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Empeiria and Good Habits in Aristotle's Ethics

MARTA JIMENEZ*

ABSTRACT My goal in this paper is to draw attention to the importance of *empeiria* in Aristotle's account of moral development in his ethical treatises, and concretely in his account of the formation of *phronêsis*. I argue that *empeiria* and good habits make different and complementary contributions to our moral development and to the content of our deliberations about how to act. While good habits equip us with a grasp of the proper ends of action, *empeiria* is in great part responsible for our eventual success in achieving such ends, by providing us with the cognition of particulars required both to properly recognize those ends in our concrete circumstances and to successfully implement the right means towards them—two crucial functions of *phronêsis*.

KEYWORDS Experience, practical wisdom, habit, *empeiria*, *phronêsis*, *ethos*, Aristotle, Socrates

INTRODUCTION: *EMPEIRIA* IN ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS

The specific role of *empeiria* (experience) in Aristotle's ethics has received much less attention than its role in his epistemology, despite the fact that Aristotle explicitly stresses the importance of *empeiria* as a requirement for the receptivity to ethical arguments and as a source for the formation of *phronêsis* (practical wisdom).[1] Thus, while *empeiria* is an integral part of all explanations that scholars give of the Aristotelian account of the acquisition of *technê* (skill, expertise) and *epistêmê* (scientific knowledge), it is usually not prominent in explanations of the acquisition of *phronêsis*.[2] The abundant mentions of *empeiria* in Aristotle's ethical

[1]The claim that *empeiria* is central for being receptive to ethical arguments is brought up by Aristotle in *EN* I.3, 1095a2–4 and X.9, 1181a9–b12 (see also *Magna Moralia* I.20, 1190b28–30); the claim that *empeiria* produces the kind of "conviction" (*pistis*) that makes knowledge authoritative is suggested in *EN* VI.8/*EE* V.8, 1142a14–20, and *EN* VII.3/*EE* VI.3, 1147a17–24.

[2]There have been abundant discussions of *empeiria* in Aristotle's epistemology during the last fifteen years, most of which do not say much about the role that *empeiria* plays in Aristotle's ethics. See, e.g. Travis Butler, "*Empeiria* in Aristotle"; Pavel Gregorić and Filip Grgić, "Experience"; Scott LaBarge, "*Empeiria*"; T. A. Blackson, "Induction and Experience"; Gregory Salmieri, "*Aisthêsis*"; and David

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treatises are often eclipsed in the secondary literature by discussions about the relative weight of habit and reason in the acquisition of ethical principles, and *empeiria* is often not dealt with on its own.[3] My goal in this paper is to draw attention to the importance of *empeiria* in Aristotle's account of moral development in his ethical treatises, and concretely in his account of the formation of *phronêsis*.

Taking seriously his opening claim in *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*) II.1 about the different modes of acquisition of intellectual virtues and virtues of character, I argue that Aristotle confers a specific role to *empeiria* in the acquisition of *phronêsis*, a role different from habituation, and, moreover, a role that is at least partly similar to the one that it plays in the acquisition of *technê* and *epistêmê*. While it is true that Aristotle allots to habituation a relevant cognitive role in our moral formation, he also considers *empeiria* to provide crucial (and different) content about the practical world and to contribute significantly to the formation of ethical notions that are necessary in the deliberations of the *phronimos*. My view is that, even though *empeiria* and habituation (just as *phronêsis* and character virtue) are intimately intertwined and often difficult to disentangle, and even though habituation does play a relevant cognitive role in our moral formation and is not just a mere process of rote training, Aristotle has good reasons to hold that *empeiria* and good habits make different contributions.[4]

My claim that *empeiria* makes a crucial and specific contribution to the formation of *phronêsis* does not aim at undermining the relevance of the role of habituation in our moral development. Habituation shapes our emotions and behavioral tendencies while equipping us with notions (or, perhaps, equipping us with the

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Bronstein, "Comments on Comments on Gregory Salmieri" and "The Origin." A notable exception is Pieter Sjoerd Hasper and Joel Yurdin, "Aristotle's Account of Experience," who study the notion of experience across the whole corpus, and devote one section (sect. 5) to experience and knowledge of particulars both in epistemology and in the practical sphere, and another (sect. 6) to the intimate connection between experience and habit. I agree with much of what Hasper and Yurdin argue in "Aristotle's Account of Experience," and especially with their characterization of *empeiria* as consisting in recognitional and practical abilities. In contrast to their approach, however, my goal is to underscore not the intimate connection between *empeiria* and habit, but the fact that *empeiria* is different from habit and plays a different role in Aristotle's ethics.

[3]There are very few references to *empeiria* in recent accounts of the formation of *phronêsis* and the acquisition of the ethical starting points in Aristotle, and sometimes no references at all, as Rosalind Hursthouse underscores in "Practical Wisdom." See, e.g. D. J. Allan, "Origin of Moral Principles"; Terence Irwin, "Reason" and "First Principles"; John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason" and "Deliberation"; John M. Cooper, "Some Remarks"; Norman O. Dahl, *Practical Reason*; David J. DeMoss, "Acquiring Ethical Ends"; C. D. C. Reeve, *Practices of Reason*; A. D. Smith, "Character and Intellect"; Iakovos Vasiliou, "Good Upbringing"; and Jessica Moss "Virtue Makes the Goal Right" and *Apparent Good*. Some exceptions are Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, Deborah Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value*, and Rosalind Hursthouse, "Practical Wisdom." My argument in this paper agrees with much of what Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, ch. 2, and Hursthouse, "Practical Wisdom," say about the relevance of *empeiria* in Aristotle's *Ethics*, but here I deal specifically with *empeiria*'s role in the formation of *phronêsis* as a source of content different from habituation.

[4]Hasper and Yurdin offer good reasons and textual support to establish an intimate connection between *empeiria* and habits ("Aristotle's Account of Experience," sect. 6). The authors refer to several texts where *empeiria* is explicitly said to be acquired through familiarity (*sunêtheia*), a term that is "conceptually and terminologically related to habit (*ethos*)"—e.g. *EN* X.9, 1181a9–11, and *EN* VIII.6, 1158a14–15 ("Aristotle's Account of Experience," 144). Although I agree that there is an intimate connection between *empeiria* and habits, I think it is important to establish that Aristotle maintains a distinction between them because he gives them different roles in moral development.

non-rational cognitive content that forms the basis of our notions[5]) regarding "the end" (*to telos*) of action—that is, the "for the sake of which" (*hou heneka*) our actions are to be chosen or done. In other words, habituation is responsible for bringing the learners to a good affective condition, properly orienting them to *aim* towards noble actions and emotions, and getting them to grasp crucial aspects of the noble and the good that allow them to see what is choiceworthy about virtuous actions—that is, their nobility. This orientation towards the noble is what ultimately provides us with motives for virtuous action, and as such it is the ground for moral virtue. At the same time, the process of habituation offers crucial content for the formation of notions about the ends of action that are relevant in the practical deliberations of the *phronimos*.

Empeiria, as I shall argue, complements the role of good habits in our moral development and contributes to the formation of *phronêsis* by providing a different kind of content. Concretely, *empeiria* equips us with notions about the practical sphere that are directly crucial for acquiring *phronêsis* insofar as this intellectual virtue—as discussed in section 1—is in charge of not only reliably adopting the ends of action established by virtue, but also of properly recognizing those ends in concrete practical situations and detecting and deliberating about "the things toward the end" (*ta pros to telos*) in each case. Agents need to acquire *empeiria* concerning practical matters to properly assess the relevant features of each situation and to find on each occasion the best concrete way to successfully achieve their end in action.

