishes his neck were longer than a crane's so that he could enjoy more food, he uses the word *opsophagos*[111] (*NE* 1118a32-33). Liddell, Scott, and Jones translate this as 'someone who enjoys eating delicacies'. It might seem as though the self-indulgent person simply enjoys the finer things. However, in *NE* III.11, when he describes the self-indulgent, he uses the word *gastrimargoi*. Rackham translates this as 'mad-bellies'. Irwin translates it as 'gluttons' but notes that it could also be rendered 'ravenous about their bellies'.[112] These people are called this because they eat more than what is required to satisfy their hunger. They might be eating expensive food, e.g., caviar, but they are not enjoying it qua delicacy. Instead, they are enjoying the feeling of being full. The *gastrimargoi* who eat an excessive amount ought to be ashamed. But, the *opsophagos* who enjoys one glass of a particularly good Cabernet Sauvignon need not.

So, the unrefined, tactile pleasures associated with eating and having sex definitely belong on the list of pleasures governed by *sōphrosunē*. But, does anything else belong

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because feeling full is pleasant. The discriminating of flavors is occurring in the former and not in the latter, which us why the former can occur with calm and finesse.

[111] Thanks to Richard Bett to pointing out that, in Aristotle's time, the *opsa* are the toppings that you put on the flatbread to make it taste interesting.

[112] Irwin, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 215.

on there? Curzer says that a whole host of other pleasures, e.g., back rubs, belong on the list. I disagree. Curzer holds that Aristotle extends *sōphrosunē* beyond the pleasures of only food, drink, and sex for two reasons. First, he mentions those three as paradigm cases of *akrasia*, not the only ones. Second, he includes heat in the list of what *sōphrosunē* governs, which means that the door is open for other pleasures to be included. Curzer concludes that "charity and consistency prohibit us from attributing to Aristotle the view that *all* cases of self-indulgence involve the pleasures of food, drink, and sex."[113] I think that Curzer's position is open to objections on both accounts.

The tactile pleasures we receive from eating and having sex are not the paradigm pleasures associated with *sōphrosunē*, they are the only ones. When Aristotle defines *sōphrosunē* in *Nicomachean Ethics* III, he uses these same examples over and over; no others. If he wanted to include other pleasures, then he would have. Saying that the tactile pleasures we receive from eating and having sex are merely the paradigm cases governed by *sōphrosunē* is like saying that the fear of imminent death is merely the paradigm case that courage governs. However, it is well-known that Aristotle means for this to be the only case properly governed by courage. (This is why valor might be a better translation of *andreia*.) Aristotle goes to great lengths to ensure that he gets this point across by explaining how conditions that appear to be courageous really are not (*NE* 1116a17-1117a29). For Curzer to be right, Aristotle would be breaking the pattern he has set when describing each virtue of character individually to describe *sōphrosune*. However, I see no reason to think that Aristotle is making any exception for *sōphrosunē.*

[113] Howard J. Curzer, *Aristotle and the Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 68.

What about Curzer's second point? Aristotle does include heat in a list associated with *sōphrosunē* when he is discussing unqualified *akrasia*. However, this list is of pleasures *and pains*. Aristotle states that the unqualified *akratēs* either desires certain pleasures too much or avoids certain pains too much. These are hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and all the objects of touch and taste (*NE* 1148a7-9).[114] At first glance, it seems that hunger, thirst, heat, and cold are the pains that the unqualified *akratēs* tries too much to avoid, while the objects of touch and taste are the pleasures she tries too much to enjoy. If this is the case, then the pleasures of a back rub, and whatever other pleasures Curzer thinks Aristotle is making room for here, will not be included in the sphere of *sōphrosunē* because heat is not being added to the list of associated pleasures.

Throughout *NE* III.10-III.12, Aristotle mentions the pleasures of touch and taste. So, it is no surprise that they appear on this list from *NE* VII.4. However, why do hunger, thirst, heat, and cold not appear in the discussion of *sōphrosunē* in Book III? Well, heat does make a brief appearance. At *NE* 1118b5-7, Aristotle rules out the sophisticated pleasures associated with warming and rubbing at the gymnasium from the sphere of *sōphrosunē*. But, the four of them together appear in no list having to do with the pleasures governed by *sōphrosunē*. The broad topic of *NE* VII.4 is qualified vs. unqualified *akrasia*. Recall from Section I that, if someone is especially soft when it comes to anger or honor, then she is only homonymously the *akratēs*. Heat and cold do not appear as examples of *akrasia* elsewhere. So, I presume that Aristotle is making room for someone who is too soft about the temperature, another qualified *akratēs*. For example, someone who complains because she is too far from the fire in winter is greedy

[114] πείνης καὶ δίψης καὶ ἀλέας καὶ ψύχους καὶ πάντων τῶν περὶ ἁφὴν καὶ γεῦσιν.

for an excess of heat. Likewise, for the person who cannot wait her turn at the well during the summer. This is behavior we expect from children, not adults. The truly temperate person can handle the fluctuations in the temperature without complaint.[115] Therefore, I see no reason to think that heat is being added to the list of associated pleasures for which the *akratēs* has an excess desire. Instead, I think Aristotle is merely giving us another example of qualified *akrasia*.

My argument makes *sōphrosunē* very narrow indeed. Is this a problem? I think not. Those with an excess desire for pretty sights and melodic sounds are doing nothing shameful. Going to a lot of concerts is not a problem, unless this person is deficient in some other sphere of *pathos*. Going to a concert rather than paying the bills is irresponsible with respect to giving and spending. However, going to a concert rather than going to see a play is not shameful behavior. Such a person merely knows her own mind and is expressing a preference for music. Enjoying fine wines from obscure regions of France is fine, so long as that person is not a braggart about her ability. So, I do not need to posit a new sphere of *pathos* for these pleasures that *sōphrosunē* does not cover. Their excesses are not concerning. If there is associated behavior that is concerning, it is in a different sphere of *pathos* outlined by Aristotle.

IV. Excess or Deficiency?

I will now argue that the *akratēs* is the one who, although she knows better, performs the same action as the self-indulgent person and not the insensible person. Recall that the unqualified *akratēs*, like the self-indulgent person, ought to be ashamed of her actions.

[115] Think of Socrates who wore the same cloak in winter and in summer. This is what it means to be temperate.

The insensible person, while technically vicious, need not be ashamed. It is a shame that she does not enjoy a good Cabernet Sauvignon, but it is not shameful. Likewise, with the person who has deficient appetites yet knows better. Her actions are not in accordance with what is good for a human being, but they are not shameful. Therefore, she cannot be the *akratēs*.

So far, a lot has been said about the self-indulgent, the so-called mad-bellies, and nothing has been said of the insensible. This reflects the amount of attention Aristotle gives to each throughout *NE* III.10-III.12. The excess with respect to *sōphrosunē* is discussed far more often than the corresponding deficiency. This is because Aristotle thinks that insensible people do not exist often, if at all (*NE* 1107b7-8), and that such people are far from being human (*NE* 1119a10). The insensible enjoy things too little because they think that the desire is wrong. As vicious people, they do not know what is right. For example, she does not realize that having one ice cream cone would be temperate. After all, it is a hot day and she otherwise keeps to a healthy diet. Her issue is that she thinks that the desire is wrong in itself. However, it is not. Recall from the previous section that our nature requires of us that we eat and reproduce. So, the desires for food and sex are not bad. They become bad when we desire the wrong objects, e.g., human flesh, or too much or too little of the right objects, e.g., water.

Let's take stock. We have four different types of people we are currently concerned with.

Akratic	**Self-Indulgent**	**Deficient in Appetite**	**Insensible**

Knows that having one ice cream cone would be temperate	Thinks that having two ice cream cones would be temperate	Knows that having one ice cream cone would be temperate	Thinks that having an ice cream cone would be overindulging
Desires two ice cream cones	Desires two ice cream cones	Does not desire an ice cream cone	Does not desire an ice cream cone
Eats two ice cream cones	Eats two ice cream cones	Does not have an ice cream cone	Does not have an ice cream cone

The *akratēs* and the self-indulgent person desire the same thing and both overindulge. Likewise, with the person deficient in appetite who knows better and the insensible person. They both underindulge. The *akratēs* and the person with deficient appetites who knows better might seem similar, because they both suffer from an inner turmoil wherein their knowledge of what is right conflicts with their desires. However, the person with the deficient appetite who knows better makes a less shameful mistake than the one the *akratēs* makes. Underindulgence is not what we should reasonably expect of a human being all of the time, for it is often not the temperate action to underindulge. However, it is better than forgetting our rational nature and acting like a mere animal.

The underindulgence I speak of here is not a dangerous sort where the insensible person and person with a deficient appetite who knows better do not eat enough to nourish themselves. If it were, then it would be more shameful than self-indulgence because it would lead to an early grave. There are two types of insensible people as I see it. The first does not discern between mere sustenance and gourmet food.[116] I have a

[116] Thanks to Howard Curzer for making this point clear to me.

friend who is content to eat ground beef on a plate. He sees no difference between that and me making an apple and brie burger. He enjoys both the same. The second sees eating and the like as a chore. As Young puts it, these insensible people "are not to be confused with anorexics. Their problem is not that they eat and drink too little, but that they partake too little of the pleasures that eating and drinking naturally bring."[117] The issue with the desires of this type of insensible person and those with deficient desires who know better is that they never have something "just for the heck of it" like the temperate do.[118] These people regard nourishing their bodies as a chore and take no pleasure in ingesting the food. I do not enjoy the taste of medicine. But, when I need to, I take it. This is the sort of attitude that these people have toward eating and having sex. They are necessary evils for the insensible and those with deficient appetites that know better. They will perform such actions, but they will derive little to no pleasure from them. Because they derive little to no pleasure from them, they will do the bare minimum that they need to.

It might sound strange to say that something is a vice but that it is not shameful. However, some vices are closer to the mean than others. Foolhardiness is usually closer to courage than cowardice is. This is so because the person with the excess desire to save someone from a burning building still saves that person, as the courageous person does. The foolhardy person jumps into action a bit too quickly, thereby showing too little regard for her life, but she still gets the job done. The coward never acts. So, she can hardly ever do what the courageous person does. Insensibility is usually closer to the

[117] Young, "Aristotle on Temperance", 536.
[118] Young, "Aristotle on Temperance", 535.

mean of *sōphrosunē* than self-indulgence because the insensible person and temperate person both refrain from acting like animals. The self-indulgent person forgets her rational nature and pursues the wrong objects or too much of the proper objects of food and sex.

Insensibility is a vice not because it is shameful behavior, but because it is not very human behavior. Aristotle gives the following definition of virtue in *NE* II.6:

> Virtue is a stable state that deliberately chooses the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is, the way in which the person of practical wisdom would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency (*NE* 1107a1-4).[119]

When he says that the mean is relative to us, he does not mean that there is a dangerous sort of relativism that lets anything go. Instead, he means that it is relative to humans.[120] The purpose of stating that the mean is relative to humans is to distinguish what is appropriate for us from what is appropriate for other beings, like the gods. An action that would be considered courageous if performed by a human being could be considered cowardly if performed by a god. Likewise, what is intemperate for a human might be temperate for a god. Since Aristotle is concerned in the *Nicomachean Ethics* with what human flourishing is, when he describes a vice, it is what is bad for a human. This does not automatically translate into being shameful. Sometimes, underindulgence is the right thing to do. After all, parents often refrain from a another serving to give it to their children. This is just not what one should reasonably expect of a human being *all the time*.

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[119] Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὡρισμένῃ λόγῳ καὶ ὡς[5] ἂν ὁ1107 a φρόνιμος ὁρίσειεν. μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ᾽ ἔλλειψιν·

[120] Cf. Irwin (1999) 197 and Brown 69-71.

So, the *akratēs* and the self-indulgent person, because they make the mistake of overindulging, ought to be ashamed of their actions. Neither of them listens to reason. The *akratēs* because she is in a haze like a drunk and the self-indulgent person because she does not even know what reason prescribes. The person with deficient desires who knows better might also fail to listen to reason, but she does not do so to the detriment of her rational nature which prohibits us from acting on each of our animal desires. For this reason, *akrasia* involves only an excess desire for the tactile pleasures associated with food and sex, not a deficiency.

Conclusion

The *akratēs* suffers from an epistemic failing in which she either lacks or knows only in the way the drunk person knows the conclusion of the good practical syllogism. This causes her to act against her better judgment. However, she is not plagued by such mistakes in every sphere of *pathos*. While we might call others akratic, unqualified *akrasia* only applies to someone who suffers such an epistemic failing with respect to *sōphrosunē*. This is because being “akratic” with respect to anger is not to demean oneself by acting like an animal, for anger still listens to reason. The unqualified *akratēs* has excessive desires for the tactile pleasures involved with eating food and having sex. This does not include the discrimination of the finer things, for the *akratēs* merely desires the feeling of satisfaction regardless of the quality of the object in question. Although it is possible to have a deficiency with respect to those same pleasures, that is not *akrasia*, for *akrasia* is shameful behavior. Underindulgence, while technically a vice, is not shameful. So, the akratic’s issue is a very specific one to have indeed.

Chapter Three: The Disunity of *Akrasia* and *Enkrateia*

In this chapter, I will argue for the traditional view of Aristotle according to which the virtuous and vicious agents possess a sort of psychological harmony not possessed by the *akratēs* (person lacking self-control) and the *enkratēs* (self-controlled person). Many endorse this picture. However, there are some challenges to it. Here, I will focus on the challenges that neither the virtuous nor the vicious person are unified. I will address both objections and argue that the virtuous and vicious agents are the only ones who are unified, leaving the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* with a lack of unity. This similarity is more proof that the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* are the same kind of person; they differ only in degree.

I begin with a sketch of the typical view attributed to Aristotle. In section II, I argue against those who believe that the virtuous person is not unified. I argue against Wolf that the unity of virtue is a tenable and interesting thesis, against Walker that the virtues are not incompatible, and against Badhwar that the virtues form more than a limited unity. In section III, I argue that the other *hexis* (stable state) of the soul that is unified is vice. Again, I go about this mainly by responding to objections, especially Müller's claim that the vicious person is conflicted.

I. The Unity of Virtue and Vice

Aristotle's virtuous agent possesses two kinds of unity. First, she possesses what I will refer to as a psychological unity between what she knows to be right and what she desires to do. This means that her decisions are free from internal conflict, unlike the *enkratēs* and *akratēs*. I do not mean that she never has to make hard choices. Indeed, the virtuous agent may hold the lives of many in her hand when she chooses and these choices might

be difficult to execute. However, she does not have an internal conflict with herself about what to do. Second, she possesses what I will refer to as a global unity because she possesses the psychological unity with respect to each and every sphere of *pathos* (emotion) because she possesses all the virtues of character.[121] The vicious agent, I will argue, only possesses the psychological unity. She has an internal harmony which leaves her free from discomfort when choosing. However, she need not possess a vice with respect to each and every sphere of *pathos*. So, she does not possess the global unity.

Aristotle's taxonomy of moral agents is as follows:

	Knows what is right	Desires what is right	Does what is right
Virtuous	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enkratēs	Yes	No	Yes
Akratēs	Yes	No	No
Vicious	No	No	No

The virtuous agent does not feel any conflict between reason and desire. So, she possesses a psychological unity that allows her to be at ease with her choices. The *enkratēs* and *akratēs* are not so lucky. They both know what is right, which means knowing the universal premise to the good practical syllogism. However, they both desire to do the opposite. This means that their choices are accompanied by a sort of pain or discomfort in having this internal conflict. The vicious agent, as I will argue, lacks this

[121] Here I shall make no claim about the virtues of character individually. The lists Aristotle gives us are long and varied. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* he lists twelve, but in the *Eudemian Ethics* fourteen. Which virtues are included in or excluded from the list is not at issue here.

conflict and is therefore psychologically unified like the virtuous agent. For example, if temperance is under scrutiny, we can say the following about the four agents in question:

Virtuous	***Enkratēs***	***Akratēs***	**Vicious**
Knows that she should not drink a fifth glass of wine	Knows that she should not drink a fifth glass of wine	Knows that she should not drink a fifth glass of wine	*Does not know* that she should not drink a fifth glass of wine
Does not desire to drink a fifth glass of wine	Desires to drink a fifth glass of wine	Desires to drink a fifth glass of wine	Desires to drink a fifth glass of wine
Does not drink a fifth glass of wine	*Does not* drink a fifth glass of wine	Drinks a fifth glass of wine	Drinks a fifth glass of wine

While there might be an initial pull to sort the virtuous and *enkratēs* into one group and the *akratēs* and vicious into another, based on what it is that they actually do, this does not line up with Aristotle's system. For him, we must see if the agent in question has acted as the virtuous person acts, which means that she has acted in a manner that accords with not only *eudaimonia* but her subjective desires as well. The virtuous person possesses this psychological harmony globally, i.e., in all spheres of *pathos,* because she possesses all the virtues of character. She possesses all of the virtues of character because she possesses a specific virtue of thought: *phronēsis* (practical wisdom).

The relationship between *phronēsis* and the virtues of character is a tight one. Aristotle tells us that Socrates was half right:

> He was wrong in thinking that all of the virtues are forms of *phronēsis,* but right in saying that the virtues require *phronēsis* to exist (*NE* 1144b19-21).[122]

The virtues of character are not identical with *phronēsis*, but an agent possesses *phronēsis* if and only if she possesses all the virtues of character. The agent who exhibits virtue of character does not happen to also possess *phronēsis*. Instead, one can only exhibit virtue of character by possessing *phronēsis*, and anyone possessing *phronēsis* will exhibit virtue of character, because each requires the other in order to play its role. The reason that virtue of character requires *phronēsis* is "precisely because a virtuous disposition is a habit of a non-rational element in us, it needs direction and guidance."[123] The virtues of character are of the part of the soul that does not have but can listen to reason. Well, *phronēsis* is of the part of the soul that has reason. Michael Pakaluk illustrates the relationship nicely with the following example. "We show courage when at war; therefore, courage itself does not decide whether we should or should not engage in war. We apparently need a virtue distinct from the virtues of character, then, which says in effect up to what point we should engage in those activities in which those virtues are displayed."[124] Virtue of character can make us desire to do something courageous, but we have to also know what reason concludes the courageous action for that circumstance to be, or else we cannot act on our desire.

However, the dependence is not one-sided. If a person possesses *phronēsis*, then, unless she is making an uncharacteristic mistake, when she acts, she will exhibit virtue of character. *Phronēsis*, far from existing in isolation from the virtues of character, requires

[122] ὅτι μὲν γὰρ φρονήσεις ᾧετο εἶναι πάσας τὰς ἀρετάς, ἡμάρτανεν, ὅτι δ᾽οὐκ ἄνευ φρονήσεως, καλῶς ἔλεγεν.
[123] Pakaluk, *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics: *An Introduction*, 227.
[124] Pakaluk, *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics: *An Introduction*, 228.

them to be what it is. Otherwise, the ability to achieve an end is not necessarily the virtue of *phronēsis*, but merely a character trait that people who are other than virtuous possess.

> There is a capacity called cleverness. It is one that leads to the actions that tend to promote whatever goal is assumed and to attain them. If the goal is fine, cleverness is praiseworthy, and if the goal is bad, cleverness is mischievous. This is why both the *phronimos* and mischievous people are called clever (*NE* 1144a23-28).[125]

An agent only possesses full virtue when she possesses the correct reason and the correct goal. Having the correct reason without the correct goal is to merely be clever. Having the correct goal without the correct reason is to merely have natural virtue.

> To all it seems that our character comes to be by nature; for we are just, temperate, brave, and have the other good features, from birth (*NE* 1144b4-7).[126]

Natural virtue is what a child possesses when she stands up to the schoolyard bully. She does not know why it is right to protect her friend, but she has a strong desire to do so. If habituated well, then she will become fully virtuous. Knowing how to make someone cry, but not having a good reason to engage in this behavior is being clever, or being good at means-end reasoning. If not properly habituated, this person will become vicious. Combining both of the necessary aspects is what makes the virtuous person so special.

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[125] ἔστι δή τις δύναμις ἣν καλοῦσι δεινότητα· αὕτη δ’ ἐστὶ τοιαύτη ὥστε τὰ πρὸς τὸν ὑποτεθέντα σκοπὸν συντείνοντα δύνασθαι ταῦτα πράττειν καὶ τυγχάνειν αὐτοῦ. ἂν μὲν οὖν ὁ σκοπὸς ᾖ καλός, ἐπαινετή ἐστιν, ἂν δὲ φαῦλος, πανουργία·

[126] πᾶσι γὰρ δοκεῖ ἕκαστα τῶν ἠθῶν ὑπάρχειν φύσει πως· καὶ γὰρ δίκαιοι5 καὶ σωφρονικοὶ καὶ ἀνδρεῖοι καὶ τἆλλα ἔχομεν εὐθὺς ἐκ γενετῆς·

She knows how to get at her goal and she aims at this goal for the right reason, something in line with *eudaimonia*.

So, a virtuous agent is unified, in a global sense, because she possesses *phronēsis*. Is the vicious agent unified in this same sense because she lacks it? No, for the *enkratēs* and *akratēs* also lack it. Instead, the unity that the vicious agent possesses is not the global unity that comes from having every vice; it is the psychological unity that comes from there being no discomfort or pain accompanying her choices. To return to the temperance example, she does not know that a fifth glass of wine at a party would be intemperate, she desires to drink a fifth glass, and does so. There is no internal conflict between reason and desire, because she does not know what she ought to be desiring. This is why she does not regret her actions.

Why exactly does the vicious agent lack global unity? Put simply, because there are even more chances for her to be disunified in ways other than the psychological disunity possessed by the *enkratēs* and *akratēs*. Each virtue has two vices, an excess and a deficiency. Some vices are closer to virtues than their counterparts. Sometimes the excess is closer to the virtue and sometimes the deficiency is. For example, rashness is usually closer to courage than cowardice is. However, insensibility is usually closer to temperance than indulgence is. There is no guarantee that an excess or deficiency in one sphere of *pathos* will reveal the same in another. One could be vicious with respect to generosity by being stingy, and be akratic with respect to pleasure, but manage to do the right thing when it comes to courage. There is no principle that the vicious person follows akin to *phronēsis* for the virtuous person.

As I stated earlier, there may be an initial pull to group the virtuous with the *enkratēs* and the *akratēs* with the vicious, if we look simply at what they do. However, my view is that the *enkratēs* and *akratēs* are together in one group while the virtuous and vicious are each in their own groups. The virtuous and the vicious each possess a psychological harmony that eludes the *enkratēs* and *akratēs*. The *enkratēs* and *akratēs* are constantly plagued by pain and discomfort when deliberating. The intense desires are to blame for the pain. Aristotle states that

> The melancholic by nature are always in need of healing, for their body is in a continuous state of irritation, and they are always having excessive desires (*NE* 1154b11-13).[127]

Melancholic people are identified earlier in Book VII as a species of *akratēis* (*NE* 1150b26-29). So, instead of drawing a bright line between *enkrateia* and *akrasia*, we should draw *two* bright lines between virtue and *enkrateia* and between *akrasia* and vice.

II. Some Criticisms of the Unity of Virtue

In this section, I will present three criticisms of the unity of virtue. The first, from Wolf, is that the only tenable unity thesis is quite uninteresting. The second, from Walker, is that virtues sometimes conflict. The third, and most damning, from Badhwar, is that the virtuous person only possesses a limited unity. I begin with the criticisms from Wolf and Walker, because they are easier to dismiss.