On the view that I propose, therefore, both habituation and *empeiria* are necessary for our moral formation, and both have relevant cognitive roles that contribute differently to the acquisition of *phronêsis*. Without good habits, agents lack the proper appreciation of the right ends of action and are at a loss concerning questions of the choiceworthiness of nobility; without sufficient *empeiria*, agents are unable to properly assess their situations and to find successful ways to specify and achieve their ends. Together, good habits and *empeiria* make learners familiar with those particulars of the practical sphere that will eventually enable them not only to properly assess and deal with their practical situations, but also to understand and be adequate judges of arguments about the noble and the good in action.

My argument proceeds in several steps. In section 1, I argue that the connections and differences that Aristotle establishes between *phronêsis* and character virtue should be reflected in the explanation of their respective modes of acquisition. On the basis of this principle, I defend a plural account of the sources of ethical content in Aristotle, and argue that we can acknowledge the role of habituation in the acquisition of the "starting points" (*archai*) of ethics—the things from which and about which ethical arguments are—without ruling out the existence of other cooperating sources that provide relevant content for practical deliberation.

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[5]The interpretation that I defend in this paper is neutral in relation to the debate about whether the content provided by habituation is non-rational (as defended by, e.g. Moss, "Virtue Makes the Goal Right" and *Apparent Good*) or rational (as defended, e.g. by Hendrik Lorenz, "Virtue of Character"). For my purposes here, it suffices to say that habituation contributes to the content of *phronêsis* with information about the end or goal at which our practical reasoning aims.

Next, I analyze several passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle explicitly opens space for *empeiria*'s specific contribution to moral development—a contribution different from (even if often intertwined with) that of habit. In section 2, I look closely at *EN* I.3 and *EN* I.4 to argue that Aristotle establishes two different requirements for receptivity to ethical arguments: *empeiria* and good habits. In section 3, I turn to the second set of texts where good habits and *empeiria* come apart, that is, the discussion of pseudo-courage at *EN* III.8 and *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) III.1, and specifically the comparison between professional soldiers (who have *empeiria*, but lack good habits) and citizen soldiers (who have good habits, but lack the relevant *empeiria*). The divergence between professional soldiers and citizen soldiers is strong evidence in favor of my view that *empeiria* and habits make very different contributions to our moral formation, and thus the passages about pseudo-courage are an ideal place to explore the specific contributions of each of them.

Having established that the role of *empeiria* differs from the role of good habits, I conclude in section 4 with a discussion of the positive contribution of *empeiria* to *phronêsis*. By comparing what Aristotle says in *EN* VI/*EE* V about the formation of *phronêsis* with his views about the genesis of knowledge in the epistemological passages from *Metaphysics* I.1 and *Posterior Analytics* II.19, I show that the role that *empeiria* plays in the acquisition of *phronêsis* is importantly similar to the role it plays in the acquisition of *technê* and *epistêmê*. A further advantage of my view, then, is that it contributes to a unified account of *empeiria* and stresses the continuity in the use of this concept throughout the corpus.

1. *EMPEIRIA* AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES AND CHARACTER VIRTUES

In *EN* II.1, 1103a14–18, Aristotle famously makes a general distinction between the origins of the intellectual virtues and the origins of the virtues of character:

> Virtue, then, is of two kinds, of intellect and of character. Intellectual virtue owes both its birth and its growth mainly to teaching, and for this very reason it requires experience and time; virtue of character comes about as a result of habit, for which reason also its name [*êthikê*] is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit).[6] (*EN* II.1, 1103a14–18)

> Διττῆς δὴ τῆς ἀρετῆς οὔσης, τῆς μὲν διανοητικῆς τῆς δὲ ἠθικῆς, ἡ μὲν διανοητικὴ τὸ πλεῖον ἐκ διδασκαλίας ἔχει καὶ τὴν γένεσιν καὶ τὴν αὔξησιν, διόπερ ἐμπειρίας δεῖται καὶ χρόνου, ἡ δ' ἠθικὴ ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται, ὅθεν καὶ τοὔνομα ἔσχηκε μικρὸν παρεκκλῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔθους.

Aristotle seems to be introducing here a clear division of labor between teaching and habituation: the intellectual virtues are acquired "through teaching" (*ek didaskalias*), which requires *empeiria* and time, while virtues of character are acquired "through habit" (*ex ethous*), that is, by engaging from the beginning in the relevant activities and getting used to behaving and feeling the right way. Should we read this as a strict dichotomy between teaching and habit, or is there

[6] Unless otherwise indicated, translations of the *EN* and *EE* are my own. All other translations are from Jonathan Barnes, *Complete Works* (with occasional modifications). The Greek quotations of the *EN* follow Ingram Bywater's OCT edition.

room for overlap? Particularly, how strictly does this distinction apply to *phronêsis*, the intellectual virtue that is concerned with practical matters? Commentators' responses to these questions diverge greatly, possibly due to the fact that Aristotle seems to leave in our passage some wiggle room by stating that intellectual virtue arises from teaching "mainly" or "for the most part" (*to pleion*).

Some commentators (such as John McDowell, Iakovos Vasiliou, and Joseph Dunne) offer deflationary readings of the division of labor established in *EN* II.1 by taking habituation to be not just responsible for the development of virtue of character, but also to be the source for the formation of *phronêsis*.[7] This reading is often grounded on a more general deflationary view of the distinction between intellectual and character virtues and of the correspondence between these virtues and the rational and non-rational parts of the soul.[8] By contrast, those commentators (such as Terence Irwin) who emphasize the differences between intellectual virtues and character virtues, or at least the division between the corresponding rational and non-rational elements, also underscore the contrast between rational and non-rational aspects of moral development. My view is that we can respect Aristotle's main dichotomy and his familiar distinction between rational and non-rational parts of the soul, while at the same time acknowledging the complexity of the sources of the intellectual virtue of *phronêsis* and of the virtues of character, given the intimate connection that exists between them.

I think there are good reasons to support a mildly deflationary reading of *EN* II.1, with the purpose of avoiding taking teaching (including the acquisition of experience) and habituation as sharply separated processes. One of the reasons is that, as most contemporary commentators agree, habituation, for Aristotle, is not mere training by rote, but instead, as Myles Burnyeat puts it, Aristotle's big discovery is that "practice has cognitive powers" ("Aristotle on Learning to be Good," 73).[9] If habituation is an intelligent process in which learners acquire cognitive content that is relevant to how they see and feel their practical world, then a strict separation between teaching and habit seems hard to maintain. We

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[7]See, e.g. McDowell: "the result of habituation, properly conceived, can be seen to be already a perhaps primitive form of practical wisdom" ("Moral Psychology," 31); Vasiliou: "Being *phronimos* is the result of having acquired a certain set of *ethê* or 'habits'" ("Good Upbringing," 777); and Dunne: "the inductive process through which the *phronimos* has been formed is also (as I have suggested) a process of habituation" ("Virtue," 62).

[8]McDowell expresses this line of thought clearly in his comments on *EN* II.1: "The division into excellences of character and intellectual excellences looks like a mere expository convenience. There is no reason not to suppose that he means a more complex picture of the relation between character and intellect to emerge, as his account takes shape. . . . But must the intellectual excellences in general be so sharply separated from the excellences of character? I do not think this is required by the way Aristotle organizes his treatment of the excellences" ("Deliberation," 27). See also the deflationary comments in McDowell, "Some Issues," about Aristotle's appeal in *EN* I.13 to the difference between parts of the soul to distinguish between intellectual and ethical virtues: "we should not take the structure too rigidly' ("Some Issues," 40n30).

[9]There is a long list of modern commentators who rightly insist on the cognitive (and for some, even rational) character of habituation. See, e.g. W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*; Cooper, *Reason and the Human Good*; Richard Sorabji, "Intellect"; Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to be Good"; Sherman, *Fabric*; Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*; McDowell, "Deliberation," "Role of *Eudaimonia*," and "Some Issues"; Vasiliou, "Good Upbringing" and "Virtue and Argument"; and Moss, "Virtue Makes the Goal Right" and *Apparent Good*. I offer a more extended discussion of this point in Marta Jimenez, "Learning Virtue."

would expect, instead, that these processes are at least simultaneous, and it is not unreasonable to think that it is impossible to disentangle them. That teaching and habituation are not sharply separated is also supported by Aristotle's explicit assertions that *phronêsis* and character virtue are intimately intertwined, and that one cannot be *phronimos* without being virtuous or virtuous without being *phronimos* (see *EN* VI.12–13/*EE* V.12–13, 1144a12–1145a6, especially at 1144b30–32).[10]

However, there are also some good reasons to maintain the distinction between two kinds of virtue and the corresponding differentiation between two modes of acquisition mentioned in *EN* II.1. One reason to resist the deflationary reading of these distinctions is that Aristotle himself seems to take them seriously when he makes them correspond to the distinction between the rational and non-rational parts of the soul at *EN* I.13, a distinction that he picks up again at *EN* VI.1/*EE* V.1.[11]

More conclusively, although Aristotle repeatedly insists on the intimate link between *phronêsis* and character virtue, he is at the same time clearly interested in maintaining—contra Socrates—that they are not the same thing. That is why he claims that "in thinking that all the virtues were forms of practical wisdom he [Socrates] was wrong, but in saying they were not without practical wisdom he was right" (*EN* VI.13/*EE* V.13 1144b19–21).[12] As we will see in section 3, Aristotle insists that Socrates was right in seeing an intimate connection between *phronêsis* and character virtue, but wrong in denying the distinction between them. In contrast to Socrates, Aristotle maintains a distinction between these two kinds of virtues and attributes to them different roles. In particular, concerning their respective contributions to deliberation, Aristotle claims that character virtues provide content about the ends of action, which are the starting points of deliberation, while *phronêsis* provides content about "the things toward the end," which are what deliberation is about, including both specification of the ends and of the means available to achieve them in the circumstances.[13]

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[10]For a careful discussion of why Aristotle thinks that character virtue is required for practical wisdom, see Ursula Coope, "Ethical Virtue."

[11]McDowell also proposes a deflationary reading of *EN* VI.1/*EE* V.1 as a response to this potential objection: "We are given to understand that the *orektikon* is the seat of the excellences of character, and Aristotle says that it is not rational in the sense of being capable of issuing directives, but it is not utterly non-rational, in that it is capable of being persuaded (see 1102b31–4). Now this seems quite consistent with supposing, as I have argued, that the directively rational excellence, practical wisdom, is not separable from the product of habituating the *orektikon*—that the content of that intellectual state is formed by molding the *orektikon*" ("Deliberation," 27). His view is that "the sense in which [practical wisdom] is a state of the intellect does not interfere with its also being a state of the desiderative element" ("Moral Psychology," 40). Ursula Coope argues against this deflationary reading and offers an alternative explanation of the relationship between character virtue and *phronêsis* that does not require bluring the distinction between the rational and the non-rational: "We can make sense of the claim that practical wisdom requires ethical virtue, while giving due weight to Aristotle's remarks about parts of the soul and to his distinction between ethical and intellectual virtue" ("Ethical Virtue," 144).

[12]ὅτι μὲν γὰρ φρονήσεις ὥετο εἶναι πάσας τὰς ἀρετάς, ἡμάρτανεν, ὅτι δ' οὐκ ἄνευ φρονήσεως, καλῶς ἔλεγεν.

[13]*EN* VI.12, 1144a7–9; VI.13, 1145a5–6. For a detailed discussion of Aristotle's claim that character virtues provide content about the ends of action while *phronêsis* provides content about "the things toward the end," see Moss, "Virtue Makes the Goal Right." I propose here a reading of the division of labor between character virtue and *phronêsis* similar to that of Moss, and I offer additional support for this interpretation by emphasizing that for Aristotle those two sorts of virtue not only provide different content for deliberation, but also have different modes of acquisition.

In conclusion, then, we should acknowledge both the intimate connection and the difference between *phronêsis* and character virtue, and should expect to see both the intimate connection and the difference between them reflected in the explanation of their respective modes of acquisition.

I believe that we can find this complexity expressed in *EN* I.7, where Aristotle claims that different starting points are apprehended in different ways:

> We apprehend some of the starting points by induction, some by perception, some by a certain habituation, and others too in other ways. (*EN* I.7, 1098b3–4)
>
> τῶν ἀρχῶν δ' αἱ μὲν ἐπαγωγῇ θεωροῦνται, αἱ δ' αἰσθήσει, αἱ δ' ἐθισμῷ τινί, καὶ ἄλλαι δ' ἄλλως.

This means that there can be more than one source for the content of our ethical deliberations. That is, there can be more than one path towards the "starting points" (*archai*) of ethics (the things from which and about which our ethical arguments are). As a consequence, we can acknowledge the role of habituation in the acquisition of the starting points of ethics without ruling out the existence of other cooperating sources that provide relevant starting points for practical deliberation.

Aristotle's claim that different principles are apprehended in different ways makes it conceivable that both *empeiria* and good habits are relevant paths towards starting points in the practical sphere. They both play different but crucial roles in how we learn to understand and bring to practice ethical arguments, and consequently, in the formation of *phronêsis*.

2. THE DOUBLE REQUIREMENT FOR RECEPTIVITY TO ETHICAL ARGUMENTS: *EMPEIRIA* AND GOOD HABITS

A familiar passage about method from *EN* I.3 (1095a2–11) contains, I think, direct evidence concerning the division of labor between *empeiria* and good habits. Here *empeiria* is mentioned for the first time in the *EN*, and Aristotle discusses the requirements that agents need to fulfill to be good listeners of ethical arguments. The explicit differentiation that Aristotle makes in this passage between two ways of failing at being properly receptive to ethical arguments is our first indication that *empeiria* might have a different role than habituation in our moral development:

> Hence a young person is not a proper listener of lectures on political science. For he *lacks experience of the actions in life*, but the arguments start from these and are about these. *And, further* [*eti de*], since he *tends to be guided by his emotions*, his study will be vain and useless, because the end is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether he is young in years or youthful in character; the defect *does not depend on time*, but on his living, and pursuing each successive object, as passion directs. For to such people, as to the incontinent, knowledge brings no profit; but to those who desire and act in accordance with reason knowledge about such matters will be of great benefit. (*EN* I.3, 1095a2–11, emphasis added)
>
> διὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖος ἀκροατὴς ὁ νέος· ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δ' ἐκ τούτων καὶ περὶ τούτων· ἔτι δὲ τοῖς πάθεσιν ἀκολουθητικὸς ὢν ματαίως ἀκούσεται καὶ ἀνωφελῶς, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν οὐ γνῶσις ἀλλὰ πρᾶξις. διαφέρει δ' οὐδὲν νέος τὴν ἡλικίαν ἢ τὸ ἦθος νεαρός· οὐ γὰρ παρὰ τὸν χρόνον ἡ ἔλλειψις, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ κατὰ πάθος ζῆν καὶ διώκειν ἕκαστα. τοῖς γὰρ τοιούτοις ἀνόνητος ἡ γνῶσις γίνεται, καθάπερ τοῖς ἀκρατέσιν· τοῖς δὲ κατὰ λόγον τὰς ὀρέξεις ποιουμένοις καὶ πράττουσι πολυωφελὲς ἂν εἴη τὸ περὶ τούτων εἰδέναι.

When Aristotle claims that young people are not good listeners of ethical lectures because they are inexperienced (*apeiroi*) and live according to passion (*kata pathos*), he offers, in my opinion, a "double requirement" for the receptivity to arguments in ethics: (a) *empeiria* of the actions in life, which I will call the '*empeiria* requirement' and (b) a proclivity to desire and act as reason directs (as opposed to living as passion directs), which I will call the 'good-habits requirement.' Although the passage is not directly concerned with the formation of *phronêsis*, it offers good support for a well delineated differentiation of the roles that *empeiria* and good habits play in preparing agents to understand and be able to apply the kind of reasoning that is proper of the *phronimos*.