Virtue and Knowledge

[127] οἱ δὲ μελαγχολικοὶ τὴν φύσιν ἀεὶ δέονται ἰατρείας· καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα δακνόμενον διατελεῖ διὰ τὴν κρᾶσιν, καὶ ἀεὶ ἐν ὀρέξει σφοδρᾷ εἰσίν·

Susan Wolf breaks the argument for the unity of virtue down as follows:

1. Each virtue essentially involves knowledge, in particular knowledge of what's important.
2. Knowledge is essentially unified.
3. Virtue is unified.[128]

This is different from how Aristotle argues for the unity of virtue, because Wolf thinks that the only tenable unity thesis is not what the Greeks endorsed. "Unlike those Greeks who believed that a courageous person will also necessarily be generous and just, our argument only supports the idea that a courageous person will have the knowledge relevant to generosity and justice. A courageous person, in other words, will know what he ought to do to be generous and just. But it does not follow that he will actually be generous and just."[129] According to Wolf, the only version of the unity thesis that goes through is a weaker one than what Aristotle and company propose. Instead of having every virtue, on this account, the virtuous person has the idea of how to act in any given circumstance. It is another matter entirely whether this knowledge leads to action.

Wolf goes on to argue that this weaker thesis is barely of interest. "The sense in which our argument justifies the claim that the virtues are unified, then falls short of the claim that to have one virtue is to have them all. What is justified by our argument is rather the claim that in order for a person to possess the knowledge—the holistic knowledge of what matters—that is necessary for them all. Because we rarely care whether a person possesses a virtue perfectly and completely, this claim is of little practical interest in

[128] Wolf, "Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues", *Ratio* 20, no. 2 (2007): 150.
[129] Wolf, "Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues", 162.

itself."[130] Indeed, if this is the only thesis we have, then it is of little practical interest, because it tells us nothing about how the virtuous person will act. Luckily, there are problems with this weaker version of unity. So, we will not be left with such questions.

The issue with Wolf is that she is describing virtue in such an incomplete way that it is indiscernible from both *enkrateia* or *akrasia*. Recall the chart from section I. The virtuous person, *enkratēs*, and *akratēs* all know what the right thing to do is. To have knowledge of what to do and fail to do is *akrasia,* because the virtuous person and *enkratēs* act on what they know. Imagine someone who is courageous, or who appears to be. Now, if she possesses knowledge of what justice is, yet does not act on it, then what kind of a person is she? She is either the virtuous person making an uncharacteristic mistake or she is the *akratēs*. Either way, Wolf is wrong. If this person is virtuous, but is making an uncharacteristic mistake, then she can still possess the other virtues, as Aristotle states. In the example, she has already demonstrated courage. So, how ought we to characterize someone who seems to possess one of the virtues, yet not another? She cannot be vicious. So, she is either the virtuous person, *enkratēs*, or *akratēs*. If this person is the *akratēs*, then Wolf has not told us anything about the virtuous person at all.

To be fair, Wolf is not doing exegetical work. Indeed, she claims early on in the paper that "[she] can make no pretense of Greek scholarship. Therefore, … the question of whether Aristotle actually held these views, interesting as that is, should not affect the strength of the argument or the attractiveness of the position [she] shall be presenting."[131] Her argument, however, is too Socratic, for it is Socrates who thinks that virtue just is

[130] Wolf, "Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues", 163.
[131] Wolf, "Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues", 148.

knowledge. Recall from Chapter One that it is not knowledge simpliciter that the *akratēs* lacks but the ability to move to Second Actuality with respect to such knowledge. This is because virtue is not identical with knowledge, for Aristotle. As Daniel C. Russell puts it, "the virtues are inseparable from phronesis, [Aristotle] says, but they are not the same thing as phronesis."[132] For Aristotle, virtues are a matter of having wisdom about what to do with knowledge and the desire to act on that knowledge. After all, the purpose of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to tell us what to do, not merely have us know something about what we ought to do.

Moreover, even if having knowledge is not enough to motivate us to act, knowledge itself is not necessarily unified.[133] I know plenty about baking cookies and scones. However, I cannot keep a plant alive to save my life. I have killed every cactus and succulent I have brought home. My dad has a green thumb that I did not inherit. He tells me what to do, but it never seems to work out for me. If *phronēsis* being unified depends on knowledge being unified, then Wolf's argument leaves something to be desired.

Phronēsis does not cause someone to have all the virtues because she has all the knowledge. That is too high a standard. Instead, *phronēsis* picks up on what is salient about the situation. If my non-rational soul tells me that it is time to be generous, then *phronēsis* just further specifies this to a particular action, e.g., bring soup to my sick friend. We need experience in life, not merely knowledge to be the *phronimos* (person who possesses practical wisdom).

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[132] Daniel C. Russell, "Phronesis and the Virtues", in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, ed. Ronald Polansky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 210.
[133] Thanks to Howard Curzer for pointing this out.

> It is a sign of what has been said that although the young may be experts in geometry and mathematics and similar branches of wisdom, we do not consider that a young man can be the *phronimos*. The reason is that *phronēsis* includes knowledge of particular facts, and this is derived from experience; a young man does not possess experience. For experience is made from much time (*NE* 1142a12-17).[134]

We do not have to know everything in order to act properly. We need to be sensitive to the situation. This means recognizing what virtue is the one that should take the front seat and drive our actions. Such a skill comes with experience in life. So, there is still a possibility of a unity of virtue thesis that is interesting, defensible, and of practical importance.

Can Virtues Conflict?

A.D.M. Walker's criticism of the unity of virtue is that there are times when two or more virtues come into conflict with one another and prescribe opposite things. His main example is justice and kindness. However, why think that these two virtues conflict? Justice does not always call for punishment and kindness does not always call for a reprieve.

Walker begins his article by citing Philippa Foot's claim that, far from what Aristotle thought, the virtues can actually conflict with one another.[135] According to Walker, Foot's

[134] Σημεῖον δ' ἐστὶ τοῦ εἰρημένου καὶ διότι γεωμετρικοὶ μὲν νέοι καὶ μαθηματικοὶ γίνονται καὶ σοφοὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, φρόνιμος δ' οὐ δοκεῖ γίνεσθαι. αἴτιον δ' ὅτι καὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστά ἐστιν ἡ φρόνησις, ἃ γίνεται γνώριμα ἐξ ἐμπειρίας, νέος δ' ἔμπειρος οὐκ ἔστιν· πλῆθος γὰρ χρόνου ποιεῖ τὴν ἐμπειρίαν.
[135] Philippa Foot, "Moral Realism and Moral Dilemma", in *The Journal of Philosophy* 80, no. 7 (1983): 396-397.

claim is more about human nature than it is the nature of the virtues themselves. Walker thinks that Foot's examples only show how a deeply flawed individual would face a conflict of virtues. He wants to claim something stronger: "that *beyond a certain point* the development of one virtue is incompatible with the development of certain others."[136] Walker concludes that improvement in one aspect of our behavior is often only achieved at the price of deterioration in some other aspect. He says that there is no shortage of examples of this conflict, but chooses to focus on justice and kindness.[137]

He begins by contrasting the sort of virtues that kindness and justice are, claiming that acts of justice are "strikingly unlike acts characteristic of kindness."[138] Kindness, according to Walker, is concerned with the good of another person, while justice is concerned with a principle. For this reason, we are supposed to see kindness and justice at odds with one another. We are told to imagine the person incapable of kindness having no trouble doling out justice. Unlike with Foot's examples, Walker thinks he has shown that there is a tension between kindness and justice themselves, not just a problem with a human being acting on both virtues simultaneously.

I do not think that Walker has shown what he set out to. There is no tension between justice and kindness nor any of the other virtues of character. Justice does not always mean that punishment must be doled out and kindness will not always prescribe a reprieve for the individual in question. Consider a judge. The virtuous judge will take into account the circumstances. If it is a defendant's third offense, then perhaps it is time

[136] A.D.M. Walker, "Virtue and Character", *Philosophy* 64 (1989): 352.
[137] It is important to note that kindness is not one of the twelve virtues listed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It certainly overlaps with generosity, which is on the list.
[138] Walker, "Virtue and Character", 353.

for her to be punished. Clearly, she is not learning her lesson in other ways. However, if it is her first offense, then justice will call for light or no punishment. This does not mean that justice is not being done, Instead, justice sometimes calls for mercy.

The circumstances are very important for Aristotle. When discussing the doctrine of the mean, Aristotle tells us the following:

> For if ten pounds is too much to eat and two pounds too few, it does not follow that the trainer will prescribe six, for this might also be too much or too little for the person who is to take it—for Milo a little, but for the beginner in gymnastics a lot (*NE* 1106b1-4).[139]

What should be inferred from that passage is that "in exercising their skill, [the trainer] will adjust their action to all aspects of the situation, including the recipients. Likewise, the responses of a possessor of virtue will be correct provided they are just right and appropriate, and neither too much nor too little, for the circumstances."[140] The trainer is akin to the virtuous person, because both recognize what is appropriate for the situation. Just as the trainer prescribes neither too much nor too little food, depending on the athlete in question, the virtuous person displays neither too much nor too little emotion, depending on the situation in question. What is going on here is a single agent, x_1, identifying different circumstances, c_1 and c_2, and responding appropriately, with actions

[139] οὐ γὰρ εἴ τῳ δέκα μναῖ φαγεῖν πολὺ δύο δὲ ὀλίγον, ὁ ἀλείπτης ἓξ μνᾶς προστάξει· ἔστι γὰρ ἴσως καὶ τοῦτο πολὺ τῷ ληψομένῳ ἢ ὀλίγον· Μίλωνι μὲν γὰρ ὀλίγον, τῷ δὲ ἀρχομένῳ τῶν γυμνασίων πολύ·

[140] Brown, "Why Is Aristotle's Virtue of Character a Mean? Taking Aristotle at His Word (*NE* ii 6)", in *The Cambridge Companion to* Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, ed. Ronald Polansky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 69.

a_1 and a_2. This difference in circumstances will lead to a difference in action. Justice is not the same across the board; neither is kindness.

Walker's mistake is his claim that kindness is concerned about the good of others and justice is not. He takes this position because he is too rigidly committed to a division of the virtues made by James D. Wallace. Wallace divides the virtues into three kinds: self-control, conscientiousness, and benevolence. He places justice in the second group and kindness in the third.[141] Of course, some virtues are more about other people than others, but to claim that justice is not about the good of others is wrong. Temperance and wittiness seem to be very self-centered, but there is still some other-regarding nature to them. The temperate person eats only her fair share at a party. The witty person is a joy to be around for others. Justice, the virtue having to do with the possessions of others is, of course, very other-regarding.

Now, I can certainly imagine the grim yet "just" agent that Walker wants me to. However, this does not line up with how I imagine Aristotle's virtuous agent to act. In fact, it sounds too much like Kant's miser who still gives to charity. Sometimes justice is the virtue at the forefront of the virtuous person's behavior. But she is never unkind to one who does not deserve such an attitude. The issue at hand is that often when we think of someone who displays a virtue, e.g., Sherlock Holmes, or Ned Stark, we are actually thinking of someone who has the excess in that specific sphere of *pathos*, not someone who hits the mean. Sherlock Holmes is witty. He is good at coming up with smart remarks. However, he cannot read a room to see that over a dead body is not the place to make

[141] James D. Wallace, *Virtues and Vices*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 128-9.

such remarks. Ned Stark is honorable. However, he cares so much about honor that he loses his head because he did not want to reveal to the king that the queen's children were fathered by her twin brother. The soldier who is courageous is not the one who yearns for a glorious death in battle. Instead, the right amount of courage can tell the soldier that it is time to retreat and reconnoiter for another day.

The truly virtuous person is not looking around for virtuous things to do. She just lives her life well. She waves at neighbors. She treats her pets well. She pays her fair share of taxes. She tells jokes. She loves her children. When situations arise, she reacts. Often her reactions are complex. Justice may take the lead, but kindness is not altogether absent in her ruling.

I am not claiming that clusters of virtues based on similarities cannot be made. I am only claiming that such divisions exist on a continuum and no bright lines causing tension between two virtues can be drawn. Indeed, when Aristotle lists the virtues of character in *Nicomachean Ethics*, he does a bit of grouping. He begins with ones that are clearly thought of as virtues in his time and ones whose possession is easy to observe; this is why he begins with courage and temperance. His readers are going to agree that these are character traits that the virtuous person ought to possess, but they are also the easiest to explain. Courage on the battlefield is obvious: we stand firm or we run away. Eating too much or too little is obvious for it is reflected in our body size. He goes on to list the virtues that are less obviously virtues and are harder to observe. However, all of the virtues have some *prima facie* goodness to them and all can be observed. Again, some virtues are more self-centered than others, but they are still other-regarding to a

certain degree. So, we can arrange the virtues on different continua, but we should not group them into separate kinds that puts them at odds with one another.

A Limited Unity of Virtue

The final objection to the claim that the virtuous person is unified comes from Neera K. Badhwar. Badhwar's thesis is as follows: "the virtues are *disunited across different domains* (areas of practical concern), but *united within domains*."[142] So, while she does not go so far as to argue that the virtues are incompatible or do not form any sort of unity, she argues that they only form a limited unity. My issue here is that she misunderstands what it means to possess a virtue, for, in her examples, the people in question are not virtuous at all.

The limited unity of virtue (LUV) argues the following: "(1) The existence of a virtue in a particular domain does not imply the existence of that (or any other) virtue in any other domain...(2) The existence of virtue in one domain implies the absence of vice as well as of ignorance in most other domains...(3) Every virtue requires the others within the same domain, and so none is incompatible with, or independent of, any other."[143] The main difference between the unity of virtue (UV) and LUV is the question over whether virtues are global or local. The proponent of UV will hold them to be the former, while the proponent of LUV will hold them to be the latter.

Aristotle believes that the virtues are global, because they are linked to a virtue of intellect that itself is unified: *phronēsis. Phronēsis* is a unity because, if we are truly

[142] Neera K. Badhwar, "The Limited Unity of Virtue", *Nous* 30, no.3 (1996): 307.
[143] Badhwar, "The Limited Unity of Virtue", 308.

sensitive to the circumstances, then we will always be sensitive when other, similar circumstances arise. Phronesis acts like a fine, mesh strainer that filters through the desires of the non-rational part of the soul. The non-rational part of the soul says something general, e.g., be kind, and the rational part specifies that to something more specific, e.g., give that lady five bucks. Imagine three friends. One is sick and the other two, because they are virtuous, help her out. The first friend makes her some soup because she is a good cook. The other friend picks up her prescriptions from the pharmacy because she has a car. Both of them react in different ways, yet both of them did so for the same reason, because they were sensitive to the pain that their friend was suffering. *Phronēsis* has worked the same in these two different agents. The non-rational parts of their soul responded differently because of their different personalities and talents. But the rational parts of their souls acted the same, and will when another friend is sick or in need.

Badhwar, on the other hand, believes that virtues are local. So, if I am temperate when it comes to food, then it means that I am not necessarily temperate when it comes to sex. If I am honest with my coworkers, then I will not necessarily be honest with strangers. However, these “virtues” that Badhwar is claiming are present are not really present. The person who does not see the value in being honest always or *hōs epi to polu* (for the most part) is not really honest. Likewise, with the other virtues.

Again, the virtues form a global unity because of the tight relationship with *phronēsis. Phronēsis* triggers in us a response to the circumstances that manifests differently depending on our personality, talents, and abilities. Because the alarm bell has gone off, we know it is time to take action. If we only take action in very specific

circumstances, then our alarm bells are broken, and we cannot be considered truly virtuous. Badhwar mentions a judge who is not a great mother as a way of imagining what this localized virtue looks like. Delta has "the emotional dispositions required for being a wise judge without having the emotional dispositions required for being a wise mother."[144] If Delta is only wise at work and not at home, then she is not properly filtering through her non-rational desires. Therefore, she is not demonstrating a virtue. Instead, she just so happens to have a good handle on her work. This is more akin to the natural virtue that children demonstrate. They have the right action in mind, but they do not know the reason why it is right. Delta is like this, not a truly virtuous person. Famously, children do not come with a manual and this might be what Delta needs to be wise, especially if she only has one child. Perhaps Delta has been getting by at work by relying on the years of precedent set ahead of her time.

Badhwar believes that the virtues are local because she does not think that anyone has enough life experience to have each of the virtues. Her argument can be reconstructed as follows:

4. If *Phronēsis* is a unity, then no one has *phronēsis*, because no one has experience is all morally relevant areas of life.
5. People possess *phronēsis.*
6. So, *phronēsis* is not a unity.[145]

We should recall that no one expects everyone to have experience in all areas of life, just the select few who manage to become virtuous. Wisdom, of course, is not going to

[144] Badhwar, "The Limited Unity of Virtue", 314.
[145] Badhwar, "The Limited Unity of Virtue", 315.

accompany motherhood at the onset. This is because wisdom comes with age. Indeed, in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tells us that the young and immature are not the proper audience for his lectures. Instead, one must have had some life experience before attempting to cultivate virtue. So, the fact that one can be a good judge and not a good mother simultaneously proves nothing about the nature of the truly virtuous person, who will exhibit both traits.

The virtuous person is an excellent specimen of humanity. She needs to be the cream of the crop.

> That is why it is also work to be excellent. For, in each case, it is work to understand the intermediate; just as not everyone, but only one who knows, finds the midpoint in a circle. So also getting angry is easy and everyone can do it, as is giving and spending money. Doing it to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, for the right end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it. Hence doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy, and fine (*NE* 1109a25-30).[146]

Possessing only some of the virtues is not enough to be a role model for the rest of humanity. Mahatma Gandhi was temperate, but cold to his children. Martin Luther King Jr. was gentle, but cheated on his wife. They appear to possess one virtue, but not another. Therefore, they are not the excellent specimens for which we are searching. Neither is Delta, the “good” judge, yet inadequate mother.

[146] διὸ καὶ ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον εἶναι· ἐν ἑκάστῳ γὰρ τὸ μέσον λαβεῖν ἔργον, οἷον κύκλου τὸ μέσον οὐ παντὸς ἀλλὰ τοῦ εἰδότος· οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀργισθῆναι παντὸς καὶ ῥᾴδιον, καὶ τὸ δοῦναι ἀργύριον καὶ δαπανῆσαι· τὸ δ’ ᾧ <δεῖ> καὶ ὅσον καὶ ὅτε καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ ὡς, οὐκέτι παντὸς οὐδὲ ῥᾴδιον· διόπερ τὸ εὖ καὶ σπάνιον καὶ ἐπαινετὸν καὶ καλόν.

Does this mean that what Aristotle proposes conflicts with what we see in everyday life? Not necessarily. I can think of many people who seem to possess one virtue yet possess at least one vice. Consider the celebrities and sports professionals that many hold in high regard as their role models. I was disappointed when I found out that Lance Armstrong was blood doping. I was disappointed when I found out that Louis C.K. has sexually harassed several female comics. Does this mean that they are evil people who cannot be saved? No. However, it does mean that I am going to think twice before putting people on a pedestal for appearing to possess only one virtue. If I think about what I want to teach my future children, then I want to exalt people that truly possess the virtues. This means that they possess *phronēsis*, which means that they will possess all the virtues of character.

Let's now return to the other claims that LUV makes and address them. Since I have already addressed incompatibility in another section, and I have just finished addressing (1), I will focus on (2). According to (2), possessing a virtue in a given domain means that a person will not possess a vice in most other domains. So, if I am just, then I am not going to be cowardly, intemperate, and stingy with my money. What basis could this have if it is not the Aristotelian argument that *phronēsis* unifies the virtues? Indeed, Badhwar is going to invoke *phronēsis* to support her claim.

Badhwar argues that *phronēsis* is potentially general. "Just as theoretical wisdom in the realm of, say, human physiology embodies an understanding of physiological principles that apply as well to certain other species, practical wisdom in, say, the domain of love and concern for a particular individual embodies an understanding of principles

that apply as well to other human beings and other human affairs."[147] According to Badhwar, if Alpha loves Zeta wisely, then he must understand human well-being in general, not just in Alpha's case. He must understand his own well-being and where loving Alpha fits into his overall picture of the good. All of this fits with what Aristotle says about *phronēsis* and none of it goes against what he says. *Phronēsis* is what unifies the virtues of character and makes them global.

III. Challenges to the Unity of Vice

Müller claims that the typical interpretation of the vicious person as unified is a mistake. He argues that the received view, where the vicious person is principled (PVP) should be supplanted by his own view that the vicious person is conflicted (CVP). I will partially agree with Müller; I will go as far as the text can carry us. Recall that, in section I, I distinguished between two types of unity that the virtuous person possesses: psychological unity and global unity. I agree that the vicious person does not always act with a general principle in mind, so I agree that PVP is not a good way to understand the vicious person. However, I will reject CVP as a good picture of the vicious person. The vicious person is not conflicted. She possesses a harmony of the soul in that she desires what her reason tells her to do. To add in conflict is to confuse vice with *akrasia*.

Müller begins his paper by citing an alleged inconsistency on Aristotle's part that he will address. There are times, it seems, where Aristotle treats the vicious person "just like the virtuous person in all but one respect: his values are upside down"[148] and other times, it seems, where Aristotle treats the vicious person as conflicted. He calls the former

[147] Badhwar, "The Limited Unity of Virtue", 320.
[148] Jozef Müller, "Aristotle on Vice", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23, no.3 (2015): 460.

view the principled vicious person (PVP) and the latter the conflicted vicious person (CVP). Support for PVP can mainly be found in Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and support for CVP can mainly be found in Books III and IX. However, Müller argues that CVP holds for all discussions of the vicious person throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to Müller, "the appearance of inconsistency is achieved only by assuming that Aristotelian vicious person *must* be a polar opposite of the virtuous person."[149] For Müller, this thesis is assumed and not argued for.

Müller outlines the following eight points about the vicious person that can be found in Book VII:

1. She acts on decision.
2. She thinks the pleasure at hand is right to pursue.
3. She sometimes pursues pleasure without an appetite for it.
4. She is persuaded by reason to pursue certain pleasures.
5. She is not regretful.
6. Her condition is continuous.
7. She does not recognize that she is vicious.
8. She does not possess the principle of actions.[150]

Müller claims that 2, 4, 5, and 8 are consistent with both PVP and CVP. I will grant him this much. So, we shall examine the others more to see which they support. Again, I will

[149] Müller, "Aristotle on Vice", 461.
[150] Müller, "Aristotle on Vice", 468-469.

support Müller halfway. I agree that PVP is a bad way to understand the vicious person. However, I do not go so far as to endorse CVP.