The strength of this distinction is not uncontroversial, however, and commentators disagree about the degree to which these two requirements are different, as well as about how they are related to one another. Let me first briefly mention the textual points I see in support of the claim that there are indeed two requirements, as preparation for my explanation of how these requirements are related to one another.

The first indication that we have two different requirements is that Aristotle connects the two steps of the text with the Greek phrase ἔτι δὲ ('and further,' 'besides'), which he typically uses to raise a new point. He identifies, thus, two different obstacles against receptivity to ethical arguments: young people are not good listeners of ethical arguments because they are inexperienced, *and, further*, because they live life according to passion.

A second indication in support of the distinction is that Aristotle gives a different explanation for each of these two points. On the one hand, he explains that lack of *empeiria* of "the actions in life" (*tôn kata ton bion praxeôn*) is an obstacle against receptivity to ethical arguments because an inexperienced listener would lack a sense of the things "from" (*ek*) which and the things "about" (*peri*) which those arguments are, namely, the details and particular features of each situation. Without *empeiria*, people often can only superficially grasp the meaning of claims about the practical sphere, and they do not have an ability to relate the content of those claims to real life; for this reason, they are unable to truly follow arguments about those issues.

Aristotle offers an example about the relevance and practicality of *empeiria*, in *EN*VI.7/*EE*V.7, 1141b16–21, that illustrates his point that people without *empeiria* are not able grasp the relevant practical details of their situations: "if someone knew that light meats are digestible and healthy, but did not know which sorts of meat are light, he would not be able to produce health, but the person who knows that bird meats are light and healthy is more likely to produce health."[14] When someone who has never seen light meats in real life hears an argument about light meats, he or she will be unable to properly grasp what the argument is about—and consequently, will be unable to apply it to practice. Lack of *empeiria*, then, leads to an inability to apply practical rules to action, and that is why learning ethical theory without *empeiria* is useless.

[14]See discussion of this passage below, in sect. 4.

On the other hand, Aristotle gives us a different reason for why "living as passion directs" is an obstacle to being properly receptive to ethical arguments. In this case, the explanation is that those who live according to passion cannot benefit from knowledge even if they have it because their passions often lead them to act contrary to their best considered decisions. The problem with having excessive emotions is not that they make us less aware of the relevant details of our practical circumstances, or that they impede our knowledge, but that even when we have knowledge and are able to identify the right thing to do, our passions lead us to act otherwise.

A third indication in the text that lack of experience and living by passion are two different obstacles against receptivity of ethical arguments, and that consequently there are two requirements for being a good listener in ethics, is the suggestion that having *empeiria* and having well-shaped passions have a different relation to age and time. On the one hand, lack of experience is directly due to the age of the listeners, and it is something that all young people have in common. (This interesting assumption, that the passage of time itself equips us with the relevant experience of life, reappears in the conclusion of the discussion of judgement (*gnomê*), understanding (*sunesis*), and comprehension (*nous*) in *EN* VI.11/*EE* V.11, 1143b6–14, where Aristotle claims that these dispositions are thought to be natural because they just arrive at a particular age.) On the other hand, Aristotle holds that the tendency to live by passion "does not depend on time," since we can find people who are slaves of their passions even when they are no longer young. His central example is acratic people, who are not necessarily young in age, but tend to give priority to their appetites and emotions over their reasoned decisions.

I think these are direct indications that the text expresses two separate requirements. However, how these two requirements relate to one another is a harder question. Are they different in account but ultimately so intertwined that they are indistinguishable in practice? Or are they independent aspects of our moral formation? The question about the relationship between *empeiria* and habits and their role in moral formation should, I think, be at the center of the debate about the acquisition of starting points in ethics; however, the specific question about the contributions of *empeiria* has often been obscured by the more familiar debate about the relative weight of habituation, dialectic, and *nous* in the formation of *phronêsis*.[15]

For some commentators, there are two clearly independent aspects of our moral formation: one concerning the acquisition of the content of our arguments, and one concerning the non-cognitive shaping of our passions. For them, the role of habituation is to train and shape our emotions and non-rational impulses in general to obey reason, and good habits have no active role in the acquisition of the content of ethical arguments. The purpose of acquiring good habits is, then, not to increase our understanding of ethical arguments, but to ensure that we

[15]This is how, e.g. the debate between Terence Irwin and John McDowell is framed in Jennifer Whiting's "Strong Dialectic." See Christopher C. W. Taylor, "Practical Reason," for a useful summary of the traditional debate.

become disposed to obey those arguments.[16] In other words, the value of having a well-trained non-rational soul is that our emotions will not stand in the way of our attention and application of arguments to practice.

In contrast, for other commentators, a good upbringing, that is, proper habituation, is necessary to follow ethical arguments because it provides the content of those arguments.[17] On this reading, the main point of *EN* I.3, 1095a2–11, is that those who have not been well brought up will not be moved by ethical arguments precisely because, since they have not yet grasped the starting points of ethics that result from proper habituation, and are consequently still unable to find virtuous activities enjoyable, they will be incapable of *understanding* ethical arguments properly. In my opinion, these commentators are right in insisting on the positive contribution of habituation to the content of our deliberations; however, their attention to habituation often causes them to inadvertently neglect the role of *empeiria* as a source of ethical content.

In *EN* I.4, 1095b4–13, the second relevant passage concerning the requirements for receptivity to ethical arguments, there is direct support for a defense of the cognitive contribution of habituation:

> Hence anyone who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just and, generally, about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits. For the 'that' is the starting point, and if this is sufficiently apparent, he will not need the 'because' as well. And this person has or can easily get starting points. And as for the one who neither has nor can get them, let him hear the words of Hesiod: "He who knows all things himself is best of all;/ Good is also the one who is convinced by those who give good advice;/ But the one who neither knows, nor takes to heart/ what he learns from another, is a useless man."[18] (*EN* I.4, 1095b6–13)

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· ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος ἔχει ἢ λάβοι ἂν ἀρχὰς ῥᾳδίως. ᾧ δὲ μηδέτερον ὑπάρχει τούτων, ἀκουσάτω τῶν Ἡσιόδου·

οὗτος μὲν πανάριστος ὃς αὐτὸς πάντα νοήσῃ,
ἐσθλὸς δ' αὖ κἀκεῖνος ὃς εὖ εἰπόντι πίθηται.
ὃς δέ κε μήτ' αὐτὸς νοέῃ μήτ' ἄλλου ἀκούων
ἐν θυμῷ βάλληται, ὃ δ' αὖτ' ἀχρήιος ἀνήρ.

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[16]See, e.g. Irwin: "Non-cognitive training is necessary, not because practical reason needs it to supply first principles, and not because practical reason is otherwise incapable of moving us to action, but because we need some non-cognitive preparation if we are to be able to listen carefully and without distortion or distraction to what practical reason tells us" ("Some Rational Aspects," 83).

[17]This is the case in, e.g. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," "Role of *Eudaimonia*," and "Deliberation"; Vasiliou, "Good Upbringing"; and Moss, "Virtue Makes the Goal Right" and *Apparent Good*. Moss's view differs from the others in that she avoids attributing any rational content to habituation and talks only of "cognitive content."

[18]Burnyeat uses the terms "the that" and "the because" that I adopt here to render *to hoti* and *to dioti* ("Aristotle on Learning to be Good," 71–72), and similarly does Vasiliou, "Good Upbringing," 776–84. Ross translates "the facts" and "the reasons" in his translation of *NE* I.4, but uses, respectively, "that the thing is so" and both "the reason why" and "the why" in his translation of *Met* I.1, 981a29–30 (Aristotle, *Complete Works*). Crisp has "the belief *that*" and "the reason *why*," and Irwin has "the [belief] that [something is true]" and "[knowing] why [it is true]" in his translation, but uses "the that" and "the because" in the commentary (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 176).