Let's begin with 1, that the vicious person acts on decision. That the virtuous person acts on decision is clear from Book VII. Müller cites the following four quotes as evidence:

> For the intemperate person yields based on his choice, since he thinks it is always right to pursue the pleasant thing (*NE* 1146b23-24).[151]
>
> *Akrasia* and intemperance are concerning the same pleasures and pains. In fact, they are about the same things, but not in the same way; the intemperate person chooses them, but the *akratēs* does not (*NE* 1148a16-18).[152]
>
> One person pursues excesses of pleasant things because they are excesses and because he chooses them, for themselves and not for some further result. He is intemperate; for he is bound to have no regrets and so is incurable, since someone without regrets is incurable (*NE* 1150a19-23).[153]
>
> The intemperate person, as we said, does not feel regret, since he abides by his choice (*NE* 1150b29-30).[154]

These quotes show that Aristotle is clear about 1. But does 1 support CVP? No. Not only is conflict never mentioned, but the first quote actually shows us that the decision that the

[151] ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἄγεται προαιρούμενος, νομίζων ἀεὶ δεῖν τὸ παρὸν ἡδὺ διώκειν·
[152] διὰ τὸ περὶ τὰς αὐτάς πως ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας εἶναι· οἱ δ' εἰσὶ μὲν περὶ ταὐτά, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡσαύτως εἰσίν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν προαιροῦνται οἱ δ' οὐ προαιροῦνται.
[153] ὁ μὲν τὰς ὑπερβολὰς διώκων τῶν ἡδέων ἢ καθ' ὑπερβολὴν καὶ διὰ προαίρεσιν, δι' αὑτὰς καὶ μηδὲν δι' ἕτερον ἀποβαῖνον, ἀκόλαστος· ἀνάγκη γὰρ τοῦτον μὴ εἶναι μεταμελητικόν, ὥστ' ἀνίατος· ὁ γὰρ ἀμεταμέλητος ἀνίατος.
[154] Ἔστι δ' ὁ μὲν ἀκόλαστος, ὥσπερ ἐλέχθη, οὐ μεταμελητικός (ἐμμένει γὰρ τῇ προαιρέσει)·

vicious person abides by is one that she reasons to, meaning her reason is in line with her desires. If the vicious person thinks it is right *in every case* to pursue the pleasure at hand, then she must believe a universal premise which is the opposite of the one contained in the good practical syllogism. If the correct universal premise is that adultery is always wrong, then she believes that adultery is always acceptable. And she desires to commit adultery. So, she possesses the same psychological unity as the virtuous person does, albeit a perverse form of it.

Next on the list is 3, that the vicious person sometimes pursues pleasures without an appetite for them. Müller's textual support for this claim is the following:

> That is why, if someone has no appetites, or slight ones, for excesses, but still pursues them and avoids moderate pains, we will take him to be more intemperate than the person who does it because he has excessive appetites (*NE* 1148a19-21).[155]

This passage might appear to support CVP, but there are two problems. First, it is a hypothetical about how vicious someone would be *if* they had little to no appetite for what they were doing. There is no guarantee that there are actually any vicious people like this. Second, what it presents is not a conflict.

Yes, we would think it worse for someone to go to excess eating cake if they did not have a desire for it than it would be if they had an overwhelming desire for the cake. The overwhelming desire helps us understand the bad behavior. So, someone without it

[155] διὸ μᾶλλον ἀκόλαστον ἂν εἴποιμεν ὅστις μὴ ἐπιθυμῶν ἢ ἠρέμα διώκει τὰς ὑπερβολὰς καὶ φεύγει μετρίας λύπας, ἢ τοῦτον ὅστις διὰ τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν σφόδρα·

would be even worse because they have no excuse for their bad behavior. But this extra vicious person would not yet have a conflict, unless she has a desire not to have cake. Without this other desire, there is no conflict. So, CVP can hardly be the proper account of vice if it does not even present the vicious person as conflicted.

The next feature of the vicious person we need to address is 6, that the vicious person's condition is continuous. Here is the evidence for 6:

> For vice resembles diseases such as dropsy or consumption, while *akrasia* is more like epilepsy; vice is a continuous bad condition, but *akrasia* is not (*NE* 1150b33-35).[156]

Again, this is solid evidence that Aristotle holds 6, but not that 6 supports CVP. If anything, Aristotle is showing us how unconflicted the vicious person is. When he compares *akrasia* to epilepsy, Aristotle is highlighting the fact that the vicious person is bad more often than the *akratēs* is. The *akratēs* has these "fits" that she succumbs to, but she is usually a good person. After her episode of *akrasia* has subsided, the *akratēs* feels bad about having done wrong, because she knew better. The conflict remains because she knew what she did was wrong. The same cannot be said of the vicious person. She does not "sober up" and feel regret. She learns no lessons from her mistakes. Instead, she is, always or *hōs epi to polu* (for the most part), bad, because she does not know any better.

The final feature we need to address is 7, that the vicious person does not know that she is vicious. Aristotle states exactly this:

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[156] ἔοικε γὰρ ἡ μὲν μοχθηρία τῶν νοσημάτων οἷον ὑδέρῳ καὶ φθίσει, ἡ δ᾽ ἀκρασία τοῖς ἐπιληπτικοῖς· ἡ μὲν γὰρ συνεχής, ἡ δ᾽ οὐ συνεχὴς πονηρία.

> For vice escapes [the agent's] notice, whereas *akrasia* does not (*NE* 1150b36-1151a1).[157]

7 is more evidence that the vicious person is not conflicted. She does not realize that she is in the wrong, because she desires what her reason prescribes and she is not learning a lesson from it. So, she keeps repeating her mistakes. She is unlike the *akratēs*, that can be cured, who realizes her mistake and regrets her decision to act against what reason prescribed.

So, I do not support the claim that CVP is the proper way to understand the vicious person. But does that mean that I support PVP? No. Think back to 1, that the vicious person acts on decision. There, Aristotle tells us that the vicious person believes that the pleasure at hand is good in all cases, which I interpreted as meaning that she believes a universal claim, one opposite to the one contained in the good practical syllogism. This might look as though it is evidence for PVP, but I do not think that it is. Recall from section I that I distinguished between two types of unity that the virtuous person possesses. In one way, the virtuous person is psychologically unified because her desires are in line with what her reason prescribes. This is the unity that the vicious person shares. In another way, the virtuous person is globally unified because she possesses a virtue in each and every sphere of *pathos* (emotion). The vicious person might have some universal beliefs, but she need not have an overarching principle that links these universal beliefs together.

[157] ἡ μὲν γὰρ κακία λανθάνει, ἡ δ' ἀκρασία οὐ λανθάνει.

It would be ridiculous for there to be a guiding light to her vicious behavior telling her how *not* to act in any given situation. Recall from section I that there is even more chance for a lack of global unity for the vicious person because there are twice as many vices as there are virtues. She can have an excess in one sphere and a deficiency in another. Even if a vicious person always has an excess or always has a deficiency, this is not global unity. Sometimes the person of excess does what the virtuous person does, although not in the way that she does it, and sometimes it is the deficient person who is more similar. For example, the rash person and the courageous person both make the save from the burning building. But it is the insensible person and the temperate both refrain from dessert. So, to always possess the excess or always possess the deficiency is to sometimes do what is right and sometimes do what is wrong. Therefore, there is no perverse mirror of *phronēsis* that the vicious person is following.

The vicious person need not be maximally vicious, i.e., she need not possess a vice in each and every sphere of *pathos*. To require her to would be to put too stringent a requirement on vice. Instead, the vicious person need only possess a vice in most of the spheres. In this way, she is still demonstrating a stable character, but it leaves room for there to be degrees of viciousness. Imagine an agent who is vicious in ten of the twelve spheres Aristotle mentions in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. What is she if not vicious? Sure, she may be a little closer to saving than someone who is vicious in all twelve. But she fits only in this category. She might even manage to get lucky and do the right thing in the other two spheres. However, she would still be vicious, because she is so always or *hōs epi to polu*.

Conclusion

I began with a typical view of Aristotle's taxonomy of agents: that the virtuous and vicious are mirrors of one another, each possessing a psychological harmony between what they desire and what their reason prescribes. I defended this claim from opponents arguing against both forms of unity. First, I defended the unity of virtue from three opponents: Wolf, Walker, and Badhwar. I argued that the unity of virtue stands because the virtues do not conflict and the relationship between *phronēsis* and the virtues of character require a unity of this sort. Then, I defended the unity of vice from Müller. I argued that the vicious person is not conflicted, like the *akratēs*, nor does she need to be maximally vicious in order to be considered as acting from a stable state of character. Again, the *enkratēs* and *akratēs* lack such unity, which is more evidence that they are the same kind of person.

Chapter Four: Healing *Akrasia* and Vice

At *NE* 1146a31, Aristotle raises a puzzle about the vicious person seeming to be more easily cured than the *akratēs* (person lacking self-control). In this chapter, I will go through how he answers that puzzle. Aristotle argues that the *akratēs* is easily curable, since she suffers regret after her akratic episode has ended. The vicious agent, however, does not. Therefore, she is incurable. I will show that my main claim, that the *akratēs* is the same kind of person as the *enkratēs* (self-controlled person), accords with everything that Aristotle says regarding who is actually curable.

In section I, I present the puzzle. In section II, I present Aristotle's resolution to the puzzle. In section III, I will argue that the *akratēs* is easy to cure because she is of the same type as the *enkratēs*. In section IV, I will discuss how it is that we get better. Healing morally bad character is not as difficult as it might seem. So, there is hope for us *akrateis* after all. As *akrasia* is a physiological condition, it will involve medicine or behavioral therapy.

I. The Initial Puzzle

Aristotle raises several puzzles at the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.2 including the following one about who is curable, the *akratēs* or the vicious:

> Still, someone who does and pursues what is pleasant because he chooses might be thought to be better than someone who acts not because of calculation, but because of *akrasia*. For he is easy to cure, because he might be persuaded to act otherwise; but the *akratēs* is subject to the proverb 'If water chokes us, what must we drink to wash it down?' If he had been persuaded that what he does is right, he

would have stopped when he was persuaded to act otherwise; but in fact, though already persuaded to act otherwise, he still acts (*NE* 1146a31-1146b3).[158]

Here, Aristotle writes that trying to persuade the *akratēs* that what she does is wrong is just as futile as giving someone who is choking a glass of water to wash down the water they are already choking on.[159] According to David Pears, "if his deliberation could not have been better, there was nothing more that reason could have done."[160] The *akratēs* already knows what she does is wrong. So, what can be done for her? Seemingly nothing, whereas the vicious person could yet be persuaded that what she does is wrong. At first glance, it seems as though the *akratēs* is in a worse position than the vicious agent.

Here is how the puzzle goes: Someone who is persuaded that she should do x and then does x has desires that follow her reasoning. She thinks chocolate pop tarts are a good breakfast, she desires a chocolate pop tart for breakfast, and she has a chocolate pop tart for breakfast. Likewise with a tenth glass of wine, an infidelity, or any other bad decision she makes. She thinks she is doing the right thing when, in fact, she is doing the wrong thing.[161] The thought here is that if we got to the vicious person and truly persuaded her that she was wrong in her deliberation, then she would instantly change. She would see that she ought to have blueberries for breakfast, break off her infidelities, and stop at three or four glasses of wine.

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[158] ἔτι ὁ τῷ πεπεῖσθαι πράττων καὶ διώκων τὰ ἡδέα καὶ προαιρούμενος βελτίων ἂν δόξειεν τοῦ μὴ διὰ λογισμὸν ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἀκρασίαν· εὐϊατότερος γὰρ διὰ τὸ μεταπεισθῆναι ἄν. ὁ δ᾽ ἀκρατὴς ἔνοχος τῇ παροιμίᾳ ἐν ᾗ φαμὲν "ὅταν τὸ ὕδωρ πνίγῃ, τί δεῖ ἐπιπίνειν;" εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐπέπειστο ἃ πράττει, μεταπεισθεὶς ἂν ἐπαύσατο· νῦν δὲ πεπεισμένος οὐδὲν ἧττον ἄλλα πράττει.

[159] Gianluca Di Muzio, "Aristotle on Improving One's Character", *Phronesis* 45, no.3 (2000): 212.

[160] David Pears, *Motivated Irrationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 16.

[161] She is not evil; she is just a chronically bad reasoner. The syllogism she follows is not the one the virtuous person follows.

II. Aristotle's Solution

Aristotle raises this puzzle at the end of NE VII.2 but he never really resolves it until VII.8. There he points out that regret is the key to being curable:

> One person pursues excesses of pleasant things because they are excesses and because he chooses them, for themselves and not for some further result. He is intemperate; for he is bound to have no regrets and so is incurable, since someone without regrets is incurable (*NE* 1150a19-22).[162]

> The intemperate person, as we said, does not feel regret, since he abides by his choice. But every *akratēs* is prone to regret. That is why the truth is not what we said in raising the puzzles, but in fact the intemperate person is incurable, and the *akratēs* curable. For vice resembles diseases such as dropsy or consumption, while *akrasia* is more like epilepsy; vice is a continuous bad condition, but *akrasia* is not (*NE* 1150b29-34).[163]

The fact that the *akratēs* regrets her actions makes her curable. After her mistake, the *akratēs* realizes that she has done something wrong; the vicious agent does not. Therefore, the vicious agent is incurable.

But why does the lack of regret mean that the vicious person is beyond help? That the *akratēs* show regret shows that she can still be reasoned with; she is not beyond help. One other notable difference is that the *akratēs* knows the universal premise to the good

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[162] ὁ μὲν τὰς ὑπερβολὰς διώκων τῶν ἡδέων ἢ καθ' ὑπερβολὴν καὶ διὰ προαίρεσιν, δι' αὐτὰς καὶ μηδὲν δι' ἕτερον ἀποβαῖνον, ἀκόλαστος· ἀνάγκη γὰρ τοῦτον μὴ εἶναι μεταμελητικόν, ὥστ' ἀνίατος· ὁ γὰρ ἀμεταμέλητος ἀνίατος.

[163] Ἔστι δ' ὁ μὲν ἀκόλαστος, ὥσπερ ἐλέχθη, οὐ μεταμελητικός (ἐμμένει γὰρ τῇ προαιρέσει)· ὁ δ' ἀκρατὴς μεταμελητικὸς πᾶς. διὸ οὐχ ὥσπερ ἠπορήσαμεν, οὕτω καὶ ἔχει, ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἀνίατος, ὁ δ' ἰατός· ἔοικε γὰρ ἡ μὲν μοχθηρία τῶν νοσημάτων οἷον ὑδέρῳ καὶ φθίσει, ἡ δ' ἀκρασία τοῖς ἐπιληπτικοῖς·

practical syllogism; the vicious agent does not (*NE* 1151a15-26). Recall from Chapter One that the *akratēs* has the knowledge necessary to act appropriately, but it is locked away during her episode making her unable to actualize it. So, she is in a better position than the vicious person who lacks knowledge all together. According to Broadie, "One can point out that the akratic's bad conscience shows rationality, consistency, and constancy on his side too, as well as self-awareness. First, he needs no Socratic-style elenchus to bring him to recognize that he is guilty of an inconsistency—between what he voluntarily did and what he had rationally decided he should do…Secondly, it is of course a mark of rationality to be disturbed or chagrined by such a dissonance in oneself."[164] So, the regret comes along with the actualizing of the heretofore suppressed knowledge of the right thing to do. The *akratēs* regrets her actions because she knows better. The vicious agent does not know better so she cannot feel regret in the same way, if at all. Cooper agrees: "It is clear on reflection that full vice must be a worse condition than uncontrol. It involves the corruption of reason both through its misunderstanding of human nature and human values and the misdirection of the non-rational desires that it permits and approves."[165] The *akratēs* can be habituated into making herself follow reason. The vicious agent needs to undergo far more training to fix her reasoning as well as her desires; likely too much for it to ever be successful.

The vicious person who is educated that her choices are bad is not going to undergo a gestalt switch and suddenly become virtuous. If change were possible, she would instead become the *akratēs*. She would understand that her desires are bad, but

[164] Broadie, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.8-9 (1151b22): *Akrasia*, *Enkrateia*, and Look-Alikes", *Aristotle*: Nicomachean Ethics ed. Carlo Natali (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162.
[165] Cooper, "*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1-2: Introduction, Method, Puzzles", *Aristotle*: Nicomachean Ethics ed. Carlo Natali (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

she would struggle to overcome them. She has been habituated to like her bad choices. This cannot be undone by education, if it can be undone at all. According to Curzer, "people who have been acting wrongly may resolve to change their vicious ways and act rightly for its own sake. Yet they often spend a long time, perhaps forever, not implementing this resolution. In situation after situation they fail to act rightly."[166] Education is useless if the agent has bad habits. Curzer takes the following three quotes to show that "Aristotle advances the thesis that teaching is futile before good habits are already in place"[167]:

> This is why a youth is not a suitable student of political science; for he lacks experience of life, which are the subject and premises of our arguments (*NE* 1095a2-4).[168]
>
> One must begin with what is familiar. But things are so in two ways—some to us, some without qualification. Presumably, then, we must begin with things familiar to us. Hence anyone who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is fine and just, and generally, about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits. For the facts are the starting-point, and if they are sufficiently plain to him, he will not need the reason as well (*NE* 1095b2-7).[169]

[166] Howard J. Curzer, "Aristotle's Painful Path to Virtue," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40, no. 2 (2002): 147.
[167] Curzer, "Aristotle's Painful Path to Virtue", 145.
[168] διὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖος ἀκροατὴς ὁ νέος· ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δ' ἐκ τούτων καὶ περὶ τούτων.
[169] ἀρκτέον μὲν οὖν ἀπὸ τῶν γνωρίμων. ταῦτα δὲ διττῶς, τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν τὰ δ' ἁπλῶς· ἴσως οὖν ἡμῖν γε ἀρκτέον ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωρίμων. διὸ δεῖ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἦχθαι καλῶς τὸν περὶ καλῶν καὶ δικαίων καὶ ὅλως τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀκουσόμενον ἱκανῶς. ἀρχὴ γὰρ τὸ ὅτι· καὶ εἰ τοῦτο φαίνοιτο ἀρκούντως, οὐδὲν προσδεήσει τοῦ διότι.

> Argument and teaching, we may suspect, are not strong with everyone, but the soul of the student must be prepared beforehand by means of habits for the fine and hated, like earth which is to nourish the seed…The character, then, must somehow beforehand have a kinship to virtue, loving what is fine and being unable to endure what is shameful (*NE* 1179b23-31).[170]

So, good habits need to come first before our education can begin. Just focusing on reasoning alone will not work, because, without good habits, we will be starting from vice or an even worse condition.

III. Another Reason *Akrasia* is Curable While Vice Is Not

Recall from the last section, that Aristotle compares the *akratēs* to the epileptic and the vicious agent to someone with dropsy or consumption. This is because the *akratēs* suffers from an intermittent condition, whereas the vicious agent is acting badly always or *hōs epi to polu* (for the most part). However, I will argue additionally that the *akratēs* has a less conspicuous condition, as she can go a long time between episodes. The vicious agent, on the other hand, is obviously bad.

One might question how much Aristotle could have known about epilepsy, given that he thought the brain was a sort of air conditioner for the blood. As it turns out, quite a lot. Before Hippocrates, ancient Greeks thought that the cause of epilepsy was divine.[171] However, Hippocrates realized that it was a disease like any other with a physical cause.

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[170] ὁ δὲ λόγος καὶ ἡ διδαχὴ μή ποτ᾽ οὐκ ἐν ἅπασιν ἰσχύει, ἀλλὰ δεῖ προδιειργάσθαι τοῖς ἔθεσι τὴν τοῦ ἀκροατοῦ ψυχὴν πρὸς τὸ καλῶς χαίρειν καὶ μισεῖν, ὥσπερ γῆν τὴν θρέψουσαν τὸ σπέρμα…δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἦθος προϋπάρχειν πως οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς, στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ δυσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχρόν.

[171] Emmanouil Magiorkinis, “Hallmarks in the History of Epilepsy: Epilepsy in Antiquity,” *Epilepsy and Behavior* 17, no. 1 (2010): 104.

According to Magiorkinis, “he was the first to attribute the etiology of epilepsy to brain dysfunction.”[172] Plato mentions epilepsy in the *Timaeus* (85a-b), where he says that “the disease disturbed the revolutions in the head and these are the most divine.”[173] Plato also mentions epilepsy in *Laws*. He claims that selling a slave with epilepsy is punishable if the condition is not disclosed beforehand. He also says that the buyer has one year to make her case against the seller, as epilepsy is not an obvious condition to lay people.[174] So, it seems that Aristotle would have known enough about epilepsy to make his claim that the *akratēs* is like the epileptic, while the vicious agent is like someone with consumption or dropsy, even if he did not fully understand that the brain was the cause of such a disfunction.

How are consumption and dropsy different from epilepsy? Obviously, for Aristotle, the two conditions akin to the vicious agent are chronic, while epilepsy is intermittent. However, I contend that those two diseases are also obvious to lay people, as sufferers present many conspicuous symptoms. Meinecke points out that Hippocrates describes consumption in great detail:[175]

> At first, there were inflammation of the eyes, discharge from the nose and eyes, pain, undigested fluids, small gummy sores, causing many troubles when they broke out. A great many relapsed and left late autumn. In summer and autumn dysenteric diseases, the urge to empty the bowels and the passing of undigested food, bilious diarrhea with many thin, crude stools; sometimes watery. In many

[172] Magiorkinis, “Hallmarks in the History of Epilepsy: Epilepsy in Antiquity,” 105.
[173] Owsei Temkin, *The Falling Sickness* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945), 5.
[174] Magiorkinis, “Hallmarks in the History of Epilepsy: Epilepsy in Antiquity”, 105.
[175] Bruno Meinecke, “Consumption (Tuberculosis) in Classical Antiquity”, *Annals of Medical History* 9, no.4 (1927): 382.

> cases there were also distressful, bilious discharges, watery, full of thin particles, infected and causing a blockage of the bladder. No kidney trouble, but their various symptoms came in different orders. Vomiting of phlegm, bile, and undigested food. Sweats, an abundance of fluids all over everything. These complaints in many cases were unaccompanied by fever, and the sufferers were not obliged to keep to their bed; but in many others there was fever, as I am going to note. Those who showed all the symptoms listed above were consumptives who suffered pain. (*De Morbis Popularibus* 1.2.5).[176]

These symptoms are numerous and conspicuous. The consumptive patient will be obviously distressed when breathing. This will be obvious to any onlooker. She might not know why the patient appears emaciated and weak, but she will know that something in her respiratory system is off; the coughing and expectoration makes this obvious. Likewise with dropsy, which is a swelling of the soft tissues. An onlooker might not know why someone is retaining water, but the edema itself will be obvious.

Just as the epileptic can go years without having a seizure, the *akratēs* can go for some time without having an episode. This is more evidence that she is the same kind of person as the *enkratēs*. She can maintain composure nine times out of ten but that tenth time she gives in to passion. Consider someone who is usually well behaved, but has a

[176] ἤρξαντο μὲν οὖν τὸ πρῶτον ὀφθαλμίαι ῥοώδεες, ὀδυνώδεες, ὑγραὶ ἀπέπτως: σμικρὰ λημία δυσκόλως πολλοῖσιν ἐκρηγνύμενα: τοῖσι πλείστοισιν ὑπέστρεφον: ἀπέλιπον ὀψὲ πρὸς τὸ φθινόπωρον. κατὰ δὲ θέρος καὶ φθινόπωρον δυσεντεριώδεες καὶ τεινεσμοὶ καὶ λειεντεριώδεες. καὶ διάρροιαι χολώδεες, πολλοῖσι λεπτοῖσιν, ὠμοῖσι καὶ δακνώδεσιν, ἔστι δ’ οἷσι καὶ ὑδατώδεες. πολλοῖσι δὲ καὶ περίρροιαι μετὰ πόνου χολώδεες, ὑδατώδεες, ξυσματώδεες, πυώδεες, στραγγουριώδεες: οὐ νεφριτικά, ἀλλὰ τούτοισιν ἀντ’ ἄλλων ἄλλα. ἔμετοι φλεγματώδεες, χολώδεες καὶ σιτίων ἀπέπτων ἀναγωγαί. ἰδρῶτες: πᾶσι πάντοθεν πολὺς πλάδος. ἐγίνετο δὲ ταῦτα πολλοῖσιν ὀρθοστάδην ἀπύροισι, πολλοῖσι δὲ πυρετοί, περὶ ὧν γεγράψεται. ἐν οἷσι δὲ ὑπεφαίνετο πάντα τὰ ὑπογεγραμμένα, μετὰ πόνου φθινώδεες. This text is from the Harvard University Press.

weakness when it comes to sexual pleasures. Her co-workers are not going to be aware that she has this problem. To them, she might even appear virtuous. The inner tension is not obvious to onlookers. It is only something that she herself, and perhaps her therapist, are aware of.

What does it look like to come out of an akratic episode? It is to become enkratic again. The *akratēs*, after her episode has subsided, can again see what she ought to do. She can even make correct judgments about what others are doing wrong. Of course, there could be chronically akratic people. However, there is nothing that Aristotle says about *akrasia* that makes that the default. Since *akrasia* is about an excess of pleasures pertaining to touch and the epistemic failing that the *akratēs* suffers from is having the conclusion of the good practical syllogism temporarily locked away, the *akratēs* will be the *enkratēs* most of the time. Whenever the *akratēs* is not having an episode, she must be the *enkratēs*, because she is neither vicious nor virtuous. According to Cleary, setting good goals for oneself is a mark of good character that the *enkratēs* and the virtuous share.[177] When the *akratēs* becomes clear-headed again, she will begin to make goals that involve not having another episode. This behavior makes her the *enkratēs*.

Aristotle is amenable to the thesis that the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* are the same type of person because he states in *NE* VII.7 that it is not so shameful to be overcome by excess if we struggle. But that is exactly what the *akratēs* does: struggle.

> For it is not surprising if someone is overcome by strong and excessive pleasures or pains; indeed, this is pardonable, provided he struggles against them—like

[177]John J. Cleary, "Akrasia and Moral Education in Aristotle." *Reading Ancient Texts Volume II: Aristotle and Neoplatonism* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2007), 59-60.

> Theodectes' Philoctetes bitten by the snake, or Carcinus' Cercyon in the *Alope*, and like those who are trying to restrain their laughter and burst out laughing all at once, as happened to Xenophantus. But it is surprising if someone is overcome by what most people are strong enough to resist, except when due to his hereditary nature or because of disease (as, for instance, the Scythian kings' softness is hereditary, and as the female is distinguished from the male) (*NE* 1150b7-16).[178]

Once Philoctetes is bitten by the snake, he is in such agony that his constant complaints cause Odysseus and company to leave him behind. King Cercyon is in agony once he finds his father, Poseidon, has impregnated his daughter, Alope. Pain, whether emotional or physical sometimes cannot be ignored. Pleasure, too, can sometimes be a bit much for us to handle without an outburst. So, it is shameful to be overcome by what most people could resist. But if there is something that most people cannot resist, then it is not shameful to give in. We are, after all, only human and not divine beings.

An opponent might object that the *akratēs* cannot be the same type of person as the *enkratēs* because the *enkratēs* is on the road to virtue. However, there is no guarantee that *enkrateia* will be overcome and an individual will become virtuous. When Aristotle talks of moral improvement, he outlines a specific way in which it would happen. But there is no guarantee that everyone will be successful in this endeavor. In fact, it looks rather bleak for the many.

[178] οὐ γὰρ εἴ τις ἰσχυρῶν καὶ ὑπερβαλλουσῶν ἡδονῶν ἡττᾶται ἢ λυπῶν, θαυμαστόν—ἀλλὰ συγγνωμονικὸν εἰ ἀντιτείνων, ὥσπερ ὁ Θεοδέκτου Φιλοκτήτης ὑπὸ τοῦ ἕχεως πεπληγμένος ἢ ὁ Καρκίνου ἐν τῇ Ἀλόπῃ Κερκύων, καὶ ὥσπερ οἱ κατέχειν πειρώμενοι τὸν γέλωτα ἀθρόον ἐκκαγχάζουσιν, οἷον συνέπεσε Ξενοφάντῳ—ἀλλ' εἴ τις πρὸς ἃς οἱ πολλοὶ δύνανται ἀντέχειν, τούτων ἡττᾶται καὶ μὴ δύναται ἀντιτείνειν, μὴ διὰ φύσιν τοῦ γένους ἢ διὰ νόσον, οἷον ἐν τοῖς Σκυθῶν βασιλεῦσιν ἡ μαλακία διὰ τὸ γένος, καὶ ὡς τὸ θῆλυ πρὸς τὸ ἄρρεν διέστηκεν.

Only someone who has a suitably prepared soul will be swayed by arguments to become better. The rest of us have more work to do before the arguments can convince us, if they can do so at all.

> Now it is apparent that arguments stimulate and incite the noble youths to be strong, given well-born character and true love of the fine makes them capable of being possessed by virtue, but they are powerless to stimulate the many to nobleness and goodness (*NE* 1179b8-11).[179]

> What argument could reform the many? To change by way of argument old habits well rooted in their characters is not easy, if not impossible. We should be content if we seem to become suitable when all the virtues are ours (*NE* 1179b16-20).[180]

Arguments are good for convincing the well-born youths who have been brought up properly. Of course, they need to be exposed to these arguments in order for *enkrateia* to become virtue. The vicious, however, are out of luck. The ones led by pleasure, the *akratēis*, are also unconvinced by argument alone.

> For he who lives by the dictates of passions will not hear or comprehend an argument turning him away. And how could he be persuaded to change? Speaking generally, passion seems not to listen to argument but to force (*NE* 1179b27-29).[181]

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[179] νῦν δὲ φαίνονται προτρέψασθαι μὲν καὶ παρορμῆσαι τῶν νέων τοὺς ἐλευθερίους ἰσχύειν, ἦθός τ᾽ εὐγενὲς καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόκαλον ποιῆσαι ἂν κατοκώχιμον ἐκ τῆς ἀρετῆς, τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς ἀδυνατεῖν πρὸς καλοκαγαθίαν προτρέψασθαι·

[180] τοὺς δὴ τοιούτους τίς ἂν λόγος μεταρρυθμίσαι; οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἢ οὐ ῥᾴδιον τὰ ἐκ παλαιοῦ τοῖς ἤθεσι κατειλημμένα λόγῳ μεταστῆσαι. ἀγαπητὸν δ᾽ ἴσως ἐστὶν εἰ πάντων ὑπαρχόντων δι᾽ ὧν ἐπιεικεῖς δοκοῦμεν γίνεσθαι, μεταλάβοιμεν τῆς ἀρετῆς

[181] οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀκούσειε λόγου ἀποτρέποντος οὐδ᾽ ἂν συνείη ὁ κατὰ πάθος ζῶν· τὸν δ᾽ οὕτως ἔχοντα πῶς οἷόν τε μεταπεῖσαι; ὅλως τ᾽ οὐ δοκεῖ λόγῳ ὑπείκειν τὸ πάθος ἀλλὰ βίᾳ.

If the intermittent *akratēis* have a character ready to receive the virtues, which I argue they do as they are really the same as the *enkratēis*, then they can get better. The path to virtue must be started on at a young age, but it does not end there.

> Presumably it is not enough if they get the right upbringing bestowed upon them in youth, but as they become men, they must pursue that which they are accustomed to (*NE* 1180a1-3).[182]

The habits they formed in their youth must be maintained if they are to become virtuous. As Aristotle and Plato both note, some people with good starts in life never live up to the example their parents set. Finally, for those way off course, corrective treatment is in order.

> The bad, who desire pleasure must be chastised by pain, like a beast (*NE* 1180a).[183]

The ones who need corrective treatments are the chronic *akratēis*, because the vicious are incurable. Of course, there is no guarantee that the chronic *akratēis* become the *enkratēis* or the *enkratēis* become virtuous. But, if moral change is to occur, then it happens in that order.

IV. Healing Morally Bad Character

So far, I have been arguing that the *akratēs* in between episodes is the *enkratēs*. But how does this change occur? Aristotle says that she physically recovers her knowledge:

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[182] οὐχ ἱκανὸν δ' ἴσως νέους ὄντας τροφῆς καὶ ἐπιμελείας τυχεῖν ὀρθῆς, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἀνδρωθέντας δεῖ ἐπιτηδεύειν αὐτὰ καὶ ἐθίζεσθαι.

[183] τὸν δὲ φαῦλον ἡδονῆς ὀρεγόμενον λύπῃ κολάζεσθαι ὥσπερ ὑποζύγιον.

> How is the ignorance resolved, so that the *akratēs* recovers her knowledge? The same account that applies to someone drunk or asleep applies here too, and is not peculiar to this way of being affected. We must hear it from the natural scientists (*NE* 1147b6-9).[184]

What does it mean that we will learn this from the natural scientists? According to Owens, "in the historical setting this could not mean anything else than the study of the human body in the Hippocratic tradition, which was in turn couched in the natural philosophy of the Presocratics."[185] Indeed, Aristotle's many other works study the human body in this tradition. In fact, his work on sleep will be helpful in explaining how the *akratēs* becomes clear-headed again.

A person awakens from sleep in the same way that the *akratēs* recovers from her episode. Aristotle writes that sleep is a specific incapacity of the sense organs:

> As we have said, sleep is not any incapacity of the perceptive faculty, but this affection is one which arises from the evaporation of food. That which is exhaled must be pushed up to a certain point, then turn back and change just as the tide in a strait. Now, in every animal the hot naturally tends to move upwards, but when it has reached the upper parts, it turns backwards, and moves downwards in a mass. So, drowsiness mostly comes on after food; for the matter, both the liquid and the bodily, are carried up in bulk. When, therefore, this comes to a stand it weighs a person down and causes him to nod, but when it has actually sunk downwards,

[184] πῶς δὲ λύεται ἡ ἄγνοια καὶ πάλιν γίνεται ἐπιστήμων ὁ ἀκρατής, ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος καὶ περὶ οἰνωμένου καὶ καθεύδοντος καὶ οὐκ ἴδιος τούτου τοῦ πάθους, ὃν δεῖ παρὰ τῶν φυσιολόγων ἀκούειν.
[185] Joseph Owens, *Aristotle: The Collected papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981), 172.

> and by its return repulsed the hot, sleep comes on, and the animal is asleep (*On Sleep* 456b18-29).[186]

So, sleep is not merely the sense organs being incapacitated; that is what separates it from fainting and other bouts of unconsciousness (*On Sleep* 455b6-7). It is one that necessarily follows from the nutritive faculty needing to do its job. This is why we get especially sleepy after meals. We awaken from sleep when this process is complete.

> Awakening occurs when digestion is completed: when the heat, which had been previously forced together in large quantity within a small space from out the surrounding part, has once more prevailed, and when a separation has been affected between the more bodily and the purer blood (*On Sleep* 458a11-13).[187]

Again, *akrasia* is a physiological condition that will subside once the body has returned to its previous state. So, once the disruption in the body is complete, the *akratēs* will regain her knowledge and regret her actions.

Joseph Owens tell us that ethics makes use of medicine to answer this question: "Further, both ethics and medicine deal with a man, a composite of soul and matter. The composite is an essentially changeable nature, changeable through both moral persuasion and physiological alteration."[188] Here, Owens is telling us that the hylomorphic composite that we are is changeable in several ways. One can be moral habituation.

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[186] Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ὥσπερ εἴπομεν, οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ὕπνος ἀδυναμία πᾶσα τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τῆς περὶ τὴν τροφὴν ἀναθυμιάσεως γίνεται τὸ πάθος τοῦτο· ἀναγκαῖον γὰρ τὸ ἀναθυμιώμενον μέχρι του ὠθεῖσθαι, εἶτ᾽ ἀντιστρέφειν καὶ μεταβάλλειν καθάπερ εὔριπον. τὸ δὲ θερμὸν ἑκάστου τῶν ζῴων πρὸς τὸ ἄνω πέφυκε φέρεσθαι· ὅταν δ᾽ ἐν τοῖς ἄνω τόποις γένηται, ἀθρόον πάλιν ἀντιστρέφει καὶ καταφέρεται. διὸ μάλιστα γίνονται ὕπνοι ἀπὸ τῆς τροφῆς· ἀθρόον γὰρ πολὺ τό τε ὑγρὸν καὶ τὸ σωματῶδες ἀναφέρεται. ἱστάμενον μὲν οὖν βαρύνει καὶ ποιεῖ νυστάζειν· ὅταν δὲ ῥέψῃ κάτω καὶ ἀντιστρέψαν ἀπώσῃ τὸ θερμόν, τότε γίνεται ὁ ὕπνος καὶ τὸ ζῷον καθεύδει.
[187] Ἐγείρεται δ᾽, ὅταν πεφθῇ καὶ κρατήσῃ ἡ συνεωσμένη θερμότης ἐν ὀλίγῳ πολλὴ ἐκ τοῦ περιεστῶτος, καὶ διακριθῇ τό τε σωματωδέστερον αἷμα καὶ τὸ καθαρώτατον.
[188] Owens, *Aristotle: The Collected papers of Joseph Owens*, 179.

However, the *akratēs* acts against her habituation and is guided by her passions. So, focusing on her education will not help her regain her knowledge. Instead, we must look for a physiological cure to her condition; something that will get her desires under control of her reason. She knows what she ought to do, but that knowledge gets suppressed when her passions are stirred up in her body. Medication, as Owens suggests, might help with this. “Cures for alcoholism, the prescription of tranquilizers, and the use of other therapeutic aids for persons who want to follow their better moral judgment, testify to it abundantly.”[189] Recall that corrective treatment in the form of pain is necessary for the bad (*phaula*). So, behavioral therapy could help the *akratēis* as well. She needs to start feeling pains when she desires excess pleasures for food and sex rather than giving in and feeling pleasure. I’m not endorsing anything as extreme as shock therapy, but something along those lines where she will begin to have a bad feeling following her excessive desire.

For Aristotle, this process will involve righting some wrongs, a process that should have occurred in childhood. This is because a proper upbringing is necessary to get us to feel pain in the right ways and at the right times.

> For pleasures cause us to do base actions, and pain causes us to abstain from fine ones. That is why we need to have had the appropriate upbringing—right from early youth, as Plato says—to make us find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for this is the correct education. Further, virtues are concerned with actions and emotions; but every emotion and every action implies pleasure or pain; hence, for

[189] Owens, *Aristotle: The Collected papers of Joseph Owens*, 179.

> this reason too, virtue is about pleasures and pains. Corrective treatments reveal this too, since they use pleasures and pains; for correction is a form of medical treatment, and medical treatment naturally operates through opposites (*NE* 1104b9-18).[190]

Starting habituation young works well. Correcting what should have been done in childhood will be more painful. Sarah Francis calls attention to the following passage where Aristotle says as much:[191]

> It is beneficial to make as many motions as possible with children of such an age. To prevent the twisting about of limbs because of softness, some races apply mechanical appliances to the body to make them straight. It is also beneficial to accustom the soul of small children to the cold, for this is most useful for health and military service. (*Politics* 1336a10-16).[192]

It is better to train the limbs to be straight from birth rather than after some deformity presents itself. The former is less painful than the latter. If we do not receive the proper upbringing, then we need to regulate pleasures and pains as an adult. This will be considerably harder, as we will have habituated ourselves into liking the wrong things and avoiding the good things. Corrective measures will have to make us feel pleasures and

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[190] διὰ μὲν γὰρ τὴν ἡδονὴν τὰ φαῦλα πράττομεν, διὰ δὲ τὴν λύπην τῶν καλῶν ἀπεχόμεθα. διὸ δεῖ ἦχθαί πως εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησίν, ὥστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ· ἡ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν.—ἔτι δ᾽ εἰ αἱ ἀρεταί εἰσι περὶ πράξεις καὶ πάθη, παντὶ δὲ πάθει καὶ πάσῃ πράξει ἕπεται ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη, καὶ διὰ τοῦτ᾽ ἂν εἴη ἡ ἀρετὴ περὶ ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας.—μηνύουσι δὲ καὶ αἱ κολάσεις γινόμεναι διὰ τούτων· ἰατρεῖαι γάρ τινές εἰσιν, αἱ δὲ ἰατρεῖαι διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων πεφύκασι γίνεσθαι.

[191] Sarah Francis, “Under the Influence” *Classical Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2011): 166.

[192] ἔτι δὲ καὶ κινήσεις ὅσας ἐνδέχεται ποιεῖσθαι τηλικούτων συμφέρει. πρὸς δὲ τὸ μὴ διαστρέφεσθαι τὰ μέλη δι᾽ ἀπαλότητα χρῶνται καὶ νῦν ἔνια τῶν ἐθνῶν ὀργάνοις τισὶ μηχανικοῖς ἃ τὸ σῶμα ποιεῖ τῶν τοιούτων ἀστραβές. συμφέρει δ᾽ εὐθὺς καὶ πρὸς τὰ ψύχη συνεθίζειν ἐκ μικρῶν παίδων, τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ πρὸς ὑγίειαν καὶ πρὸς πολεμικὰς πράξεις εὐχρηστότατον.

pains at the appropriate times. This sounds a lot like behavioral therapy. If I am pleased by bad things, then I need to reinforce aversion by feeling pain instead. Dieting as an adult is more difficult than eating healthy from childhood onward. Giving in to desire is a slippery slope that is difficult to escape.

If the cure for *akrasia* is beginning to sound like the cure for some sort of mental illness, then we're on the same page. The melancholic, a subset of the *akratēis*, are, in today's terms, most closely akin to someone suffering from bipolar II disorder.[193] As such, they need medicine and/or therapy. Here, I stray slightly from interpreting Aristotle to using him as a jumping off point to give an Aristotelian view of what to do about *akrasia*. This is necessary because Aristotle did not have at his disposal the knowledge of how to cure mental illness that we have today. While what I will argue about the cure for *akrasia* is my own view, it is Aristotelian at its core and does not conflict with anything in the text. Aristotle would be quite happy that a physiological condition has a physiological cure.

Aristotle mentions melancholia four times in *NE* VII:

> The quick-tempered and *melancholikoi* are most prone to be impetuous *akratēis*. The former too hasty and the latter too violent to wait for reason because they are prone to follow appearance (*phantasia*) (*NE* 1150b25-28).[194]
>
> One type of *akratēs* does not abide by the result of his deliberation, while the *melancholikos* is not even prone to deliberate at all (*NE* 1152a18-19).[195]

[193] Akiskal & Akiskal, "In Search of Aristotle: Temperament, Human Nature, Melancholia, Creativity and Eminence", *Journal of Affective Disorders* 100 (2007): 4.
[194] μάλιστα δ' οἱ ὀξεῖς καὶ μελαγχολικοὶ τὴν προπετῆ ἀκρασίαν εἰσὶν ἀκρατεῖς· οἱ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τὴν ταχυτῆτα, οἱ δὲ διὰ τὴν σφοδρότητα οὐκ ἀναμένουσι τὸν λόγον, διὰ τὸ ἀκολουθητικοὶ εἶναι τῇ φαντασίᾳ.
[195] ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐμμενετικὸς οἷς ἂν βουλεύσηται, ὁ δὲ μελαγχολικὸς οὐδὲ βουλευτικὸς ὅλως.

> Easier to heal of the akratics are the *melancholikoi* than those who deliberate but do not abide by it (*NE* 1152a27-29).[196]
>
> *Melancholikoi* by nature are always in need of healing, for their body is in a continuous state of irritation, and they are always having excessive desires (*NE* 1154b11-13).[197]

So, the melancholic are a kind of *akratēs* whose desires are so strong that she skips deliberation altogether. Ross and Rackham each translate *melancholikoi* as 'excitable'. Liddell, Scott, and Jones translate it as 'atrabilious' (ill-tempered). Irwin translates it as 'volatile'. However it is interpreted, it is the excess of black bile that causes such a temperament. But what does melancholia look like today?

According to Akiskal and Akiskal, "this disease [melancholia] often arises from cyclothymic and hyperthymic temperaments, and the melancholia Aristotle is referring to is possibly bipolar II, or some territory in between."[198] The cyclothymic and hyperthymic temperaments are the tell-tale lows and highs felt by those on the bipolar spectrum. The former refers to the instability of mood from which those on the bipolar spectrum suffer and the latter refers to the abnormally positive attitude that punctuates the depressive episodes. On the bipolar spectrum, "depression dominates the course of the disease, yet it is punctuated by brief periods of hypomania; most importantly, such individuals display lifelong traits of depressive (melancholic), anxious, cyclothymic, irritable (choleric), and

[196] εὐϊατοτέρα δὲ τῶν ἀκρασιῶν ἦν οἱ μελαγχολικοὶ ἀκρατεύονται τῶν βουλευομένων μὲν μὴ ἐμμενόντων δέ·
[197] οἱ δὲ μελαγχολικοὶ τὴν φύσιν ἀεὶ δέονται ἰατρείας· καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα δακνόμενον διατελεῖ διὰ τὴν κρᾶσιν, καὶ ἀεὶ ἐν ὀρέξει σφοδρᾷ εἰσίν·
[198] Akiskal & Akiskal, "In Search of Aristotle: Temperament, Human Nature, Melancholia, Creativity and Eminence", 4.

hyperthymic (sanguine) temperaments."[199] Specifically, bipolar II disorder is "defined by a pattern of depressive episodes and hypomanic episodes, but not the full-blown manic episodes that are typical of Bipolar I disorder."[200] While someone with bipolar I will experience manias in the form of cleaning the living room from top to bottom at 3 am or spending their entire paycheck on a new hobby, someone with bipolar II disorder will experience hypomanias where they have rapid speech or become irritable.

Treatment for bipolar II disorder involves antipsychotics (mood stabilizers) and therapy. Medication alone can level out the roller coaster of emotions, but therapy is needed so that the individual can tell when she is having an episode and act accordingly. Most manias are obvious to an onlooker, but not to the individual herself. She may be acting recklessly but, since she feels energized, she does not see a problem at this time. This is very similar to the *akratēs*. The *akratēs* has a normal temperament punctuated by these episodes where she indulges. If she wishes to stop, then she must first see that there is a problem during her episodes and not just after. Talking with a professional can help, but she has a physiological condition that prevents her from acting as she should. Likewise, the individual suffering from bipolar II disorder has a brain chemistry imbalance that needs to be regulated.

What will medication do to the *akratēs*? I see two options. The first is that medication will make the *akratēs* have the right desire. If the *akratēs* now has the right desire, then she will be virtuous. The second is that the medication will make the *akratēs*

[199] Akiskal & Akiskal, "In Search of Aristotle: Temperament, Human Nature, Melancholia, Creativity and Eminence", 2.
[200] "Bipolar Disorder," The National Institute of Mental Health, Last Revised January 2020, https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder.

do the right thing. If this is the case, then she will be more reliably be enkratic. This will depend on whether the *akratēs* in question is intermittent or chronic. Either way, it shows that the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* are of the same kind. Therefore, they belong on a spectrum together and should not be separated as they often are.

When a person suffering from bipolar II disorder is having an episode, even simple tasks like taking a shower can seem insurmountable. They have the second order desire to want to want to take a shower, but they lack the first order desire to get in the shower. This lack of desire can pop up intermittently or it can do so chronically. If it is intermittent, call the state they are in if medicine cures their desires state X. If it is chronic, call the state they are in if medicine makes them do what is right state Y. If medicine cures their lack of desire to shower, then they will be virtuous. If medicine makes them do what is right, by overriding their lack of desire, then they will be more reliably enkratic.