In this passage, which is explicitly about the acquisition of "starting points" (*archas*) in ethics, Aristotle refers to the importance of "having been brought up in good habits" (*tois ethesin êchthai kalôs*) for the acquisition of ethical content, that is, content that is relevant for our deliberations about how to act. There is no doubt that, in this passage, Aristotle makes the good-habits requirement directly responsible for our grasping (or being very close to grasping) starting points in ethics.[19] In other words, good habits are a crucial source for what Aristotle calls "the that" (*to hoti*), which he distinguishes here from "the because" (*to dioti*), and calls here the "starting point" (*archê*) of ethical knowledge.

Those commentators who defend the claim that habituation is the source for the content of *phronêsis* read this passage as evidence for it. Some are led by the reference to the 'that' to claim that habituation here plays a similar role to that of *empeiria* in other epistemological passages. For example, Vasiliou makes this claim by appealing to *Met.* I.1, 981a24–30, where Aristotle makes a similar distinction between the 'that' and the 'because' (or the 'why') and says that *empeiria* is responsible for knowing the 'that' ("Good Upbringing," 783–84). The passage from *Met.* I.1 states clearly that people with experience, the *empeiroi*, know the 'that':

> But yet we think that knowledge and understanding belong to *technê* rather than to experience, and we suppose artists to be wiser than people of experience (which implies that wisdom depends in all cases rather on knowledge); and this because the former know the cause, but the latter do not. *For experienced people know the 'that,' but do not know the 'why,' while the others know the 'why' and the cause.*[20] (*Met.* I.1, 981a24–30, emphasis added)
>
> ἀλλ' ὅμως τό γε εἰδέναι καὶ τὸ ἐπαΐειν τῇ τέχνῃ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὑπάρχειν οἰόμεθα μᾶλλον, καὶ σοφωτέρους τοὺς τεχνίτας τῶν ἐμπείρων ὑπολαμβάνομεν, ὡς κατὰ τὸ εἰδέναι μᾶλλον ἀκολουθοῦσαν τὴν σοφίαν πᾶσι· τοῦτο δ' ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν αἰτίαν ἴσασιν οἱ δ' οὔ. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἔμπειροι τὸ ὅτι μὲν ἴσασι, διότι δ' οὐκ ἴσασιν· οἱ δὲ τὸ διότι καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν γνωρίζουσιν.

Given this direct association between *empeiria* and possession of the 'that' in *Met.* I.1, it seems natural to use this passage (combined with the reading of the above passage from *EN* I.3 that I am opposing) to explain the claim about the 'that' in *EN* I.4, 1095b6–13. And this is how Vasiliou proceeds:

> Aristotle draws a connection between "the that," experience, and knowledge of particulars on the one hand, and "the because," knowledge of universals, and *technê* (broadly understood as an art, craft, or science) on the other. In the second passage from the *Ethics* quoted earlier (1094b28 ff.), Aristotle explicitly states that the young are not appropriate hearers of lectures on ethics because they lack experience. Here in the *Metaphysics* he gives confirmation of what was implied there; namely that the experience of actions that occur in life gives one "the that." ("Good Upbringing," 784)

I think Vasiliou is right when (following McDowell) he argues that habituation plays an important role in shaping not only people's emotional and behavioral

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[19] This passage is not just an isolated case, but it is supported by other texts where Aristotle establishes character virtue as source of the starting point of action, which he specifies as the goal. See, e.g. *EN* VI.12/*EE* V.12, 1144a31–b1 and *EN* VII.8/*EE* VI.8, 1151a11–19.

[20] I render *to hoti* and *to dioti* with the terms "the that" and "the because" to underscore the parallelism with *NE* I.4, and thus I depart from Ross's translation of *Met* I.1, 981a24–30 (*Complete Works*). (See n. 18 above).

tendencies, but also their cognitive grasp of relevant features of the ends of action. As he argues, habituation provides learners with a grasp of virtuous ends as enjoyable in themselves, and this not only shapes the learners' tendency to obey ethical arguments, but also provides a content without which it is impossible for them to properly *understand* arguments in ethics. This content, which is the core of character virtue, is a crucial component of our deliberations about what to do and, as a consequence, is a necessary requirement for *phronêsis*.[21]

By applying this strategy, however, Vasiliou does away with the distinction between two requirements for receptivity for ethical arguments in *EN* I.3, *empeiria* and good habits, obscuring the singular role that *empeiria* plays by inadvertently subsuming it under a general good-upbringing requirement.[22] In contrast, I think that taking habituation as a source of that crucial content, which in *EN* I.4 is called the 'that' in ethics, does not need to be a threat to the distinction between the roles of *empeiria* and good habits.

My proposal is to open space for a significant role of *empeiria* as a source of starting points in ethics, without denying the role played by good habits. If, as suggested in *EN* I.7, 1098b3–4, the starting points in ethics can arise from multiple sources, then we can accept both that *EN* I.3 presents two different requirements for the receptivity of ethical arguments, and that habituation provides us with crucial content concerning that from which and about which ethical arguments are. In other words, we can hold that both habituation and *empeiria* provide us with crucial content for our deliberations about practical matters, even if they do it in significantly different ways.

As we know from the discussion of the doctrine of mean in *EN* II.6, getting things right in the ethical sphere requires not only getting things right in relation to the goal of action (the *hou heneka*), which is the job of the virtuous dispositions that arise from habit, but also getting them right in relation to other particulars. This task is, I think, a matter of having *empeiria* and the kind of knowledge that derives from it. It follows, then, that both habituation and *empeiria* are necessary for acquiring the starting points of ethics, and that only those who have had a good upbringing *and* have experience of the practices of life will be well equipped to adequately think about ethical matters.

One strong reason why I resist the equivalence between *empeiria* and good habits, and insist on reading *EN* I.3 as expression of the distinction between them, is that, as we will see in the next section, Aristotle discusses a clear case where the content provided by habit and that provided by *empeiria* are different and contribute to different aspects of our deliberations about action.

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[21]This is why Aristotle claims that character virtue is required for practical wisdom.

[22]Something similar occurs with Moss's strategy in *Apparent Good*. Although Moss labels her reading as "Aristotle's practical empiricism," there are surprisingly not many references to *empeiria* in her discussion of moral development (*Apparent Good*, 46–47). Instead, she makes practical experience mainly about perceptual pleasures and pains and, for her, the relevant practical experience is equivalent to habituation. While I am sympathetic to the bottom-up character of this account of the formation of *phronêsis*, I think that this approach only gets one half of Aristotle's practical empiricism. My view is that, although the importance in the process of moral development of having felt the appropriate perceptual pleasures and pains is undeniable, Moss's account is missing the kind of practical experience that arises from *empeiria*. (I am grateful to Moss for helping refine my criticism of her view on this point.)

3. *EMPEIRIA*, HABITUATION AND CHARACTER VIRTUE: THE CASE OF COURAGE

There is a compelling reason to differentiate the roles of *empeiria* and good habits, namely, that they sometimes come apart, and those individuals who have *empeiria* without good habits look very different from those who have good habits without *empeiria*. The main evidence appears in *EN* III.8 and *EE* III.1, two passages where Aristotle argues that those soldiers who have mere *empeiria* about dangerous situations are not properly courageous. These passages leave no doubt that (1) *empeiria* is often necessary to perform virtuous actions successfully, and (2) the kind of cognition that *empeiria* provides by itself does not reliably lead to virtuous action, as *empeiria* does not equip people with the appreciation of the choiceworthiness of noble and good things that is required to perform virtuous actions virtuously. In other words, while *empeiria* sufficiently equips agents to solve a wide range of practical problems, it does not guarantee that they will be consistently oriented towards the right ends in action, or that they will take the right ends as the starting point of their deliberations about what to do. Instead, Aristotle claims, against Socrates, that mere *empeiria* produces a sort of pseudo-virtue with which agents can often pass as virtuous without truly being so.