	Knows What Is Right	Desires What Is Right	Does What Is Right
Virtue	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X	Yes	Yes	Yes/No?
Enkrateia	Yes	No	Yes
State Y	Yes	No	Yes
Akrasia	Yes	No	No

State Y is identical to *enkrateia*. So, if the chronic *akratēs* is given medicine for her condition, then she will become the *enkratēs*. State X is a bit imprecise, because the

person in State X will not necessarily do the right thing. Nor will she necessarily do the wrong thing.

What would Yes/Yes/No correspond to on the preceding chart? It would be a virtuous person making a mistake. That is not necessarily a *hexis*. There are a lot of combinations absent from this chart that are not *hexeis*. Consider No/Yes/Yes. That could be one of two things. The first is called inverse *akrasia*. For example, Huck Finn desires to let Jim go free, helps Jim go free, but thinks it is wrong.[201] The second, I argue, would be a child possessing natural virtue. She does not have the knowledge that what she desires to do is right, although it is. She feels that bullying is wrong, but can't articulate the universal premise of the good practical syllogism. Again, these are not stable enough to be *hexeis*.

Yes/Yes/Yes is obviously the virtuous person. So, no matter what someone in State X finally does, it is better than being the *akratēs*. If the intermittent *akratēs* is given medicine for her condition, then what does she become? I argue that she becomes virtuous. Even if she makes a mistake and does not follow through ten percent of the time, she is still acting from a reliably stable state. The virtuous person does not have to be maximally virtuous. She is allowed to make mistakes sometimes. If the intermittent *akratēs* becomes virtuous with medicine, then she was the same type of person as the *enkratēs* all along. Recall that her soul has to be properly prepared before virtue can take hold. It is not shameful for the concert pianist to take a pill to relieve her stage fright.

[201] Chad Kleist, "Huck Finn the Inverse Akratic: Empathy and Justice", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 12, no. 3 (2008): 257.

Without her medicine, we might never hear her play. With her medicine, however, she can do what she desires to do, which is good.

At this point, keen readers of Aristotle will point out that he also has two kinds of *akratēis*, which might not line up nicely with my division into intermittent and chronic. For Aristotle, there are weak *akratēs* and strong (impetuous) *akratēs*. Indeed, I have already noted that the melancholics are the latter.

> Among the *akratēis* themselves, those who abandon themselves are better than those who have reason but do not abide by it. For the second type are overcome by a less strong emotion, and do not act without having deliberated, as the first type do (*NE* 1151a1-3).[202]

So, the weak *akratēs* who deliberates but fails to follow through on the conclusion is worse off than the melancholic *akratēs* who is so excited that she skips deliberation altogether. This might seem counterintuitive. Cleary explains why it is not:

> Thus, by contrast with the incurably vicious person who is morally blind, the akratic person can be morally educated because he recognizes the right thing to do, even though he occasionally does the wrong thing. Aristotle concludes (1152a27) that the type of *akrasia* shown by persons with excitable temperaments is more curable than that of weak akratics who deliberate about what they ought to do, but fail to keep their resolutions."[203]

[202] αὐτῶν δὲ τούτων βελτίους οἱ ἐκστατικοὶ ἢ οἱ τὸν λόγον ἔχοντες μέν, μὴ ἐμμένοντες δέ· ὑπ᾽ ἐλάττονος γὰρ πάθους ἡττῶνται, καὶ οὐκ ἀπροβούλευτοι ὥσπερ ἅτεροι·
[203] Cleary, "*Akrasia* and Moral Education in Aristotle", 49.

Going through the deliberation and failing to follow the conclusion is a failure of her reason. It does not have quite the hold on her that it should. The melancholic *akratēs* can be taught to slow down and think first before acting. A failure of reason is harder to cure than a failure to reason.[204]

Francis draws attention to the following quotes that can help make sense of what affects the melancholic *akratēs*:[205]

> Full of hope, the young are naturally as hot-blooded as those who are drunk; At the same time, because they have not yet had many failures (*Rhetoric* 2.12).[206]
>
> Similarly in fits of anger and all manner of appetites all are easily deceived, and the more easily the more they are under the influence of emotions. To those suffering from a fever, animals appear on the walls because of a small resemblance of marks in a pattern (*On Dreams* 460b9-13).[207]

We can now see that the temperature of the body affects the intellect. Being too hot can cause us to be too optimistic or to hallucinate. Recall that melancholia is a disease of the black bile. The temperature of the black bile makes one either mad or a genius (*Problems* 954a31-34).[208] The melancholic *akratēs* has a physical impediment that gets in the way of reasoning, unlike her weaker counterpart who has a desire issue. Again, medicine or behavioral therapy that will retrain her pleasures and pains are appropriate cures. The

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[204] Thanks to Richard Bett for clarifying this point.
[205] Francis, "Under the Influence", 162.
[206] καὶ εὐέλπιδες· ὥσπερ γὰρ οἱ οἰνωμένοι, οὕτω διάθερμοί εἰσιν οἱ νέοι ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως· ἅμα δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ μήπω πολλὰ ἀποτετυχηκέναι.
[207] τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ ἐν ὀργαῖς καὶ ἐν πάσαις ἐπιθυμίαις εὐαπάτητοι γίνονται πάντες, καὶ μᾶλλον ὅσῳ ἂν μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν ὦσιν. διὸ καὶ τοῖς πυρέττουσιν ἐνίοτε φαίνεται ζῷα ἐν τοῖς τοίχοις ἀπὸ μικρᾶς ὁμοιότητος τῶν γραμμῶν συντιθεμένων.
[208] I know that *Problems* is likely spurious. However, while it may not be Aristotle's own words, it is sufficiently Aristotelian enough for my purposes.

weak *akratēs* will need some reasoning education as well as aversion therapy to retrain her appetites. She needs to learn to trust the conclusions that she has come to. Perhaps a formal logic course will show her that her reasoning is justified, which will make her more likely to follow it in the future.

While the two kinds of *akratēis* are clearly not identical, the only thing I disagree with Aristotle about is *akrasia* being stable enough to be a *hexis* (stable state of the soul) of its own. The melancholic *akratēs* can be either intermittent or chronic; it depends on how often she fails to deliberate. Likewise, with the weak *akratēs*. She can be either, depending on how often she fails to abide by her deliberation. I have been arguing that the *akratēs* makes a narrow mistake in one facet of her life. The frequency of this is undetermined by the text. Certainly, one could argue, since Aristotle lists *akrasia* as a *hexis*, then she must act that way always or *hōs epi to polu* (for the most part). However, the *akratēs* is defined not by how she acts always or *hōs epi to polu*, but by her failings. She need only make a mistake ten percent of the time to be considered the *akratēs*. Of course, there are agents who make mistakes ninety percent of the time, yet can be said to know better. They are *akratēis* too. The fact of the matter is, Aristotle is silent in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as to whether the *akratēis* are intermittent or chronic. However, I believe that he is amenable to the thesis and therefore my overall point that, from what he has told us, *akrasia* and *enkrateia* represent one *hexis*, not two.

Conclusion

I have presented Aristotle's puzzle from *NE* VII.3 about who is curable: the *akratēs* or the vicious person. For Aristotle, the *akratēs* is easily cured because she regrets her bad actions. This means that she, unlike the vicious person, can see the error of her ways. I

argued that this makes her the *enkratēs* when she is between akratic episodes, no matter if her episodes of *akrasia* are intermittent or chronic. I concluded by discussing what course of action the *akratēis* can take to be cured. Since her condition is physiological, she needs medicine or behavioral therapy to resist her passions. While Aristotle could not have known this at his time, he would be amenable to the idea that a physiological condition requires a physiological cure.

Chapter Five: Aristotle vs. Plato and the Stoics

So far, I have been pushing my interpretation of Aristotle without stating why we should begin with him in the first place. I will now remedy that. In this final chapter, I will compare Aristotle's view with that of Plato and the Stoics. Their views differ with respect to the questions of the voluntariness of bad actions, there being states between virtue and vice, being happy without external goods, the unity of virtue, and the value of friendship. It is with regard to these questions that we can see Aristotle's view as being superior, because it leaves room for common phenomena, especially *enkrateia* (self-control) and *akrasia* (lack of self-control). The upshot of making so many fine-grained distinctions is that it focuses on the positives rather than the negatives and thereby encourages us to be better.

I. Aristotle vs. the Stoics

In this section, there are four issues on which I will be focusing. The first two are areas where the Stoics and Aristotle seem to agree with each other, but, upon further inspection, do not: unity of virtue and friendship. The second two are areas where it is clear that the two disagree: the necessity of external goods and there being states in between virtue and vice.

Unity of Virtue

While the Stoics hold both the unity of virtue (UV) and reciprocity of virtue (RV), Aristotle only holds RV. UV is a stronger thesis than RV. According to UV, all of the virtues are in play simultaneously. According to RV, if someone has one virtue, then they have all of them. Here is the Stoic view:

> Menedemus of Eretria eliminated the plurality and the differentiations of the virtues, proclaiming that there is a single one, called by many names: the same thing that is called temperance and courage and justice, like 'mortal' and 'human being'. Ariston of Chios also made virtue one in its being and called it 'health'… Zeno of Citium also in a way seems to be drifting in this direction when he defines prudence in matters requiring distribution as justice, in matters requiring choice as temperance, and in matters requiring endurance as courage (Plutarch, *Moralia* 440e-441a).[209]

> All the virtues, which are sciences and skills, have their theories in common and, as already mentioned, their end. Hence, they are also inseparable. For whoever has one has all, and whoever acts in accordance with one acts in accordance with all. They differ from one another by their own main points (Stobaeus 2.63,6-11).[210]

So, the Stoics hold both that having one virtue entails having the other virtues, RV, and that the virtues are all in play simultaneously, UV. Aristotle holds only RV and not UV because he believes that the virtues are all inter entailing, but not that they are all concomitant.

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[209] Μενέδημος μὲν ὁ ἐξ Ἐρετρίας ἀνῄρει τῶν ἀρετῶν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, ὡς μιᾶς οὔσης καὶ χρωμένης πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ σωφροσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ δικαιοσύνην λέγεσθαι, καθάπερ βροτὸν καὶ ἄνθρωπον. Ἀρίστων δ' ὁ Χῖος τῇ μὲν οὐσίᾳ μίαν καὶ αὐτὸς ἀρετὴν ἐποίει καὶ ὑγίειαν ὠνόμαζε… ἔοικε δὲ καὶ Ζήνων εἰς τοῦτό πως ὑποφέρεσθαι ὁ Κιτιεύς, ὁριζόμενος τὴν φρόνησιν ἐν μὲν ἀπονεμητέοις δικαιοσύνην, ἐν δ' αἱρετέοις σωφροσύνην, ἐν δ' ὑπομενετέοις ἀνδρείαν·

[210] Πασάς δὲ τὰς ἀρετάς, ὅσαι ἐπιστῆμαι εἰσι καὶ τέχναι, κοινά τε θεωρήματα ἔχειν καὶ τέλος, ὡς εἴρεται, τὸ αὐτό, διό καὶ ἀχωρίστους εἶναι. τόν γάρ μίαν ἔχοντα πάσας ἔχειν, καὶ τόν κατὰ μίαν πράττοντα κατὰ πάσας πράττειν. Διαφέρειν δ' ἀλλήλων τοῖς κεφαλαίοις. All Stobaeus excerpts, unless otherwise noted, are from the Wachsmuth edition.

> That is why some say that all the virtues are *phronēsis*, Socrates was wrong in thinking that all of the virtues are forms of *phronēsis,* but right in saying that the virtues require *phronēsis* to exist (*NE* 1144b18-21).[211]

The Stoics think that, at bottom, each virtue is *phronēsis*, just in a different sphere of action. But, for Aristotle, *phronēsis* is its own sort of virtue, a virtue of thought, distinct from the many virtues of character (e.g., justice and courage).

Virtues of thought exist in the rational part of our soul, while virtues of character exist in the non-rational part of our soul. This division into rational and non-rational parts of the soul is not one shared by the Stoics. For Aristotle, however, it is important to understanding how virtue comes about. Recall from Chapter Three that, on his view, one possesses virtue of character if and only if one possesses *phronēsis*. The agent who exhibits virtue of character does not happen to also possess *phronēsis*. Instead, one can only exhibit virtue of character by possessing *phronēsis*, and anyone possessing *phronēsis* will exhibit virtue of character, because each requires the other in order to play its role. The reason that virtue of character requires *phronēsis* is "precisely because a virtuous disposition is a habit of a non-rational element in us, it needs direction and guidance."[212] The virtues of character are of the part of the soul that does not have but can listen to reason. Well, *phronēsis* is of the part of the soul that has reason. Virtue of character can make us desire to do something courageous, but we have to also know

[211] διόπερ τινές φασι πάσας τὰς ἀρετὰς φρονήσεις εἶναι, καὶ Σωκράτης τῇ μὲν ὀρθῶς ἐζήτει τῇ δ' ἡμάρτανεν· ὅτι μὲν γὰρ φρονήσεις ὤετο εἶναι πάσας τὰς ἀρετάς, ἡμάρτανεν, ὅτι δ'οὐκ ἄνευ φρονήσεως, καλῶς ἔλεγεν.
[212] Pakaluk, *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics: *An Introduction*, 227.

what reason concludes the courageous action for that circumstance to be, or else we cannot act on our desire.

However, the dependence is not one-sided. If a person possesses *phronēsis*, then, unless she is making an uncharacteristic mistake, when she acts, she will exhibit virtue of character. *Phronēsis*, far from existing in isolation from the virtues of character, requires them to be what it is. Otherwise, the ability to achieve an end is not necessarily the virtue of *phronēsis*, but merely a character trait that people who are other than virtuous possess, cleverness. So, having *phronēsis* will mean that we have each of the twelve virtues of character. And having one virtue fully will mean that we must possess the other eleven fully, because *phronēsis* ensures that we act on our desire to be virtuous. Therefore, we can see that Aristotle holds RV. But he does not go so far as to hold UV, because the virtues do not simply reduce to *phronēsis* on his view.

Why is it better to hold just RV and not both RV and UV? I argue that UV is too strong. UV requires each and every action to be in accordance with each virtue. Even if we go with the canonical four virtues of justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance, that is simply not what the circumstances always require. When danger is afoot, it is time to be courageous. When pleasure is a possibility, it is time to be temperate. The Stoics think that each and every virtue is always at play when the virtuous person acts.

> They say that the wise man does everything well…This is a because of his accomplishing everything in accordance with right reason and in accordance with virtue, which is skill concerned with the whole of life…By analogy, the bad man

> does everything that he does badly and in accordance with all of the vices (Stobaeus 2.66,14-2.67,4).[213]

So, the wise person is always acting with each of the primary virtues in mind (prudence, justice, courage, and moderation) and the vicious person is always acting with each of the vices in mind. For Aristotle, this is not so. One virtue takes the front seat and drives our actions. The courageous thing need not conflict with the just thing to do, but one will be what the situation calls for. Imagine that I am sick with the flu. It is time to be generous and kind. Generosity will take the front seat and drive what my friends do for me. They will not be worried with courage or wittiness.

To worry about all twelve virtues simultaneously would be to ignore what the situation calls for. There might be times where two virtues drive my actions, but not all twelve. Imagine that I am a judge and have to sentence a very dangerous person. I must do what is just, but doing what is just also takes courage, for this person is very imposing. Such situations might present themselves. However, there will never be a situation where each of the twelve virtues Aristotle lists in the *Nicomachean Ethics* will be of equal importance. There is a time for wit and a time for anger. Likewise, for the rest of the virtues. So, the Stoic view conflicts with common sense, while Aristotle's view accords with it.

Friendship

[213] Λέγουσι δὲ καὶ πάντ' εὖ ποιεῖν τόν σοφόν…Τῷ γάρ κατὰ λόγον ὀρθόν ἐπιτελεῖν πάντα καὶ οἷον κατ' ἀρετήν, περί ὅλον οὖσαν τόν βίον τέχνην… Κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον δὲ καὶ τόν φαῦλον πάντα ὅσα ποιεῖ κακῶς ποιεῖν καὶ κατὰ πάσας τάς κακίας.

While, at first glance, it might seem as though Aristotle and the Stoics are on the same page with respect to friendship, they have divergent views. Aristotle and the Stoics do agree that true friendship is among the virtuous, because the friend is another self.

> And they say that friendship exists only among the virtuous, because of their similarity. They say that it is a sharing of things needed for one's life since we treat our friends as ourselves (Diogenes Laërtius 7.124).[214]

> Complete friendship is the friendship of good people similar in virtue; for they wish goods in the same way to each other insofar as they are good, and they are good in themselves (*NE* 1156b7-9).[215]

> The excellent person is related to his friend in the same way as he is related to himself (since a friend is another self). Therefore, just as his own being is choiceworthy for him, his friend's being is choiceworthy for him in the same or a similar way (*NE* 1170b6-8).[216]

However, this is where the similarity ends. For Aristotle, friends are an important part of a *eudaimon* life, for no one would choose to live without friends (*NE* 1155a5-6). For the Stoics, friendship is but a stop on the way to a *eudaimon* life.

According to Annas, "there is no distinctive ethical role here for *philia*, commitment to particular other people…We have no ethical reason to stop at, or to be particularly

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[214] λέγουσι δὲ καὶ τὴν φιλίαν ἐν μόνοις τοῖς σπουδαίοις εἶναι, διὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα· φασὶ δ' αὐτὴν κοινωνίαν τινὰ εἶναι τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον, χρωμένων ἡμῶν τοῖς φίλοις ὡς ἑαυτοῖς.

[215] Τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίων. οὗτοι γὰρ τἀγαθὰ ὁμοίως βούλονται ἀλλήλοις, ᾗ ἀγαθοί, ἀγαθοὶ δ' εἰσὶ καθ' αὐτούς·

[216] ὡς δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχει ὁ σπουδαῖος, καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον (ἕτερος γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ φίλος ἐστίν)· καθάπερ οὖν τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι αἱρετόν ἐστιν ἑκάστῳ, οὕτω καὶ τὸ τὸν φίλον, ἢ παραπλησίως.

concerned with, attachments to particular other people."[217] Annas believes this because, according to the Stoics, our concern for others in general is fundamentally of the same kind our concern for our children, which itself is of the same kind as our concern for ourselves. She cites the following passages from Cicero and Plutarch:

> [The Stoics think that] as soon as a living thing is born (for this is the place to start) it feels a concern for itself and is introduced to conserving itself, and to its constitution, and to loving those things that preserve its constitution (*de Finibus* III.16-20).[218]

> How is it then that [Chrysippus] keeps on irritating us by writing in all his books, books on physics, by Zeus, and on ethics, that we are familiarized with ourselves as soon as we are born, and to our parts and to our own offspring? (*Moralia* 1038b).[219]

The virtuous life for the Stoics is one in which the agent has achieved impartiality. They attempt to treat all people as they do themselves.

> (1) Each one of us is at it were wholly enclosed in many circles, some smaller, others larger, the latter encompassing the former following from their differences and unequal conditions towards one another. (2) The first and closest circle is the one which a person has drawn as though around the center, his own mind. This circle encompasses the body and anything received by the body. For it is the shortest and smallest, and is almost fastened to the center itself. (3) The second

[217] Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 265.
[218] Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 264.
[219] πῶς οὖν ἀποκναίει πάλιν ἐν παντὶ βιβλίῳ φυσικῷ νὴ Δία καὶ ἠθικῷ γράφων ὡς οἰκειούμεθα πρὸς αὐτοὺς εὐθὺς γενόμενοι καὶ τὰ μέρη καὶ τὰ ἔκγονα τὰ ἑαυτῶν;

> one, further removed from the center but encompassing the first, this is placed around parents, siblings, wife, and children. The third one has in it uncles and aunts, grandparents, nephews, nieces, and cousins. The one after encompasses the other relatives. Immediately afterwards are local residents, then fellow-tribesmen, next that of fellow-citizens, and then in the same way those from neighboring towns, and those of the same country. (4) The outermost and largest, which encompasses all the rest of the circles, is that of the whole human race. (5) Once these have all been considered, there is need to vigorously draw each of the circles together somehow towards the center, and to always be eagerly transferring those from the encompassing [circles] into the encompassed ones (Stobaeus 4.671,7-673,11).[220]

The goal for the Stoics is to draw everyone in and treat them as we do those closest to us. We cannot draw everyone into the innermost circle. However, we should still try to shrink the circles as much as we can. This goal is not to make as many friends as possible, but to become impartial.

For Aristotle, drawing everyone in so close is just not possible.

[220] (1) ὅλως γάρ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν οἷον κύκλοις πολλοῖς περιγέγραπται, τοῖς μέν σμικροτέροις, τοῖς δὲ μείζοσι, καί τοῖς μέν περιέχουσι, τοῖς δὲ περιεχομένοις, κατὰ τάς διαφόρους καί ἀνίσους πρός ἀλλήλοις σχέσεις. (2) πρῶτος μέν γάρ έστι κύκλος καί προσεχέστατος, ὅν αὐτός τις καθάπερ περί κέντρον τήν ἑαυτοῦ γέγραπται διάνοιαν. ἐν ᾧ κύκλῳ τό τε σῶμα περιέχεται καί τά του σώματος ἕνεκα παρειλημμένα. σχεδόν γάρ ὁ βραχύτατος καί μικροῦ δεῖν αὐτοῦ προσαπτόμενος του κέντρου κύκλος οὗτος. (3) δεύτερος δ' ἀπό τούτου καί πλέον μέν ἀφεστώς του κέντρου, περιέχον δὲ τόν πρῶτον, ἐν ᾧ τετάχαται γονεῖς ἀδελφοί γυνή παῖδες. ὁ δ' ἀπό τούτων τρίτος, ἐν ᾧ θεῖοι καί τηθίδες, πάπποι τε καί τηθαι, καί ἀδελφῶν παῖδες, ἔτι δ' ἀνεψιοί. μέθ' ὅν ὁ τούς ἄλλους περιέχων συγγενεῖς. τούτῳ δ' ἐφεξῆς ὁ τῶν δημοτῶν καί μετ' αὐτόν ὁ τῶν φυλετῶν, εἶθ' ὁ πολιτῶν, καί λοιπόν οὐτῶς ὁ μέν ἀστυγειτόνων, ὁ δὲ ὁμοεθνῶν. (4) ὁ δ' ἐξωτάτω καί μέγιστος περιέχων τε πάντας τοὺς κύκλους ὁ του παντός ἀνθρώπων γένους. (5) τούτων οὖν τεθεωρημένων κατὰ τόν ἐντεταμένον εστί περί τήν δέουσαν ἑκάστων χρῆσιν τό επισυνάγειν πως τούς κύκλους ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ κέντρον καί τῇ σπουδῇ μεταφέρειν ἀεί τούς ἐκ τῶν περιεχόντων εις τούς περιεχομένους. Here, the Greek text has been taken from Long and Sedley (347-348).