In his discussions of pseudo-courage in *EN* III.8 and *EE* III.1, Aristotle is mainly concerned with those cases in which people have skills or tendencies that allow them to appear to be courageous, even when they are not. One of his crucial examples, which he brings up first in *EN* III.6, is that people who are experts in a particular practical sphere (e.g. sailors or soldiers) often misleadingly look as if they were courageous, since they are able to endure what seem to be dangerous situations not because they have courage, but because they have familiarity with similar circumstances:

> Properly, then, we will call courageous the person who is fearless in face of a noble death, and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind. Yet at sea also, and in disease, the courageous person is fearless, but not in the same way as the sailors; for he has given up hope of safety and is disliking the thought of this kind of death, while *the sailors are hopeful because of their experience*. At the same time, we show courage in situations where there is the opportunity of showing prowess or where death is noble; but in these forms of death neither of these conditions is fulfilled. (*EN* III.6, 1115a32—b6, emphasis added)
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> κυρίως δὴ λέγοιτ' ἂν ἀνδρεῖος ὁ περὶ τὸν καλὸν θάνατον ἀδεής, καὶ ὅσα θάνατον ἐπιφέρει ὑπόγυια ὄντα· τοιαῦτα δὲ μάλιστα τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν θαλάττῃ καὶ ἐν νόσοις ἀδεὴς ὁ ἀνδρεῖος, οὐχ οὕτω δὲ ὡς οἱ θαλάττιοι· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀπεγνώκασι τὴν σωτηρίαν καὶ τὸν θάνατον τὸν τοιοῦτον δυσχεραίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ εὐέλπιδές εἰσι παρὰ τὴν ἐμπειρίαν. ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἀνδρίζονται ἐν οἷς ἐστὶν ἀλκὴ ἢ καλὸν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν· ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις δὲ φθοραῖς οὐδέτερον ὑπάρχει.

Sailors are fearless because their *empeiria* makes them "hopeful" (*euelpides*) that they will be able to handle the circumstances. Their *empeiria* allows them to properly assess the situation and, once they identify it as not truly dangerous, they are able to offer the right practical response. Their experience makes them have hope instead of fear. So, whenever a situation is familiar to the agents and they have sufficient *empeiria* of similar circumstances, their disposition to feel fear and

confidence adequately (i.e. courageously) does not play a relevant role in their ability to properly respond to the dangers. There is no doubt that in many occasions their actions are courageous, but they do not perform them courageously, since their deliberations about how to act do not include considerations about the nobility of the action, but merely considerations about how to solve the practical problems at hand.

This central thought about how *empeiria* is not sufficient for courage is presented in more detail in the discussion of the particular kind of pseudo-courage based on *empeiria* at *EN* III.8:

> *Empeiria* with regard to particular facts is also thought to be courage. This is indeed the reason why Socrates thought courage was knowledge. Other people exhibit this quality in other dangers, and professional soldiers exhibit it in the dangers of war. For there seem to be many *empty alarms* in war, of which these soldiers have had the most comprehensive experience. Therefore they seem courageous, because the others do not know how things are. (*EN* III.8, 1116b3–8, emphasis added)
>
> δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ ἡ ἐμπειρία ἡ περὶ ἕκαστα ἀνδρεία εἶναι· ὅθεν καὶ ὁ Σωκράτης ᾠήθη ἐπιστήμην εἶναι τὴν ἀνδρείαν. τοιοῦτοι δὲ ἄλλοι μὲν ἐν ἄλλοις, ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς δ' οἱ στρατιῶται· δοκεῖ γὰρ εἶναι πολλὰ κενὰ τοῦ πολέμου, ἃ μάλιστα συνεωράκασιν οὗτοι· φαίνονται δὴ ἀνδρεῖοι, ὅτι οὐκ ἴσασιν οἱ ἄλλοι οἷά ἐστιν.

Aristotle's point is that professional soldiers appear courageous to the untrained eye even when they are not. People without experience are not able to properly assess the risks involved in a situation, and often they might conclude that someone is courageous when this is not the case. In contrast, professional soldiers are able to properly assess dangers when they see them on account of their *empeiria*, and are better able to deal successfully with apparently dangerous situations because they also have knowledge of the means towards achieving their ends.

Something that Aristotle's analysis reveals about professional soldiers is that their *empeiria* does not prepare them to deal with *real* dangers, but rather with "empty" alarms (*kena*). *Empeiria* helps these agents to *identify* the dangers that are "empty" or not real, and consequently to have confidence and not be frightened by them. In this respect at least, the *empeiroi* have a clear practical advantage over the *apeiroi* (inexperienced): they can clearly tell apart truly dangerous situations from false alarms. But what about handling dangers that are not empty, but real instead? In those cases, although agents with *empeiria* will still have better resources to handle difficult situations, their experience will not equip them with the kind of confidence required to stay in battle when things get ugly. This is because, as the rest of the text suggests, although mere *empeiria* often equips agents with the ability to assess the situation properly and to find a successful course of action, it does not yet equip agents with the relevant guidance about the goal.

Empeiria, on the one hand, allows agents to identify as not genuinely dangerous certain situations that seem dangerous to inexperienced people; and, on the other hand, it makes agents more able to identify the best means by which to achieve success in action. These two are the features that make *empeiria* highly deceiving in the battlefield, since it often truly looks like those with experience are the most courageous:

> Again, *their experience makes them most capable* in attack and in defense, since they can use their arms and have the kind that are likely to be best both for attack and for defense. Therefore they fight like armed people against unarmed or like trained athletes against amateurs. For in such contests too it is not the most courageous ones that fight best, but those who are strongest and have their bodies in the best condition. (*EN* III.8, 1116b9–15, emphasis added)
>
> εἶτα ποιῆσαι καὶ μὴ παθεῖν μάλιστα δύνανται ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας, δυνάμενοι χρῆσθαι τοῖς ὅπλοις καὶ τοιαῦτα ἔχοντες ὁποῖα ἂν εἴη καὶ πρὸς τὸ ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸς τὸ μὴ παθεῖν κράτιστα· ὥσπερ οὖν ἀνόπλοις ὡπλισμένοι μάχονται καὶ ἀθληταὶ ἰδιώταις· καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἀγῶσιν οὐχ οἱ ἀνδρειότατοι μαχιμώτατοί εἰσιν, ἀλλ' οἱ μάλιστα ἰσχύοντες καὶ τὰ σώματα ἄριστα ἔχοντες.

Those who have *empeiria* "are most capable" (*malista dunantai*) in battle, Aristotle says, since they are best at making use of the right means by which to achieve success. To put it in terms of the famous *Metaphysics* I.1 passage, people with *empeiria* are "more successful" (*mallon epitunchanousin* [981a14]). The *empeiroi* will succeed even if they compete with people who are more courageous than them but have no experience, since they are better prepared to deal with the difficulties of the situation.

However, Aristotle concludes, we should not think that those who fight best are most courageous. In fact, *empeiria* does not provide tools to perform courageous actions courageously, since the ability of the merely *empeiroi* has nothing to do with being able to feel fear and confidence about the right things, and they typically fail to appreciate the value of the nobility of their actions. They are *empeiroi* in matters of risk, but their *empeiria* says nothing about what is worth risking one's life for, and therefore they do not have a full grasp of what is truly dangerous (e.g. committing injustice as opposed to losing one's own life)—that grasp is only available to those who have been properly habituated in virtue.