> Clearly you cannot live with many people and distribute yourself among them. Further these many people must also be friends to one another, if they are all to spend their days together; and this is difficult for many people to do. It also becomes difficult for many to share the joys and sufferings as their own, since you are quite likely to find yourself sharing one friend's joy and another friend's suffering at the same time. Presumably, then, it is not good to seek as many friends as possible, but only enough to live with. Indeed, it even seems impossible to be an extremely close friend to many people (*NE* 1171a3-11).[221]

Humans simply cannot treat everyone like a friend. We need not be hostile towards the furthest Mysian, but we need not open our home to her either. When we try to spread out the sentiments we have for those closest to us all that ends up happening is a watering down of the feeling. In his criticism of Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle tells us that treating all children as if they were your own child will not work:

> For that which is common to the greatest number is neglected. Everyone thinks chiefly of his own household, hardly at all of the common interest; and only when he is himself concerned as an individual. For besides other considerations, everybody is more inclined to neglect something which he expects another to fulfill; as in families many servants are often less useful than a few. Each citizen will have a thousand sons who will not be his sons individually, but anybody will be equally

[221] ὅτι δ' οὐχ οἷόν τε πολλοῖς συζῆν καὶ διανέμειν αὐτόν, οὐκ ἄδηλον. ἔτι δὲ κἀκείνους δεῖ ἀλλήλοις φίλους εἶναι, εἰ μέλλουσι πάντες μετ' ἀλλήλων συνημερεύειν, τοῦτο δ' ἐργῶδες ἐν πολλοῖς ὑπάρχειν. χαλεπὸν δὲ γίνεται καὶ τὸ συγχαίρειν καὶ τὸ συναλγεῖν οἰκείως πολλοῖς· εἰκὸς γὰρ συμπίπτειν ἅμα τῷ μὲν συνήδεσθαι τῷ δὲ συνάχθεσθαι. ἴσως οὖν εὖ ἔχει μὴ ζητεῖν ὡς πολυφιλώτατον εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τοσούτους ὅσοι εἰς τὸ συζῆν ἱκανοί. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδέχεσθαι δόξειεν ἂν πολλοῖς εἶναι φίλον σφόδρα.

the son of anybody, and will therefore be neglected by all alike (*Politics* 1261b36-1262a2).[222]

The Stoics simply expect too much of us. According to Annas, "impartiality has seemed to many to be too high a demand for a reasonable morality to make, too much of an alienation from our natural attachments to be a requirement that moral agents can reasonably be expected to respect."[223] I agree. We can only care for so many people. There is only so much time in a day to invest in bettering others.

Another issue is that the Stoics only see friendship as being between virtuous persons. This is a problem for two reasons. First, it means that my best friend and I are not really best friends, something I am not willing to concede. Second, it clashes with our common-sense ideas about friendship often being intense emotionally.

My best friend, Rileigh, lives very far away in Las Vegas. We do not see each other often, but we have cried and laughed together on many occasions. Whether it be a graduation or the loss of a beloved pet, we are there for each other. This is no emotionless matter where I send a card and give it no thought. We are like sisters. We even have matching Aristotle quote tattoos. The Stoic idea of friendship does not capture this relationship. Because I am not virtuous, the Stoics would not consider this relationship a true friendship. For them, friendship is only between two virtuous people. If they are right, then an *akratēs* like me has no business being friends with Rileigh. Indeed, I have nothing to offer her because I cannot properly attend to her needs as I ought to attend to my own.

[222] πρὸς γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὡς ἑτέρου φροντίζοντος ὀλιγωροῦσι μᾶλλον, ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς οἰκετικαῖς διακονίαις οἱ πολλοὶ θεράποντες ἐνίοτε χεῖρον ὑπηρετοῦσι τῶν ἐλαττόνων. γίνονται δ' ἑκάστῳ χίλιοι τῶν πολιτῶν υἱοί, καὶ οὗτοι οὐχ ὡς ἑκάστου ἀλλὰ τοῦ τυχόντος ὁ τυχὼν ὁμοίως ἐστὶν υἱός, ὥστε πάντες ὁμοίως ὀλιγωρήσουσιν.
[223] Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 267.

The fact that I do treat Rileigh as a second self and help her achieve her goals is a modus tollens against the Stoic view.

Aristotle, on the other hand, would realize that, though less than ideal, ours is a true friendship. He allows for there to be other forms of friendship that are less perfect than the ideal friendship that exists between virtuous persons, which accords with our modern notions about friendship. He thinks that we can be friends for utility and pleasure (*NE* 1156a10-14). Being friends for utility does not mean that I am using the other person as a means to an end. I am still treating her well for her own sake. A.A. Long phrases it well when he describes friendships that are decidedly not Stoic: "You may like your server at the checkout counter, she may like you, and you may wish each other well for each other's sake. This reciprocal affection and benefit are sufficient to make this encounter a kind of friendship, but one that goes no further in its basis than utility benefaction."[224] Friendships for pleasure can also live up to the test of treating the other as a second self. Long continues: "Such friends find one another appealing because they enjoy one another's company, irrespective of any material benefits they receive or of any firmly positive judgments concerning one another's characters. Mutual pleasure and enjoyment are what make these friends wish each other well in the contexts of their spending time together and keeping in touch."[225] These friendships might be incomplete and dissolve at some point, but they are friendships nonetheless. The bonds we share will fellow inhabitants of our cities are these types of friendships as well as the bonds shared by children who are fond of one another (*NE* 1157a26-29).

[224] Long, "Friendship and Friends in the Stoic Theory of Good Life", *Thinking about Friendship* ed. Damian Calouri (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 223.
[225] Long, Ibid.

Since the virtuous person, for the Stoics, is free from emotions, her friendships will be rather stolid. Of course, I do not mean to say that the Stoic virtuous person is cold like a robot. She is not led by *pathos* (emotion), but can feel *eupatheias* (innocent emotions):

> They say that there are three innocent emotions: joy, caution, wishing. Joy, they say, is the opposite of pleasure, being well-reasoned swelling. Caution is the opposite of fear, being well-reasoned shrinking. For the wise man will be afraid of nothing, but he will be cautious. They say that wishing is the opposite of appetite, being well-reasoned desire. Just as certain passions fall under the primary ones, so too with the primary innocent emotions. Under wishing: kindness, goodwill, affection, gentleness. Under caution: respect, purity. Under joy: delight, merriment, cheerfulness (Diogenes Laërtius 7.116).[226]

However, I still believe that this is not what we see in intense friendships. When my friend is having a panic attack, I should not tell her that what she is worried about is not really a danger. Instead, I should comfort her. I do not think that the Stoic virtuous person can do this. She cannot see why her friend is upset so she cannot see how to empathize with her.

On the other hand, the virtuous person, on Aristotle's account, has the right amount of the right emotions. So, she will share in the emotions of her friends.

[226] Εἶναι δὲ καὶ εὐπαθείας φασὶ τρεῖς, χαράν, εὐλάβειαν, βούλησιν. καὶ τὴν μὲν χαρὰν ἐναντίαν [φασὶν] εἶναι τῇ ἡδονῇ, οὖσαν εὔλογον ἔπαρσιν· τὴν δ᾽ εὐλάβειαν τῷ φόβῳ, οὖσαν εὔλογον ἔκκλισιν. φοβηθήσεσθαι μὲν γὰρ τὸν σοφὸν οὐδαμῶς, εὐλαβηθήσεσθαι δέ. τῇ δ᾽ ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἐναντίαν φασὶν εἶναι τὴν βούλησιν, οὖσαν εὔλογον ὄρεξιν. καθάπερ οὖν ὑπὸ τὰ πρῶτα πάθη πίπτει τινά, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ὑπὸ τὰς πρώτας εὐπαθείας· καὶ ὑπὸ μὲν τὴν βούλησιν εὔνοιαν, εὐμένειαν, ἀσπασμόν, ἀγάπησιν· ὑπὸ δὲ τὴν εὐλάβειαν αἰδῶ, ἀγνείαν· ὑπὸ δὲ τὴν χαρὰν τέρψιν, εὐφροσύνην, εὐθυμίαν.

> I speak of moral virtue, for this is concerned with emotions and actions, in which one can have excess or deficiency or a mean such as one can be frightened or confident, feel appetite or anger or pity, and experience pleasure and pain in general, either too much or too little, and in both cases wrongly. Whereas to feel these feelings at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner, is to feel the best amount of them, which is the mean amount, which is the very thing that is virtue. (*NE* 1106b16-23).[227]

It is not hitting the mean to always be the same level of happiness. We should be sad when our friends are sad and happy when our friends are happy. On special occasions, we should be very happy. The Stoic virtuous person is too reasonable. She cannot properly empathize with her friends as Aristotle's virtuous person does.

Moreover, the Stoic virtuous person will never feel certain emotions, e.g., anger, whereas these can be felt in the right way and at the right time for Aristotle. Here is the Stoic view:

> (1) They say that the morally good man experiences nothing contrary to his desire nothing contrary to his impulse nothing contrary to his design, on account of the fact that in all such cases he acts with reserve and encounters no obstacles which are unanticipated. (2) He is also gentle, his gentleness being a tenor by which he is gently disposed in acting always appropriately and in not being moved to anger against anyone. (3) He is also quiet and well-

[227] λέγω δὲ τὴν ἠθικήν· αὕτη γάρ ἐστι περὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις, ἐν δὲ τούτοις ἐστὶν ὑπερβολὴ καὶ ἔλλειψις καὶ τὸ μέσον. οἷον καὶ φοβηθῆναι καὶ θαρρῆσαι καὶ ἐπιθυμῆσαι καὶ ὀργισθῆναι καὶ ἐλεῆσαι καὶ ὅλως ἡσθῆναι καὶ λυπηθῆναι ἔστι καὶ μᾶλλον καὶ ἧττον, καὶ ἀμφότερα οὐκ εὖ· τὸ δ' ὅτε δεῖ καὶ ἐφ' οἷς καὶ πρὸς οὓς καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ ὡς δεῖ, μέσον τε καὶ ἄριστον, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς.

> ordered, his decorum being knowledge of fitting movements, and his quiet demeanor the good arrangement of the natural motions and rests of his soul and body. (4) The opposites of these occur in all bad men (Stobaeus 2.155, 5-17).[228]

So, for the Stoics, the virtuous person will never get angry. But what about when someone has injured your friend? That is precisely the time to get angry. Aristotle agrees:

> Let us then define anger as a desire accompanied by pain for a real or apparent retribution because of a real or apparent slight, affecting a man himself or one of his friends, when such a slight is not befitting. (*Rhetoric* 1378a31-33).[229]

Of course, many people feel too much anger or feel anger towards the wrong people, but the virtuous person will have the proportionate response when she or her friend has been slighted. A true friend is on our side after a breakup; she does not tell us to look for a silver lining until some time has passed and we have healed. So, she needs to have intense emotions, sometimes.

Glenn Lesses agrees: “If true friends turn out to be free from emotion, then the Stoic conception of friendship differs greatly from the attitude that makes, say, Butch Cassidy a pal to the Sundance Kid or Thelma to Louise. Stoic friendship is not a passionate personal relationship. If the sage is a reliable friend, he or she is also a less

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[228] (1) λέγουσι δὲ μήτε παρά τήν ὄρεξιν μήτε παρά τήν ὁρμήν μήτε παρά τήν ἐπιβολήν γίνεσθαι τι περί τόν σπουδαῖον, διά τὸ μέθ’ ὑπεξαιρέσεως πάντα ποιεῖν τὰ τοιαῦτα καί μηδέν αὐτῷ τῶν ἐναντιουμένων ἀπρόληπτον προσπίπτειν. (2) εἶναι δὲ καὶ πρᾶον, τῆςπραότητος οὔσης ἕξεως καθ’ ἥν πράως ἔχουσι πρός τὸ ποιεῖν τὰ ἐπιβάλλοντα ἐν πᾶσι καὶ μὴ ἐκφέρεσθαι εἰς ὀργήν ἐν μηδενί. (3) καί ἡσύχιον δὲ καί κόσμιον εἶναι, τῆς κοσμιότητος οὔσης ἐπιστήμης κινήσεων πρεπουσῶν, ἡσυχιότητος δὲ εὐταξίας περί τάς κατά φύσιν κινήσεις καί μονάςψυχῆς καί σώματος. (4) τῶν ἐναντίων τούτοις ἐπὶ πάντων φαύλων γιγνομένων. Here, the Greek text is taken from Long and Sedley (416-417).

[229] Ἔστω δὴ ὀργὴ ὄρεξις μετὰ λύπης τιμωρίας φαινομένης διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγωρίαν τῶν εἰς αὐτὸν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ, τοῦ ὀλιγωρεῖν μὴ προσήκοντος.

intense one."[230] But Aristotle's virtuous person can be a good friend without being so rational all the time. She does not go so far as to be led by appetites and desire to act wrongly, but she can feel love and whatnot fully. So, Aristotle's view again accords well with our common-sense notions. Friendships occur between all sorts of people and, even when it occurs between two virtuous people, it often involves intense emotions.

External Goods

Another, more obvious, difference between Aristotle and the Stoics is over the possibility of being *eudaimon* without external goods like health and wealth. Here is the Stoic position:

> 'Indifferent' is used in two senses: in the first, of things which contribute neither to happiness nor unhappiness, as is the case with wealth, reputation, health, strength, and the like. For it is possible to be happy without these, though the manner of using them is constitutive of happiness or unhappiness (Diogenes Laërtius 7.104).[231]

For the Stoics, things like wealth and health can be used in good and bad ways. So, they are not good simpliciter. Only something that is good simpliciter, like virtue, can be a necessary component for *eudaimonia*. Here is what Aristotle says:

> *Eudaimonia* clearly also needs external goods to be added, as we said, since it is impossible, or not easy, to do fine actions if we lack the resources. For many fine

[230] Glenn Lesses, "Austere Friends: The Stoics and Friendship", *Apeiron* 26, no.1 (1993): 69-70.
[231] Διχῶς δὲ λέγεσθαι ἀδιάφορα· ἅπαξ μὲν τὰ μήτε πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν μήτε πρὸς κακοδαιμονίαν συνεργοῦντα, ὡς ἔχει πλοῦτος, δόξα, ὑγίεια, ἰσχὺς καὶ τὰ ὅμοια· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ καὶ χωρὶς τούτων εὐδαιμονεῖν, τῆς ποιᾶς αὐτῶν χρήσεως εὐδαιμονικῆς οὔσης ἢ κακοδαιμονικῆς.

> actions require instruments for their performance: friends, wealth, and political power. Further, the lack of these—for instance, good birth, good children, beauty—mars our blessedness. For we do not altogether have *eudaimonia* if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary, or childless; and we have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad, or were good but have died (*NE* 1099a31-1099b7).[232]

For Aristotle, we cannot be *eudaimon* without some amount of external goods. If we are starving or being tortured, then we cannot be *eudaimon* (*NE* 1153b19-22). The *eudaimon* life is one with enough resources to pursue virtuous activity.

Aristotle very much wants to vindicate common-sense morality where he thinks it is correct. The Stoics are happy to give us a theory which contrasts with common-sense morality. The Aristotelian project is to account for the plain phenomena. So, we should put stock in what people say about *eudaimonia*.

> We should examine the principle, however, not only from the conclusion and premises, but also from what is said about it, for all the facts harmonize with a true account (*NE* 1098b9-11).[233]

When going over the common beliefs, Aristotle notes that most people believe *eudaimonia* to be the highest good or final end, but disagree about what exactly it is (*NE*

[232] φαίνεται δ' ὅμως καὶ τῶν ἐκτὸς ἀγαθῶν προσδεομένη, καθάπερ εἴπομεν· ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἢ οὐ ῥᾴδιον τὰ καλὰ πράττειν ἀχορήγητον ὄντα. πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ πράττεται, καθάπερ δι' ὀργάνων, διὰ φίλων καὶ πλούτου καὶ πολιτικῆς δυνάμεως· ἐνίων δὲ τητώμενοι ῥυπαίνουσι τὸ μακάριον, οἷον εὐγενείας, εὐτεκνίας, κάλλους· οὐ πάνυ γὰρ εὐδαιμονικὸς ὁ τὴν ἰδέαν παναίσχης ἢ δυσγενὴς ἢ μονώτης καὶ ἄτεκνος, ἔτι δ' ἴσως5 ἧττον, εἴ τῳ πάγκακοι παῖδες εἶεν ἢ φίλοι, ἢ ἀγαθοὶ ὄντες τεθνᾶσιν.

[233] Σκεπτέον δὴ περὶ αὐτῆς οὐ μόνον ἐκ τοῦ συμπεράσματος καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν λεγομένων περὶ αὐτῆς· τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεῖ πάντα συνάδει τὰ ὑπάρχοντα,

1095a18-21). Some candidates are pleasure, wealth, honor, and virtue. But each of those either lacks self-sufficiency or completeness. The *eudaimon* life is one which cannot be added to in order to make it better. Only a life of activity lived in accordance with reason is *eudaimon*.

> It is clear that all the various characteristic sought after in *eudaimonia* belong to the good as we have said. For to some people happiness seems to be virtue; to others *phronesis*; to others some sort of wisdom; to others again it seems to be these, or one of these, involving pleasure or requiring it to be added; others add in prosperity as well. Some of these views are from ancient times and held by many, while others are held by a few men who are widely esteemed. Neither group is likely to be completely wrong, but to be correct on one point at least, or even most points (*NE* 1098b23-30).[234]

People who have good opinions about what *eudaimonia* is should be listened to. Even if their accounts are not entirely correct, there is still some nugget of truth that can be useful in fleshing out a fuller account.

Most people think that we need external goods to be happy and they are right. The Stoics won't even allow that health and wealth are goods, because they can be used badly. However, tell the homeless person that wealth is not a good and she will laugh. Tell the person who is dying that health is not a good and she will raise an eyebrow. I do not mean to present a straw man of Stoicism here. Even defenders of Stoicism admit that,

[234] φαίνεται δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα περὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἅπανθ᾽ ὑπάρχειν τῷ λεχθέντι. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἀρετή, τοῖς δὲ φρόνησις, ἄλλοις δὲ σοφία τις εἶναι δοκεῖ· τοῖς δὲ ταῦτα ἢ τούτων τι μεθ᾽ ἡδονῆς ἢ οὐκ ἄνευ ἡδονῆς· ἔτεροι δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐκτὸς εὐετηρίαν συμπαραλαμβάνουσιν. τούτων δὲ τὰ μὲν πολλοὶ καὶ παλαιοὶ λέγουσιν, τὰ δὲ ὀλίγοι καὶ ἔνδοξοι ἄνδρες· οὐδετέρους δὲ τούτων εὔλογον διαμαρτάνειν τοῖς ὅλοις, ἀλλ᾽ ἔν γέ τι ἢ καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα κατορθοῦν.

at first glance, the sage seems to be missing something important when she does not mourn the loss of something as the rest of us do.

> For we might suppose that we cannot react appropriately to the sufferings of others if we do not take these sufferings seriously but regard them as unimportant. The Stoic sage lacks passions because she lacks the belief that, for instance, being crippled in an accident is really bad for the victim. To regard such misfortunes as indifferent rather than bad is apparently to believe that they are trivial. We might argue that our immediate responses to the sufferings of others cannot be appropriate if we believe that their sufferings are trivial. And so, even if sages display some immediate response to the sufferings of others, in so far as they have some elements of passions, the content of their response still seems to display inhuman detachment from the sufferings of other people.[235]

Irwin defends the Stoics from critics like Nussbaum and Striker by saying that "only virtue deserves, in the Stoic view, the uncompromising concern that non-Stoics direct to external goods."[236] However, one need not preserve health at all costs, say becoming vicious by stealing medicine, in order to respect health for the good that it is. It will affect someone's happiness if they are crippled in an accident and it should. They should not lose all zeal for life. But mourning the loss of their limbs is perfectly normal. The Stoics' desire to fly in the face of common-sense morality shows that they are too out of touch with people to give advice. The masses are not going to heed their warnings if they conflict

[235] Terence Irwin, "Stoic Inhumanity", *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* ed. Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 227.
[236] Irwin, "Stoic Inhumanity", 236.

with everything they believe. Aristotle, on the other hand, is more apt to make room for what the masses believe, even when they are wrong.

States between Virtue and Vice

The most important difference that I will be focusing on is the question of there being states between virtue and vice. For the Stoics, the answer is no. But, for Aristotle, the answer is yes. Here is the Stoic position:

> It is their opinion that there is nothing in between virtue and vice, whereas according to the Peripatetics there is, namely progress. For, they say, just as a stick must be either straight or crooked, so must a person be either just or unjust, nor again are there degrees of justice, and likewise for the other virtues (Diogenes Laërtius 7.127).[237]

> For if one truth is not truer than another, then neither is one falsehood falser than another. So, neither is one deception more of a deception than another nor is one mistake more of a mistake than another. For he who is a hundred stades from Canopus and he who is one stade away are equally not in Canopus. So too he who makes a greater mistake and he who makes a smaller one are equally not acting correctly (Diogenes Laërtius 7.120-121).[238]

> 'Yes,' they say, 'but just as in the sea the man an arm's length from the surface is drowning no less than the one who has sunk five hundred fathoms, so even those

[237] Ἀρέσκει δ' αὐτοῖς μηδὲν μεταξὺ εἶναι ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας, τῶν Περιπατητικῶν μεταξὺ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας εἶναι λεγόντων τὴν προκοπήν· ὡς γὰρ δεῖν φασιν ἢ ὀρθὸν εἶναι ξύλον ἢ στρεβλόν, οὕτως ἢ δίκαιον ἢ ἄδικον, οὔτε δὲ δικαιότερον οὔτ' ἀδικώτερον, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως.

[238] εἰ γὰρ ἀληθὲς ἀληθοῦς μᾶλλον οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐδὲ ψεῦδος ψεύδους· οὕτως οὐδ' ἀπάτη ἀπάτης, οὐδ' ἁμάρτημα ἁμαρτήματος. καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἑκατὸν σταδίους ἀπέχων Κανώβου καὶ ὁ ἕνα ἐπίσης οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐν Κανώβῳ· οὕτω καὶ ὁ πλέον καὶ ὁ ἔλαττον ἁμαρτάνων ἐπίσης οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐν τῷ κατορθοῦν.

> who are approaching virtue are no less in a state of vice than those who are far from it. And just as the blind are blind even if they are going to recover their sight a little later, so those progressing remain foolish and depraved right up to their attainment of virtue' (Plutarch, *Moralia* 1063a-b).[239]

So, for the Stoics, there is nothing between virtue and vice. Right up until we make the leap to virtue, we are still vicious. In these quotes we can see that, if we aren't perfect, then we're vicious, according to the Stoics.

However, for Aristotle, we can fail to be perfect in many ways, some of which are even praiseworthy.

> *Enkrateia* and endurance seem to be good and praiseworthy conditions, whereas *akrasia* and softness seem to be base and blameworthy conditions. The *enkratēs* seems to be the same as one who abides by his calculation; and the *akratēs* seems to be the same as one who abandons it. The *akratēs* knows that his actions are base, but does them because of his emotions, whereas the *enkratēs* knows that his appetites are base, but because of reason does not listen to them (*NE* 1145b8-14).[240]

For Aristotle, we can be enkratic and akratic. The *enkratēs* (person of self-control) does the right thing, but has the opposite desire. The *akratēs* (person lacking self-control)

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[239] "ναί," φασίν, "ἀλλὰ ὥσπερ ὁ πῆχυν ἀπέχων ἐν θαλάττῃ τῆς ἐπιφανείας οὐδὲν ἧττον πνίγεται τοῦ καταδεδυκότος ὀργυιὰς πεντακοσίας οὕτως οὐδὲ οἱ πελάζοντες ἀρετῇ τῶν μακρὰν ὄντων ἧττόν εἰσιν ἐν κακίᾳ· καὶ καθάπερ οἱ τυφλοὶ τυφλοί εἰσι κἂν ὀλίγον ὕστερον ἀναβλέπειν μέλλωσιν, οὕτως οἱ προκόπτοντες, ἄχρι οὗ1 τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀναλάβωσιν, Βάνόητοι καὶ μοχθηροὶ διαμένουσιν."

[240] Δοκεῖ δὴ ἥ τε ἐγκράτεια καὶ καρτερία τῶν σπουδαίων καὶ [τῶν] ἐπαινετῶν εἶναι, ἡ δ' ἀκρασία τε καὶ μαλακία τῶν φαύλων τε καὶ ψεκτῶν.—καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ἐγκρατὴς καὶ ἐμμενετικὸς τῷ λογισμῷ, καὶ ἀκρατὴς καὶ ἐκστατικὸς τοῦ λογισμοῦ.—καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀκρατὴς εἰδὼς ὅτι φαῦλα πράττειν διὰ πάθος, ὁ δ' ἐγκρατὴς εἰδὼς ὅτι φαῦλαι αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖν[2] διὰ τὸν λόγον.

knows that what she desires is wrong, but fails to overcome her desire. Since a majority of us are somewhere on the spectrum between *enkrateia* and *akrasia*, we should focus on these states of character.

The upshot of Aristotle's view is that we can differentiate between better and worse states of character. For the Stoics, the world is black and white. But, for Aristotle, there is a big gray area where most of us exist. The person who is one stade from Canopus is not as lost as the person who is one hundred stades from Canopus. We can expect the person who is one stade away to get to Canopus is due time. But we might not hold out hope for the person who is one hundred stades away. Likewise, with the drowning example. The one who has sunk an arm's length can be reached. Not so for the one who has sunk five hundred fathoms. There are people who are closer to virtue than vice. The Stoics are conceptually handicapped compared to Aristotle. They can say that some people are closer to virtue than others, but, on their account, they are all still vicious at the end of the day. For Aristotle, the *enkratēis* are praiseworthy even if they do not attain virtue. The Stoics, however, cannot claim this.

I have been arguing that the *akratēs* is the same kind of person as the *enkratēs*. So, they are both praiseworthy on my account. Of course, a chronic *akratēs* would not be as praiseworthy as an intermittent *akratēs*, but recall that the average *akratēs* might well have eleven out of twelve facets of her life in order. She only makes a mistake with respect to the tactile pleasures associated with food and sex. Moreover, her mistake is not complete ignorance, like the vicious person has, it is a temporary one. On my account, a great deal of non-virtuous people have much better to be said in their favor. This is not so for the Stoics. For them, most of us are in a bad condition. My interpretation of Aristotle

leaves us with a roadmap to virtue, but much more. It does not damn us for being less than perfect. So, it encourages us to see the good we are doing and try harder to do more. It focuses on the positive rather than the negative. This is better for inspiring moral development.

Another problem with the Stoics' view is that some kind of gestalt switch occurs when a person finally becomes virtuous. Up until that point, she is vicious. However, all of a sudden, she is now a different sort of person. That just is not how habituation works. For Aristotle, we need to train our desires to come in line with our reason. I.e., we must learn to like doing the right thing and loathe doing the wrong thing. This is how habituation works. When Aristotle addresses the young men of his day, his audience for the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he is not addressing perfectly virtuous people. Instead, they are mainly *enkratēis*. They have had a good upbringing, but still have to work to do the right thing from a stable disposition. Aristotle makes room for most people in the world to get better according to his theory. The Stoics, on the other hand, condemn us all for our failure.

A final problem is that, according to the Stoics, the virtuous always do everything right and the vicious always do everything wrong.

> There is nothing between virtue and vice. For all human beings have from the start inclinations toward virtue by nature and are like half lines of iambic verse, according to Cleanthes. Hence, if they remain incomplete, they are bad, but if they are completed, they are excellent. They also say that the wise man does

everything in accordance with all the virtues. For his every action is complete and so none of the virtues are left out. (Stobaeus 2.65,7-14).[241]

All mistakes are equal, and likewise all right actions; and all fools are equally foolish since they have one and the same disposition (Stobaeus 2.113,18-21).[242]

The bad man does everything that he does badly and in accordance with all of the vices (Stobaeus 2.67,3-4).[243]

And all the imprudent are mad. For they are not prudent, but do everything in accordance with madness, which is equivalent to imprudence (Diogenes Laërtius 7.124).[244]

But, is this really in line with what we observe? I think not. There certainly are people who are always acting badly, but this is not the case for everyone who is not yet perfect. There are shades of gray when it comes to moral mistakes. Aristotle's view allows for people to make mistakes one, two, five times out of ten. In fact, this is what we see. A truly virtuous person is a rarity for Aristotle, but a near impossibility for the Stoics. Someone who acts in accordance with each of the vices is as rare as someone who acts in accordance with each of the virtues. But those in between are many.

[241] Αρετῆς δὲ καὶ κακίας οὐδέν εἶναι μεταξύ. Πάντας γὰρ ἀνθρώπους ἀφορμάς ἔχειν ἐκ φύσεως πρός ἀρετήν, καὶ οἱονεί τόν τῶν ημιαμβειων λόγον ἔχειν κατὰ τόν Κλεανθην. ὅθεν ἀτελεῖς μέν ὄντας εἶναι φαύλους, τελειωθέντας δὲ σπουδαίους. Πάσι δὲ καὶ πάντα ποιεῖν τόν σοφόν <κατὰ> πάσας τάς ἀρετάς. Πᾶσαν γὰρ πρᾶξιν τελείαν αὐτοῦ εἶναι, διό καὶ μηδεμιᾶς ἀπολελεῖφθαι ἀρετῆς.
[242] [Ἐκ] πάντων τε τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ἴσων ὄντων καὶ τῶν κατορθωμάτων, καὶ τούς ἄφρονας ἐπίσης πάντας ἄφρονας εἶναι, τήν αὐτήν καὶ ἴσην ἔχοντας διάθεσιν.
[243] τόν φαῦλον πάντα ὅσα ποιεῖ κακῶς ποιεῖν καὶ κατὰ πάσας τάς κακίας.
[244] πάντας τε τοὺς ἄφρονας μαίνεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ φρονίμους εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἴσην τῇ ἀφροσύνῃ μανίαν πάντα πράττειν.

Consider the cheating wife or the lazy dieter. Imagine a wife who is perfect in every way, except that she is cheating on her husband. How frequent her trysts are will determine whether she is the *akratēs* or the vicious person. If she has only cheated once and ends the affair, then she is the *akratēs*. However, if it has happened multiple times to the point where this is a reliable way she acts, and she does not regret it, then she is the vicious person. Obviously, one of these scenarios is worse than the other. Both have gone wrong, but one is worse. Likewise, for the person who cheats on her diet. The dieter who knows that she should be having carrot sticks, instead of the chocolate cake she is actually eating, for a snack has gone wrong, but if her mistake is fleeting, then she is in a better position than if she makes this mistake constantly.

For the Stoics, the people I consider *akratēis* are just as bad as every other person who fails to be virtuous. Even worse, the Stoics have no way of saying that the people I consider *enkratēis* are any better than the vicious. Imagine that instead of cheating on a husband or a diet, one only feels the desire to, but manages to overcome that desire and act according to reason. This is a feat to be celebrated. But the Stoics cannot applaud such behavior. Instead, they must lump such people in with the rest of the foolish and vicious, if they are to be consistent.

How do these two views come to such different conclusions? It has to do with an even more basic disagreement between them. Again, for Aristotle, we can divide the soul into rational and non-rational parts. These parts can be at odds with each other, giving us the *enkratēs* and *akratēs*. No such division exists for the Stoics:

> They say the soul has eight parts. Its parts are the five sense organs and the vocal part and the thinking, which is the intellect itself, and the generative. From

> falsehood comes a perversion, which extends to the intellect, many inborn emotions and causes of instability arise from this. Passion itself is, according to Zeno, the irrational and unnatural movement of a soul or an excessive impulse (Diogenes Laërtius, 7.110).[245]

For the Stoics, the soul is rational when the person is virtuous and the soul is irrational when the person is vicious. There is no distinct part of the soul that lacks reason that we can pin point as the explanation why we go astray sometimes.

For the Stoics, the behavior Aristotle calls *akrasia* and *enkrateia* could only be described as a flip-flopping of reason.

> They say that emotion is an impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason, or a movement of the soul which is irrational and contrary to nature (and that all emotions belong to the soul's commanding-faculty). Therefore, every fluttering is also an emotion, and likewise, every emotion is a fluttering (Stobaeus 2.88,8-12).[246]

> Some people say that there is no difference between reason and emotions, and that there is no disagreement between the two and a standstill, but a turning of the reason to either direction, which escapes notice owing to the sharpness and speed of the change. We do not perceive that the natural instrument of appetite and

[245] Φασὶ δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι ὀκταμερῆ· μέρη γὰρ αὐτῆς τά τε πέντε αἰσθητήρια καὶ τὸ φωνητικὸν μόριον καὶ τὸ διανοητικόν, ὅπερ ἐστὶν αὐτὴ ἡ διάνοια, καὶ τὸ γεννητικόν. ἐκ δὲ τῶν ψευδῶν ἐπιγίνεσθαι τὴν διαστροφὴν ἐπὶ τὴν διάνοιαν, ἀφ' ἧς πολλὰ πάθη βλαστάνειν καὶ ἀκαταστασίας αἴτια. ἔστι δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πάθος κατὰ Ζήνωνα ἡ ἄλογος καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ψυχῆς κίνησις ἢ ὁρμὴ πλεονάζουσα.

[246] Πάθος δ' εἶναι φασιν ὁρμήν πλεονάζουσαν καὶ ἀπειθῆ τῷ αἱροῦντι λόγῳ ἤ κίνησιν ψυχῆς <ἄλογον> παρά φύσιν (εἶναι δὲ πάθη πάντα τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς), διό καί πᾶσαν πτοίαν πάθος εἶναι, <καί> πάλιν <πᾶν> πάθος πτοίαν.

> regret, or anger and fear, is the same part of the soul, which is moved by pleasure towards the shameful, and while moving recovers itself again. For appetite and anger and fear and all such things are worthless opinions and judgments, which do not arise by just one part of the soul but are the whole commanding-faculty's inclinations, yieldings, assents, and impulses, and, quite generally, activities which change rapidly, just like children's attacks, whose fury and strength are dangerous and transient owing to their weakness (Plutarch, *Moralia* 446f-447a).[247]

When the *akratēs* falls victim to her passions, she is not simply changing her mind very rapidly. Instead, she is viewing the object of her desire under the guise of the good. She is focused on the short-term good that the donut or cigarette will bring her rather than the long-term damage either will do. She does not go back and forth between her desire and her reason. What reason tells her has been locked away for a short period of time. Once she acts on her desire and the akratic episode has passed, she will regain her reason. But, while she is having her episode, she will not vacillate back and forth between what reason dictates and what she desires. Recall from Chapter One that the *akratēs* usually says something like 'I know I shouldn't eat this' or 'Eating this would be bad.' She does not go back and forth saying 'Will I?' or 'Won't I?' over and over again.

The Stoic view holds that what I call *akrasia* is just a rapid changing of the mind. When I overindulge at dinner, I do not keep changing my mind. Common-sense morality

[247] ἔνιοι δέ φασιν οὐχ ἕτερον εἶναι τοῦ λόγου τὸ πάθος οὐδὲ δυεῖν διαφορὰν καὶ στάσιν, ἀλλ' ἑνὸς λόγου τροπὴν ἐπ' ἀμφότερα, λανθάνουσαν ἡμᾶς ὀξύτητι καὶ τάχει μεταβολῆς, οὐ συνορῶντας1 ὅτι ταὐτόν ἐστι τῆς ψυχῆς ᾧ πέφυκεν ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ μετανοεῖν, ὀργίζεσθαι καὶ δεδιέναι, φέρεσθαι πρὸς τὸ αἰσχρὸν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς καὶ φερομένης πάλιν αὐτῆς ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι· καὶ γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ ὀργὴν καὶ φόβον καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα δόξας εἶναι καὶ κρίσεις πονηράς, οὐ περὶ ἕν τι γινομένας τῆς ψυχῆς μέρος, ἀλλ' ὅλου τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ῥοπὰς καὶ εἴξεις καὶ συγκαταθέσεις καὶ ὁρμάς, καὶ ὅλως ἐνεργείας τινὰς οὔσας ἐν ὀλίγῳ μεταπτωτάς, ὥσπερ αἱ τῶν παίδων ἐπιδρομαὶ τὸ ῥαγδαῖον καὶ τὸ σφοδρὸν ἐπισφαλὲς ὑπ' ἀσθενείας καὶ ἀβέβαιον ἔχουσι.

tells us that we can and do act against our better judgment. When these akratic episodes happen, we feel the discomfort of having two conflicting desires. We both desire and don't desire the cigarette/donut/affair. We feel these desires simultaneously, not in rapid succession. Again, the Stoics tell us something that flies in the face of common-sense and Aristotle tells us something that accords with it.

Aristotle and the Stoics disagree about a lot. The Stoics hold that all of the virtues are in play simultaneously, while Aristotle holds the weaker view that if someone has one virtue, then they have them all. The Stoics hold that the only true friendship is one between virtuous persons, while Aristotle holds that we can be friends for utility and pleasure as well as virtue. The Stoics hold that we do not need external goods to lead a flourishing life, while Aristotle holds that we need a certain amount. The Stoics hold that anyone who is not virtuous is vicious, while Aristotle makes more fine-grained distinctions when it comes to moral mistakes. Aristotle's view accords well with common-sense and everyday appearances. Therefore, his system is superior to the Stoics'.

II. Aristotle vs. Plato

In this section, I will focus on two major differences between Plato and Aristotle: the unity of virtue and the im/possibility of *akrasia*. Indeed, they disagree about a host of other things, but, for my purposes, these are the main differences. Aristotle's account has the upshot of being not only consistent with the apparent phenomena, but it is more uplifting too.

The Unity of Virtue

As I said in the previous section, Aristotle holds the reciprocity of virtue (RV), that if someone has one virtue then they have all of them, yet does not go so far as to hold the unity of virtue (UV), that all of the virtues reduce to one thing, and are therefore concomitant. For Socrates[248], on the other hand, each of the virtues reduces to knowledge. So, he holds both RV and UV.

Socrates poses the following questions to Protagoras:

> Recount this for me in precise exposition: whether virtue is a single thing, its parts being justice and temperance and piety, or are the things I have just mentioned all names for a single being. This is what I yearn for.
>
> This is an easy question to answer, Socrates, he replied. Virtue is a single entity, and the things you are asking about are its parts.
>
> Do you mean, I asked, parts as in the parts of a face: mouth and nose and eyes and ears? Or parts as in the parts of gold, where there is no difference between parts or between the parts and the whole, except in largeness and smallness (*Protagoras* 329c-d)?[249]

[248] Obviously, Socrates left us no texts. We have only the words of his followers. A further problem is that the accounts do not always agree. Take, for example, the contrast between Xenophon's *Apology* and Plato's *Apology*. Should we never take Plato's word as evidence for what Socrates believed? No, that would be too harsh. Plato presents convincing evidence that Socrates was committed to both UV and the impossibility of *akrasia*. Indeed, this evidence accords with what Aristotle says about Socrates in Books VI and VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. So, I take it that Plato's portrayal is useful. If, however, we were discussing the afterlife or the Forms, then I would be less prepared to take Plato's word for what Socrates believed.

[249] ταῦτ᾽ οὖν αὐτὰ δίελθέ μοι ἀκριβῶς τῷ λόγῳ, πότερον ἓν μέν τί ἐστιν ἡ ἀρετή, μόρια δὲ αὐτῆς ἐστὶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ ὁσιότης, Dἢ ταῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἃ νῦν δὴ ἐγὼ ἔλεγον πάντα ὀνόματα τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἑνὸς ὄντος· τοῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ὃ ἔτι ἐπιποθῶ. Ἀλλὰ ῥᾴδιον τοῦτό γ᾽, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀποκρίνασθαι, ὅτι ἑνὸς ὄντος τῆς ἀρετῆς μόριά ἐστιν ἃ ἐρωτᾷς. Πότερον, ἔφην, ὥσπερ προσώπου τὰ μόρια μόριά ἐστι, στόμα τε καὶ ῥὶς καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὦτα, ἢ ὥσπερ τὰ τοῦ χρυσοῦ μόρια οὐδὲν διαφέρει τὰ ἕτερα τῶν ἑτέρων, ἀλλήλων καὶ τοῦ ὅλου, ἀλλ᾽ ἢ μεγέθει καὶ σμικρότητι;

While he never answers the question for himself, he is certainly displeased with Protagoras's answer that they are like the parts of a face.

> Then thoughtlessness is the opposite of temperance? —It appears so.
>
> Now do you remember that earlier it was agreed that thoughtlessness is opposite to wisdom? —He agreed to this.
>
> And that one thing has one opposite? —I say so.
>
> Which of the two, Protagoras, of our explanations are we to let go of? That one thing has one opposite or the other, as was said, that wisdom is different from temperance, and each is a part of virtue, and moreover, a different part, and that the two are as unlike, both in themselves and in their capacities, as the parts of the face? Which of the two are we to let go of? The two of them together are not quite in tune; they do not agree with each other. How could they agree, if one thing must have but one opposite and not more, while wisdom, and temperance likewise, appear both to be opposite to thoughtlessness, which is a single thing? Such is the position, Protagoras, I said, or is it otherwise? —He agreed, involuntarily (*Protagoras* 332e-333b).[250]

[250] Ἐναντίον ἄρ᾽ ἐστὶν ἀφροσύνη σωφροσύνης; Φαίνεται. Μέμνησαι οὖν ὅτι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ὡμολόγηται ἡμῖν ἀφροσύνη σοφίᾳ ἐναντίον εἶναι; Συνωμολόγει. Ἓν δὲ ἑνὶ μόνον ἐναντίον εἶναι; Φημί. Μέμνησαι οὖν ὅτι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ὡμολόγηται ἡμῖν ἀφροσύνη σοφίᾳ ἐναντίον εἶναι; Συνωμολόγει. Ἓν δὲ ἑνὶ μόνον ἐναντίον εἶναι; Φημί. Πότερον οὖν, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, λύσωμεν τῶν λόγων; τὸ ἓν ἑνὶ μόνον ἐναντίον εἶναι, ἢ ἐκεῖνον ἐν ᾧ ἐλέγετο ἕτερον εἶναι σωφροσύνης σοφία, μόριον δὲ ἑκάτερον ἀρετῆς, καὶ πρὸς τῷ ἕτερον εἶναι καὶ ἀνόμοια καὶ αὐτὰ καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις αὐτῶν, ὥσπερ τὰ τοῦ προσώπου μόρια; πότερον οὖν δὴ λύσωμεν; οὗτοι γὰρ οἱ λόγοι ἀμφότεροι οὐ πάνυ μουσικῶς λέγονται· οὐ γὰρ συνᾴδουσιν οὐδὲ συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις. πῶς γὰρ ἂν συνᾴδοιεν, εἴπερ γε ἀνάγκη ἑνὶ μὲν ἓν μόνον ἐναντίον εἶναι, πλείοσιν δὲ μή, τῇ δὲ ἀφροσύνῃ ἑνὶ ὄντι σοφία ἐναντία καὶ σωφροσύνη αὖ φαίνεται· ἦ γάρ, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, ἔφην ἐγώ, ἢ ἄλλως πως; Ὡμολόγησε καὶ μάλ᾽ ἀκόντως.

So, if the virtues are not like the parts of a face, because they each have the same opposite, but opposites always come in pairs, then they are like the parts of gold. They are all in play simultaneously, because they are all just knowledge of what the situation calls for.

For Socrates, if someone has one virtue, then they have all of them, and this is because each of the virtues just is knowledge of what is right. For example, he argues the following about courage:

> Therefore, cowardice is ignorance of what is and what is not to be feared? —He nodded.
>
> Now, I went on, courage is the opposite of cowardice? —He affirmed.
>
> Therefore, wisdom about what is and is not to be feared is the opposite of this ignorance? —He nodded thereupon (*Protagoras* 360c-d).[251]

While knowledge of what to do is enough, on Socrates's account, to drive us to action, for Aristotle, it can only get us so far. We need to have the desire to do something virtuous and *phronēsis* further specifies what the situation calls for. So, Aristotle only partly agrees with Socrates. Again, I call attention to the following quote from *NE* VI:

[251] Οὐκοῦν ἡ τῶν δεινῶν καὶ μὴ δεινῶν ἀμαθία δειλία ἂν εἴη; Ἐπένευσεν. Ἀλλὰ μήν, Dῆν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ἐναντίον ἀνδρεία δειλίᾳ. Ἔφη. Οὐκοῦν ἡ τῶν δεινῶν καὶ μὴ δεινῶν σοφία ἐναντία τῇ τούτων ἀμαθίᾳ ἐστίν; Καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἔτι ἐπένευσεν.

> That is why some say that all the virtues are *phronēsis*, Socrates was wrong in thinking that all of the virtues are forms of *phronēsis,* but right in saying that the virtues require *phronēsis* to exist (*NE* 1144b18-21).[252]

So, while Aristotle agrees with Socrates that the virtues *involve* knowledge, they are not reducible to mere knowledge. Since they are not reducible to mere knowledge, they are not all in play simultaneously.

The upshot to holding RV but not UV is that Aristotle leaves room for us to make different kinds of mistakes. We can do the right thing in one area of our lives and do the wrong thing in another. For example, I can do what the temperate person does but not what the just person does. We can be inconsistent in this way for Aristotle without doing everything wrong. For Plato, we can only do wrong when we are ignorant. But that does not exhaust all of the possibilities. We can know that something is wrong and still desire to do it. This is what the *akratēis* and *enkratēis* do. The *enkratēs* does what is right, but not in the way that the virtuous person does it. The *akratēs* fails to do what is right. I will elaborate on this more in the next section.

The Im/possibility of Akrasia

For Plato, *akrasia* is impossible, because wrongdoing is always involuntary. For Aristotle, the *akratēis* and vicious act wrongly, but do so voluntarily. As such, they are blameworthy for their actions. Just like the Stoics, Plato is conceptually handicapped by denying the

[252] διόπερ τινές φασι πάσας τὰς ἀρετὰς φρονήσεις εἶναι, καὶ Σωκράτης τῇ μὲν ὀρθῶς ἐζήτει τῇ δ' ἡμάρτανεν· ὅτι μὲν γὰρ φρονήσεις ᾤετο εἶναι πάσας τὰς ἀρετάς, ἡμάρτανεν, ὅτι δ'οὐκ ἄνευ φρονήσεως, καλῶς ἔλεγεν.

possibility of *akrasia*. Aristotle is correct, the appearances show us that *akrasia* exists. Moreover, it is true that we are, up to a certain point, responsible for our character.