The proof that those who act from mere *empeiria* are not genuinely courageous is presented in the next section, at *EN* III.8, 1116b15–23, and it consists in showing the lack of stability of the courage of merely experienced people, as opposed to those who have virtue, or at least good habits (like the well-raised citizen soldiers):

> Professional soldiers *turn cowards*, however, when the danger puts too great a strain on them and they are inferior in number and equipment. For they are the first to run away, while citizen-soldiers die at their posts, as in fact happened at the temple of Hermes. For to the latter running away is disgraceful and death is preferable to safety on those terms; while the former from the very beginning faced the danger on the assumption that they were stronger, but as soon as they know the facts they escape, since they fear death more than disgrace. The courageous person, however, is not someone of that sort. (*EN* III.8, 1116b15–23, emphasis added)
>
> οἱ στρατιῶται δὲ δειλοὶ γίνονται, ὅταν ὑπερτείνῃ ὁ κίνδυνος καὶ λείπωνται τοῖς πλήθεσι καὶ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς· πρῶτοι γὰρ φεύγουσι, τὰ δὲ πολιτικὰ μένοντα ἀποθνήσκει, ὅπερ κἀπὶ τῷ Ἑρμαίῳ συνέβη. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τὸ φεύγειν καὶ ὁ θάνατος τῆς τοιαύτης σωτηρίας αἱρετώτερος· οἳ δὲ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκινδύνευον ὡς κρείττους ὄντες, γνόντες δὲ φεύγουσι, τὸν θάνατον μᾶλλον τοῦ αἰσχροῦ φοβούμενοι· ὁ δ' ἀνδρεῖος οὐ τοιοῦτος.

The merely *empeiroi* might turn cowards when they meet an opponent who is stronger or fitter than they are, or when they are confronted with an unfamiliar situation. In other words, going back to the distinction between "empty dangers"

and "real dangers," the merely *empeiroi* reveal their lack of true courage whenever they meet real dangers. In those cases, they flee because their experience is insufficient to provide reasons to stay at their posts. In contrast, citizen soldiers (who might not have much experience but are well trained in good habits) stay at their posts and confront the dangers, even in the most extreme circumstances.

This passage presents the crux, then, for why *empeiria* is not sufficient for virtue and is an insufficient source for our deliberations about how to act. The reason, as the contrast with citizen soldiers suggests, is that the merely *empeiroi* do not care sufficiently about the nobility of their actions, and (unlike the virtuous person and citizen-soldiers with well-formed habits) they prefer to do something shameful than to die. The failure of the merely *empeiroi* here is that they have not properly tuned their sense of fear and are too frightened by the wrong things—"they fear death more than disgrace" (*ton thanaton mallon tou aischrou phoboumenoi*)—because they have not been properly oriented towards the noble by their habituation.

In sum, in *EN* III.8, Aristotle shows that although *empeiria* is crucial for achieving the right assessment of the possibilities of practical situations and for practical success in familiar cases, it does not equip agents with an adequate grasp of the proper goal of action because it offers no input about the value of noble ends. For this reason, *empeiria* without habituation leads at best to pseudo-virtue.

What is interesting about the kind of pseudo-virtue produced by *empeiria* is that the *empeiroi* are particularly successful at appearing virtuous and, when judged by their behavior, often pass as virtuous individuals. This is, in Aristotle's view, what has led some people to erroneously think that *empeiria* is virtue. Indeed, this is the failure that Aristotle thinks Socrates makes when he claims that virtue is knowledge, and, as we have mentioned in section 1, Aristotle proposes a correction of Socrates's claim that virtue is knowledge (or, as in this case, *empeiria*) of the relevant practical matters, and he asserts instead that virtue is not without the relevant kind of knowledge (*EN* VI.13/*EE* V.13, 1144b19–21).[23]

The reference to Socrates in these passages typically puzzles commentators. Some complain that Aristotle is being unfair to Socrates by attributing to him views on *empeiria* and knowledge very different from the ones we see him holding in Plato's dialogues, especially in Plato's *Laches* and *Protagoras*. Their claim—justified, in my opinion—is that the kind of knowledge that Socrates identifies with virtue is different from the knowledge that *empeiria* seems to provide in these passages from *EN* III.8.[24]

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[23]See n. 12 above.

[24]E.g. both Irwin, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, and Taylor, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, Books II–IV*, find the reference to Socrates in these passages misleading precisely for this reason. They insist that Socrates's conception of the relevant knowledge of "what is dangerous" (*ta phobera*) in Plato's *Laches* is clearly very different from the knowledge about, e.g. how to climb masts or how to fight in armor. (I am thankful to an anonymous referee for emphasizing this point.) Nicholas D. Smith, in contrast, considers—rightly in my opinion—that Aristotle's comments about Socrates in these lines are consistent with Socrates's definition of courage as "wisdom about what is and what is not to be feared" (Ἡ σοφία ἄρα τῶν δεινῶν καὶ μὴ δεινῶν) at *Protagoras* 365d4–5 ("Aristotle and Socrates," 605). Socrates's precise conception of the relevant knowledge is slippery, but I think that Smith is right in seeing the *Protagoras* as a source for Aristotle here. In fact, one of Aristotle's objections against the Socratic position, just like Protagoras's objection at *Protagoras* 349e (cf. 359b–c), is that a readiness to confront dangers is crucial for true courage and it is not something susceptible to be taught through professional training.

I think, however, that although it is true that the kind of knowledge that Socrates identifies with virtue is more complex than Aristotle's characterization allows, the reference to Socrates is justified in this context. What Aristotle tries to emphasize is that Socrates does not properly understand the relationship of *empeiria* and knowledge to virtue. Socrates, as Aristotle sees it, seems to assume that knowledge about danger, or the kind of expertise that enables agents to successfully assess dangerous situations as dangerous and handle them successfully, is the main source for the virtue of courage. For Socrates, at least in the definition from *Protagoras* (and in the one that Nicias presents in the *Laches*), courage is knowledge of future goods and evils, and all cases of cowardice are either cases of ignorance about what is truly dangerous, that is, what things count as future evils, or cases of lack of expertise about how to protect oneself from those evils (i.e. lack of ability to use the relevant knowledge properly).

In fact, if what Socrates claims in the *Protagoras* is representative of his view, he seems to think that the courageous person is able to confront dangers precisely because his knowledge about what counts as good and evil enables him to be aware of the fact that they are not true dangers. In other words, the Socratic expert-courageous person is able to properly deal with future evils by uncovering that they are truly non-evils (*Protagoras* 359d–e).

Against Socrates's intellectualism, Aristotle points out that those who are best able to assess and handle dangers (i.e. those with a practical expertise in dangers, so to speak) are not necessarily the most courageous. As he puts it, professional soldiers, like professional athletes, might be better prepared to win, but they are not more courageous than those who risk their lives in situations which they do not fully know how to handle. Socrates's emphasis on expertise, Aristotle suggests, misses the point of what is crucial for courage, namely, the readiness to put one's life at risk with an awareness of the fact that things might go wrong. Aristotle's point is that such readiness is crucial for true courage and not something that can be taught through professional training or through mere experience of practical situations. It is acquired, instead, by proper habituation of our emotions and behavioral tendencies.

In the corresponding passages from *Eudemian Ethics* about pseudo-courage, Aristotle makes this point again, and is perhaps a bit clearer about the kind of advantage and the kind of failure that the merely *empeiroi* have. Here his criticism of Socrates, although still cryptic, is more carefully spelled out:

> There are five kinds of courage, so named for a certain similarity between them; for they all endure the same things but not for the same reasons. One is a civic courage, due to the sense of shame; another is military, *due to experience and knowledge, not (as Socrates said) of what is dangerous, but of the resources they have to deal with what is dangerous.* (*EE* III.1, 1229a12–16, emphasis added)

> ἔστι δ' εἴδη ἀνδρείας πέντε λεγόμενα καθ' ὁμοιότητα· <τὰ> αὐτὰ γὰρ ὑπομένουσιν, ἀλλ' οὐ διὰ τὰ αὐτά. μία μὲν πολιτική· αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν ἡ δι' αἰδῶ οὖσα. δευτέρα ἡ στρατιωτική· αὕτη δὲ δι' ἐμπειρίαν καὶ τὸ εἰδέναι, οὐχ ὥσπερ Σωκράτης ἔφη τὰ δεινά, ἀλλ' ὅτι τὰς βοηθείας τῶν δεινῶν.