In the *Apology*, when Socrates is questioning Meletus, we can see that he holds the theory that no one does wrong willingly:

> Is there anybody who wishes to be harmed by those who live around him rather than be helped? Answer, my good sir. Indeed, the law commands you to answer. Is there anyone who wishes to be harmed? —Certainly not.
>
> Come now, which of the two have you brought me here for: that I corrupt the young men and make them worse willingly, or unwillingly? —Willingly, I say.
>
> What then, Meletus? Are you so much wiser at your age than me at mine that you know that bad people always do something bad to those who are near to them, and the good people do good, whereas I have come to such a pitch of ignorance that I don't know this, if I make one of my associates wretched, I run the risk that I shall be treated badly by him, so that I do as much harm as willingly, as you say? I'm not persuaded by you, Meletus, and I don't think anybody else is. Either I don't corrupt them, or, if I do corrupt them, it's unwillingly. So, you're lying either way. But if I do corrupt them willingly, it's not the law to bring people here for such mistakes but get them alone and instruct them and admonish them. Clearly, if I learned better, I shall stop doing what I'm doing unwillingly. You on the other avoided my company and were unwilling to teach me, and brought me here

instead, where it's the law to bring those in need of correction, not instruction. (*Apology* 25d-26a).[253]

According to Socrates, people who willingly do wrong need education, not punishment. They simply do not know that what they pursue is bad.

Socrates also tells us that no one willingly does wrong in the *Protagoras*. Ignorance, he explains, is the cause of wrongdoing:

> Then if, I proceeded, the pleasant is good, no one who has knowledge or thought of other actions as better than those he is doing, and as possible, will do as he proposes if he is free to do the better ones; and this yielding to oneself is none other than ignorance, and strength over oneself is wisdom. —They all agreed.
>
> Well then, by ignorance do you mean having a false opinion and being deceived about matters of value? —They all agreed to this also.

[253] Ἔστιν οὖν ὅστις βούλεται ὑπὸ τῶν συνόντων βλάπτεσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ὠφελεῖσθαι; ἀποκρίνου, ὦ ἀγαθέ· καὶ γὰρ ὁ νόμος κελεύει ἀποκρίνεσθαι. ἔσθ' ὅστις βούλεται βλάπτεσθαι;
Οὐ δῆτα.
Φέρε δή, πότερον ἐμὲ εἰσάγεις δεῦρο ὡς διαφθείροντα τοὺς νέους καὶ πονηροτέρους ποιοῦντα ἑκόντα ἢ ἄκοντα;
Ἑκόντα ἔγωγε.
Τί δῆτα, ὦ Μέλητε; τοσοῦτον σὺ ἐμοῦ σοφώτερος εἶ τηλικούτου ὄντος τηλικόσδε ὤν, ὥστε σὺ μὲν ἔγνωκας ὅτι οἱ μὲν κακοὶ κακόν τι ἐργάζονται ἀεὶ τοὺς μάλιστα πλησίον ἑαυτῶν, οἱ δὲ ἀγαθοὶ ἀγαθόν, ἐγὼ δὲ δὴ εἰς τοσοῦτον ἀμαθίας ἥκω ὥστε καὶ τοῦτ' ἀγνοῶ, ὅτι ἐάν τινα μοχθηρὸν ποιήσω τῶν συνόντων, κινδυνεύσω κακόν τι λαβεῖν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, ὥστε τοῦτο <τὸ> τοσοῦτον κακὸν ἑκὼν ποιῶ, ὡς φῂς σύ; ταῦτα ἐγώ σοι οὐ πείθομαι, ὦ Μέλητε, οἶμαι δὲ οὐδὲ ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων οὐδένα· ἀλλ' ἢ οὐ διαφθείρω ἢ, εἰ διαφθείρω, ἄκων, ὥστε σύ γε κατ' ἀμφότερα ψεύδῃ. εἰ δὲ ἄκων διαφθείρω, τῶν τοιούτων ἁμαρτημάτων οὐ δεῦρο νόμος εἰσάγειν ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ ἰδίᾳ λαβόντα διδάσκειν καὶ νουθετεῖν· δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν μάθω, παύσομαι ὃ γε ἄκων ποιῶ. σὺ δὲ συγγενέσθαι μέν μοι καὶ διδάξαι ἔφυγες καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησας, δεῦρο δὲ εἰσάγεις, οἷ νόμος ἐστὶν εἰσάγειν τοὺς κολάσεως δεομένους ἀλλ' οὐ μαθήσεως.

> Then surely, I proceeded, no one willingly goes after the bad or what he thinks to be bad. It is not in human nature to wish to go after what one thinks to be bad in preference to the good (*Protagoras* 358b-d).[254]

We can see here that Socrates thinks that going after what is actually bad only happens when one is ignorant.

Plato is still committed to this thesis, even later in his life when he has moved away from Socrates's theories towards his own.

> On the other hand, when the unjust are curable, one should realize, in the first place, that every unjust person is not unjust willingly. For the greatest of evils no one anywhere would acquire willingly, least of all in his most valued possessions. And, as we have said, the truth is that the most valued part is the soul. No one, therefore, will accept into this most valued thing the greatest of evils and live with it all his life (*Laws* 731c).[255]

> All bad men are, in all respects, unwillingly bad. This being so, my next argument necessarily follows —What argument?
>
> That the unjust man is indeed bad, but the bad man is like this unwillingly. However, to suppose that an unwilling act was done willingly is illogical. Therefore,

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[254] Εἰ ἄρα, ἔφην ἐγώ, τὸ ἡδὺ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν, οὐδεὶς οὔτε εἰδὼς οὔτε οἰόμενος ἄλλα βελτίω εἶναι, ἢ ἃ ποιεῖ, καὶ δυνατά, ἔπειτα ποιεῖ ταῦτα, ἐξὸν τὰ βελτίω· οὐδὲ τὸ ἥττω εἶναι αὐτοῦ ἄλλο τι τοῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἢ ἀμαθία, οὐδὲ κρείττω ἑαυτοῦ ἄλλο τι ἢ σοφία. Συνεδόκει πᾶσιν. Τί δὲ δὴ; ἀμαθίαν ἆρα τὸ τοιόνδε λέγετε, τὸ ψευδῆ ἔχειν δόξαν καὶ ἐψεῦσθαι περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων τῶν πολλοῦ ἀξίων; Καὶ τοῦτο πᾶσι συνεδόκει. Ἄλλο τι οὖν, ἔφην ἐγώ, ἐπί γε τὰ κακὰ οὐδεὶς ἑκὼν ἔρχεται οὐδὲ ἐπὶ ἃ οἴεται κακὰ εἶναι, οὐδ᾽ ἔστι τοῦτο, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐν ἀνθρώπου φύσει, ἐπὶ ἃ οἴεται κακὰ εἶναι ἐθέλειν ἰέναι ἀντὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν·

[255] τὰ δ᾽ αὖ τῶν ὅσοι ἀδικοῦσι μέν, ἰατὰ δέ, γιγνώσκειν χρὴ πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἄδικος οὐχ ἑκὼν ἄδικος. τῶν γὰρ μεγίστων κακῶν οὐδεὶς οὐδαμοῦ οὐδὲν ἑκὼν κεκτῆτο ἄν ποτε, πολὺ δ᾽ ἥκιστα ἐν τοῖς τῶν ἑαυτοῦ τιμιωτάτοις· ψυχὴ δ᾽, ὡς εἴπομεν, ἀληθείᾳ γ᾽ ἐστὶ πᾶσι τιμιώτατον· ἐν οὖν τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ τὸ μέγιστον κακὸν οὐδεὶς ἑκὼν μή ποτε λάβῃ καὶ ζῇ διὰ βίου κεκτημένος αὐτό.

> to the person who holds the view that the unjust are unjust unwillingly, a man who is doing injustice does so against his will. Here and now, a conclusion I myself must accept: for I agree that all men who do injustice do so unwillingly (*Laws* 860d-e).[256]

It is clear that Plato holds that wrongdoing is always done unwillingly. Again, I think that this is because he is committed to what Socrates says in the *Protagoras* about ignorance. However, the *akratēs* is not all together ignorant like the vicious person is.

Like the Stoics, Plato leaves no room for *enkrateia* and *akrasia*. For him, there is only virtue and vice. However, for Aristotle, this denial of *akrasia* is absurd.

> This [Socrates's] argument contradicts things that appear manifestly. There is need to search concerning the affection, if it is ignorance, for the type of ignorance that it is (*NE* 1145b28-30).[257]

Plato and Aristotle do agree about one thing: that vice is a disease of the soul.

> Diseases of the soul because of a bodily state come about in the following way. We must agree that want of understanding is a disease of the soul, and want of understanding is of two kinds. One is madness, the other ignorance. Whatever condition a man suffers from, if it brings about one of these two, it must be called

[256] Ὡς οἱ κακοὶ πάντες εἰς πάντα εἰσὶν ἄκοντες κακοί. τούτου δὲ οὕτως ἔχοντος ἀνάγκη που τούτῳ ξυνέπεσθαι τὸν ἐξῆς λόγον.
Τίνα λέγεις;
Ὡς ὁ μὲν ἄδικός που κακός, ὁ δὲ κακὸς ἄκων τοιοῦτος. ἀκουσίως δὲ ἑκούσιον οὐκ ἔχει πράττεσθαί ποτε λόγον· ἄκων οὖν ἐκείνῳ φαίνοιτ᾽ ἂν ἀδικεῖν ὁ ἀδικῶν τῷ τὴν ἀδικίαν ἀκούσιον τιθεμένῳ· καὶ δὴ καὶ νῦν ὁμολογητέον ἐμοί, ξύμφημι γὰρ ἄκοντας ἀδικεῖν πάντας·

[257] οὗτος μὲν οὖν ὁ λόγος ἀμφισβητεῖ τοῖς φαινομένοις ἐναργῶς, καὶ δέον ζητεῖν περὶ τὸ πάθος, εἰ δι᾽ ἄγνοιαν, τίς ὁ τρόπος γίνεται5 τῆς ἀγνοίας·

> disease. We must assume that excessive pleasures and pains is the greatest of the soul's diseases (*Timaeus* 86b).[258]

If Plato allowed the possibility of *akrasia*, he would agree with Aristotle that it is a bodily condition that affects the intellect. However, again, he maintains that wrongdoing is involuntary.

> And, indeed, approximately all those affections which are called by way of reproach want of self-control in pleasure, as though the bad acted voluntarily, are not rightly so reproached; for no one is voluntarily bad, but the bad man becomes bad by reason of some bad bodily condition and uneducated nurture, and these are experiences which are hated by everyone and involuntary (*Timaeus* 86d-e).[259]

The issue here is that Plato has removed all agency from the wrongdoer. Total ignorance is not the only reason that people go astray. Certainly, it is conceptually possible that there are people who do not know that adultery, theft, and murder are wrong. However, most of us have been raised in societies such that we are familiar with the harms of such behavior. Even children who are raised in abusive homes can come to understand that violence conflicts with love. So, even if we get a bad start, there is hope for us to get better.

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[258] Καὶ τὰ μὲν περὶ τὸ σῶμα νοσήματα ταύτῃ ξυμβαίνει γιγνόμενα, τὰ δὲ περὶ ψυχὴν διὰ σώματος ἔξιν τῇδε. νόσον μὲν δὴ ψυχῆς ἄνοιαν ξυγχωρητέον, δύο δ' ἀνοίας γένη, τὸ μὲν μανίαν, τὸ δὲ ἀμαθίαν. πᾶν οὖν ὅ τι πάσχων τις πάθος ὁπότερον αὐτῶν ἴσχει, νόσον προσρητέον· ἡδονὰς δὲ καὶ λύπας ὑπερβαλλούσας τῶν νόσων μεγίστας θετέον τῇ ψυχῇ·

[259] καὶ σχεδὸν δὴ πάντα ὁπόσα ἡδονῶν ἀκράτεια κατ' ὄνειδος ὡς ἑκόντων λέγεται τῶν κακῶν, οὐκ ὀρθῶς ὀνειδίζεται· κακὸς μὲν γὰρ ἑκὼν οὐδείς, Εδιὰ δὲ πονηρὰν ἕξιν τινὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἀπαίδευτον τροφὴν ὁ κακὸς γίγνεται κακός, παντὶ δὲ ταῦτα ἐχθρὰ καὶ ἄκοντι προσγίγνεται.

On Plato's view, I have to be ignorant of the fact that cigarettes and too many donuts are bad. If this were the 1930s, then that could be a universal excuse. However, we now know that cigarettes are bad for our health. Likewise, with too many sweets or fattening foods. Of course, there could be some people who do not know these things. Aristotle leaves room for this with the vicious. But this is not the only way to go wrong. People can desire what is bad and go one of two ways: they can either give in to their desire or not. For Plato, these kinds of mistakes do not happen. However, these mistakes are more common than being totally ignorant of the badness of the object of our desire. So, not only are they possible, but they should be the focus of our study given how common they are.

Moreover, there is no agency left in a person if all of her mistakes are due to ignorance. Aristotle differentiates between things done in ignorance and things done out of ignorance. For example, drinking too much alcohol can make us ignorant. However, such behavior is not thereby excused, because the agent chose to get drunk in the first place (*NE* 1110b23-28). Treating people as though they just do not know any better is to infantilize them. Most adults know better than to get drunk and drive. Yet some people do exactly that. Should we really think they did not know any better? If that were the case, then, once told that their actions were wrong, they would reform. However, recidivism rates are high. As Aristotle says, it "contradicts things that appear manifestly" to assume that *akrasia* never happens (*NE* 1145b28).

Why is Aristotle right? Because we are responsible for our actions, good and bad. He says as much in *NE* Book III:

> If someone says that pleasant things and fine things force us, because they are external and compel us, then, everything must be forced. Everyone in every action aims at something gratifying. Moreover, if we are forced and unwilling to act, we find it painful; but if something pleasant or fine is its cause, we do it with pleasure. It is absurd, then, for him to ascribe responsibility to external causes, not to himself as being easily snared by such things, or to hold himself responsible for his fine actions, but pleasant things responsible for his shameful actions (*NE* 1110b9-17).[260]

So, we cannot accept praise when we act rightly but not accept blame when we act wrongly. We must admit that we are to blame for our bad character. Of course, our parents and role models have a very strong effect on us. But, at a certain age, it is up to us to pursue the good over the pleasant. Rachana Kamtekar agrees: "I am the voluntary cause of known but unintended effects of my voluntary actions, and among these known effects is the character into which my actions habituate me."[261] *I* am the cause of these actions; it is not some great mystery why I have acted wrongly. I have to take responsibility for my actions. Otherwise, I will never be able to get better.

Plato, like the Stoics, has to lump all of the wrongdoers together. But, for Aristotle, some of us are curable and others not. So, we too need to make these distinctions.

> The intemperate person, as we said, does not feel regret, since he abides by his choice. But every *akratēs* is prone to regret. That is why the truth is not what we

[260] εἰ δέ τις τὰ ἡδέα καὶ τὰ καλὰ φαίη βίαια εἶναι (ἀναγκάζειν γὰρ ἔξω ὄντα), πάντα ἂν εἴη οὕτω βίαια. τούτων γὰρ χάριν πάντες πάντα πράττουσιν. καὶ οἱ μὲν βίᾳ καὶ ἄκοντες λυπηρῶς, οἱ δὲ διὰ τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ καλὸν μεθ' ἡδονῆς. γελοῖον δὲ1 τὸ αἰτιᾶσθαι τὰ ἐκτός, ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτὸν εὐθήρατον ὄντα ὑπὸ τῶν τοιούτων, καὶ τῶν μὲν καλῶν ἑαυτόν, τῶν δ'αἰσχρῶν τὰ ἡδέα.

[261] Rachana Kamtekar, "Aristotle Contra Plato on Voluntariness of Vice." *Phronesis* 64, no. 1 (2019): 75.

> said in raising the puzzles, but in fact the intemperate person is incurable, and the *akratēs* curable (*NE* 1150b29-32).[262]

The vicious are too far gone to be saved. The *akratēs* and *enkratēs*, however, can become virtuous. Again, this focus on the positive over the negative exhorts us to be better. Virtue is a real possibility for many of us.

I'm not projecting onto Aristotle here. The point of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to get better. Of course, he had a narrower audience in mind than I do, but it would be foolish to expect him never to make mistakes. For all his errors about women and slaves, this much he gets right. He didn't write *Nicomachean Ethics* simply to show that he was a virtuous person. No, he wrote it with his pupils in mind. He wants them not only to know better, but to *do* better. This point is made both early on and towards the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Since our present study, unlike the other [branches of philosophy], has a practical aim (for we are not examining the nature of virtue for the sake of knowing what it is, but in order that we may become good, without which result our examination would be of no advantage), it is necessary to carry out our enquiry concerning actions, and to ask how we are to act rightly. For our actions, as we have said, have control over of our *hexeis*. (*NE* 1103b26-32).[263]

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[262] Ἔστι δ' ὁ μὲν ἀκόλαστος, ὥσπερ ἐλέχθη, οὐ μεταμελητικός (ἐμμένει γὰρ τῇ προαιρέσει)· ὁ δ' ἀκρατὴς μεταμελητικὸς πᾶς. διὸ οὐχ ὥσπερ ἠπορήσαμεν, οὕτω καὶ ἔχει, ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἀνίατος, ὁ δ' ἰατός·

[263] Ἐπεὶ οὖν ἡ παροῦσα πραγματεία οὐ θεωρίας ἕνεκά ἐστιν ὥσπερ αἱ ἄλλαι (οὐ γὰρ ἵν' εἰδῶμεν τί ἐστιν ἡ ἀρετὴ σκεπτόμεθα, ἀλλ' ἵν' ἀγαθοὶ γενώμεθα, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲν ἂν ἦν ὄφελος αὐτῆς), ἀναγκαῖον ἐπισκέψασθαι τὰ περὶ τὰς πράξεις, πῶς πρακτέον αὐτάς· αὗται γάρ εἰσι κύριαι καὶ τοῦ ποιὰς γενέσθαι τὰς ἕξεις, καθάπερ εἰρήκαμεν.

> If we have said enough about happiness and the virtues, and friendship and pleasure, then may we assume that the inquiry we have formed is complete? As we have said, in practical sciences the end is not to attain theoretical knowledge, but to act on it. Hence, to know about virtue is not enough. We must attempt to possess and practice it, or in some other way to become good (*NE* 1179a33-1179b4).[264]

The point of reading is not merely to know what is good, but to go out and do it. The conclusion of the good practical syllogism is, after all, an action (*NE* 1147b9-11, *Movement of Animals* 701a17-24). So, we are meant to go forth and act, and to do so well.

Aristotle and Plato have quite divergent views when it comes to UV and the possibility of *akrasia*. For Plato, the virtues are each always in play simultaneously, because they are all just knowledge. For Aristotle, that just is not right. There is a time for bravery and a time for wit. One virtue takes the wheel and drives how we are going to react. Being sensitive to the situation requires seeing which virtue is needed, not acting with all of them at once. For Plato, *akrasia* is impossible, because wrongdoing only occurs based on ignorance. For Aristotle, this contradicts the obvious appearances. Most people know that cigarettes, alcohol, and sweets are bad in excess. However, many still overindulge. This fits with what Aristotle writes about going astray. Again, his system accords with common-sense notions.

[264] Ἆρ’ οὖν εἰ περὶ τούτων καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ φιλίας καὶ ἡδονῆς ἱκανῶς εἴρηται τοῖς τύποις, τέλος ἔχειν οἰητέον τὴν προαίρεσιν, ἢ καθάπερ λέγεται, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τοῖς πρακτοῖς τέλος τὸ θεωρῆσαι ἕκαστα καὶ γνῶναι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὸ πράττειν αὐτά; οὐδὲ δὴ περὶ ἀρετῆς ἱκανὸν τὸ εἰδέναι, ἀλλ’ ἔχειν καὶ χρῆσθαι πειρατέον, ἢ εἴ πως ἄλλως ἀγαθοὶ γινόμεθα.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented reasons why I begin with Aristotle's system rather than Plato's or the Stoics'. The Stoics hold that each virtue is in play simultaneously, external goods are not necessary for flourishing, friendship is only between the virtuous, and that all vicious people act with all of the vices at once. Aristotle disagrees with them on all these points. First, the virtues do not form a unity, but there is a reciprocity among them. Second, we need a certain amount of external goods to flourish. Third, friendships can exist between all manner of people and often involve intense emotions. Finally, there is at least one stable state of the soul in between virtue and vice. Plato also holds that all of the virtues are in play simultaneously and that *akrasia* is impossible. However, we are not always ignorant when we act wrongly. While I do not agree with everything that Aristotle writes, I agree with a majority of it. Making fine-grained distinctions when it comes to right and wrong actions fits better with common-sense moral notions and gives those of us who are struggling a roadmap to virtue.

Conclusion

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle focuses on four *hexeis* (stable states of the soul): virtue, *enkrateia* (self-control), *akrasia* (lack of self-control), and vice. Most people draw bright lines between *enkrateia* and *akrasia*. This is a mistake. On my interpretation, we ought to draw two bright lines: one between virtue and *enkrateia* and another between *akrasia* and vice. This means that the *akratēs* (person lacking self-control) and *enkratēs* (self-controlled person) are actually the same kind of person, they differ only in degree. So, Aristotle has only given us enough information to distinguish three separate *hexeis*. While this is hardly the received view, I am convinced that it is faithful to the text.

The *akratēs* and *enkratēs* are the same kind of person for three reasons. First, the *akratēs* makes a very narrow mistake. She does not know, or knows in the way that the drunk person knows, the conclusion to the good practical syllogism. The good practical syllogism is the one employed by the virtuous person. Because she knows the two premises, but has her knowledge of the conclusion locked away by her physiological condition, the *akratēs* only knows better in a weak sense. Second, she makes this mistake in only one facet of her life. She desires too much the tactile pleasures associated with food and sex. Aristotle lists eleven other spheres of *pathos* (emotion) where her behavior is undetermined. Third, the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* both lack the psychological unity that I argued the virtuous and vicious agents each possess. The virtuous and vicious persons each possess a harmony between what reason tells them and what they desire. The *akratēs* and *enkratēs* lack this unity. They are always at odds with themselves and struggle.

Realizing that the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* exist on a spectrum allows us to focus on the positives rather than the negatives of *akrasia*. This will exhort us to get better, even though Aristotle seems to think that our character is rather cemented by the time we reach adulthood. He does, however, admit that the *akratēs*, unlike the vicious, is curable, because she comes to regret her wrong actions. So, there is hope for us *akratēis* yet. The cure for *akrasia* will be like the cure for many forms of mental illness, because one of the forms of *akrasia* that Aristotle mentions, the melancholic, is very much like someone with Bipolar II disorder. The *akratēs* has a physiological condition. So, she needs medicine and/or therapy. She needs medicine to curb her desires and therapy to realize when she is in the middle of an episode. While I strayed slightly form interpreting Aristotle to giving my own view here, Aristotle would be happy that a physiological condition has a physiological cure.

Finally, I defended Aristotle's system against Plato and the Stoics. *Akrasia* is not impossible; it happens all the time. It is what Aristotle describes, the *akratēs* has her knowledge temporarily locked away from her. Once she regains it, she regrets her actions. The upshot to this interpretation of Aristotle is twofold. First, it accords with common-sense beliefs about morality. Aristotle very much wants his theories to be supported by facts that are obvious even to lay people. Second, it drives home the purpose of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: to be a better person. We are not to read it and merely sit back with the knowledge we have acquired. We are supposed to go forth and do some good in our community. My hope is that my interpretation makes that abundantly clear.

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