The problem with Socrates's view, for Aristotle, is that he does not sufficiently distinguish between questions about "what is dangerous" (*ta deina*) and questions about "the resources to deal with danger" (*tas boêtheias tôn deinôn*). Further, Socrates thinks that both sorts of questions can be handled with the same experience and knowledge. To become courageous, for Socrates, one needs to acquire expertise about dangers, while Aristotle thinks that such expertise is insufficient and one needs to have in addition a good sense of the value of acting courageously (which is acquired through habit).

For Aristotle, a lot depends on the distinction between properly grasping the end (or countergoal[25]) and grasping the characteristics of the things that conduce to the end. As we saw in section 1, in the final chapters of *EN* VI/*EE* V, Aristotle expresses his wish to keep those two abilities—i.e. grasping the goal and grasping the things that are conducive to the goal—separate, and he attributes them respectively to character virtue and *phronêsis* (1144a7–22).[26] Thus, the error that Aristotle attributes to Socrates in *EN* III.8, where he accuses him of conflating *empeiria* and virtue, is in line with his criticism in *EN* VI.13/*EE* V.13 that Socrates fails to properly understand the distinction between virtue and *phronêsis* (1144b17–30).

Aristotle's strategy against what he takes to be Socrates's view—that is, that courage is a kind of knowledge based on *experience* of dangers—is to stress that people can have expertise in assessing and dealing with dangers without being truly courageous, and even without having the kind of knowledge that is most relevant for doing courageous actions courageously—that is, the knowledge of the value of the nobility of courageous actions. In fact, he says some lines below, their confidence is rooted on the fact that they have knowledge of "their resources to deal with what is dangerous" (*tas boêtheias tôn deinôn*) but not knowledge of "what is frightening" (*ta phobera*):

> Similarly, all who face dangers owing to experience are not really courageous; this is what, perhaps, most soldiers do. For the truth is the exact opposite of what Socrates thought; he held that courage was knowledge. But those who know how to ascend masts are confident not because *they know what is frightening* but because *they know how to deal with what is dangerous*. (*EE* III.1, 1230a4–12, emphasis added)

> Παραπλησίως δὲ τούτοις καὶ ὅσοι δι' ἐμπειρίαν ὑπομένουσι τοὺς κινδύνους, ὅνπερ τρόπον σχεδὸν οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν στρατιωτικῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπομένουσιν. αὐτὸ γὰρ τοὐναντίον ἔχει ἢ ὡς ᾤετο Σωκράτης, ἐπιστήμην οἰόμενος εἶναι τὴν ἀνδρείαν. οὔτε γὰρ διὰ τὸ εἰδέναι τὰ φοβερὰ θαρροῦσιν οἱ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἱστοὺς ἀναβαίνειν ἐπιστάμενοι, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἴσασι τὰς βοηθείας τῶν δεινῶν·

What Aristotle thinks that Socrates failed to see is that the content of *empeiria* in this practical sphere typically is just about how to deal with dangerous situations—and, in general, concerns what Aristotle sometimes calls "the things toward the end" (*EN* III.3, 1112b34; VI.12, 1144a7–9; VI.13, 1145a5–6; *EE* II.11, 1227b23). In other words, *empeiria* is never properly about "what is frightening," that is, *empeiria* is never about the end (or countergoal) itself, although it provides us with useful tools to recognize in practice generally frightening things and equips us with resources to deal with them succesfully.

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[25]David Pears in has coined the term 'countergoals' to refer to the painful or destructive things that those who perform courageous actions try to avoid ("Courage as a Mean," 174).

[26]For a detailed discussion of this passage, see Moss, "Virtue Makes the Goal Right."

Now, there is a sense in which *empeiria* is not useless in relation to the agents' ability to grasp whether a situation is in fact frightening. In our example, Aristotle claims that soldiers with *empeiria* will be the most able to recognize the concrete situations and actions that involve real danger; and he means that these soldiers will be most able to properly assess the risks that each situation involves. In other words, *empeiria* equips agents with the ability to properly read situations and not be fooled by apparent dangers. Without sufficient *empeiria*, agents might aim at the right noble ends but be nonetheless unable to achieve them in action. This is what occurs often with citizen soldiers, who have a proper grasp of the goal in the context of battle, but nonetheless often need to follow orders of those with more experience if they are going to succeed.

In conclusion, then, *empeiria* needs to be accompanied by good habits if it is going to lead to the kind of knowledge that enables agents not just to successfully assess and handle practical situations but also to grasp the choiceworthiness of noble actions. Those who are merely *empeiroi* are missing the right orientation towards the noble that is possessed by those who have been brought up in good habits. Even if the *empeiroi* do have better tools to identify dangers and ways of dealing with them, even if they have a decent working notion of the noble, they are unable to grasp the motivational force that the noble carries with it for those who have been properly brought up. As a consequence, although the merely *empeiroi* are often able to get it right in the practical sphere and have a good sense of the things to be done in contexts with which they are familiar, they will not get it fully right when the situation becomes complicated. Their actions may often be externally similar to those of virtuous people, but they are missing the appropriate grasp of the goal that corresponds to the virtuous person and is achieved through proper habituation. At the same time, without *empeiria*, those who have been brought up in good habits might nonetheless fail to properly assess practical situations or be unable to find the right means towards their ends. *Empeiria* and good habits, then, need to work in tandem to equip agents with the crucial components of good deliberation and successful action.

4. *EMPEIRIA* AS SOURCE OF *PHRONÊSIS*

What are the positive contributions that *empeiria* makes in the process of learning to be good? And why do we need *empeiria* for the development of practical wisdom? In this section, I look at passages from *EN* VI/*EE* V to explore the contribution of *empeiria* to the formation of *phronêsis*. I show that *empeiria* does a significant part of the job in determining the content of our thoughts about what to do in the practical sphere, just as it provides content to concepts and beliefs in the sphere of *technê* and *epistêmê* (*Met.* I.1; *APo.* II.19). I show, first, that *empeiria* is particularly useful for achieving practical results—we can apply to the sphere of the practical what Aristotle says in *Met* I.1 in the context of productive expertise and science: *empeiria* without *logos* is more practical than *logos* without *empeiria* (981a12–15). Moreover, *empeiria* provides a grasp of the particulars that are the main objects of deliberation and the starting points of *phronêsis*—just as in the productive sphere they are the starting points of *technê*.

The first explicit positive role attributed in to *empeiria* in relation to *phronêsis* occurs in the context of the discussion "excellence in deliberation" (*euboulia*) in *EN* VI.7/*EE* V.7. In line with what we learned in our previous discussion of *empeiria* in *EN* III.8, Aristotle suggests in *EN* VI.7/*EE* V.7 a strong connection between *empeiria* and practical success. The good deliberator is "skillful in aiming" (*stochastikos*) at the best good achievable by action, and good deliberators are in general "more practical" (*praktikoteroi*), precisely because they have the relevant sort of *empeiria*:

> We say that the work [*ergon*] of the person of practical wisdom [*tou phronimou*] is above all deliberating well [*to eu bouleuesthai*]; and no one deliberates about things that cannot be otherwise, or about things which do not have an end; and this is the good that can be brought about by action [*prakton agathon*]. The person who is without qualification good at deliberating is the one who is capable of aiming [*stochastikos*] in accordance with calculation [*kata ton logismon*] at what is the best achievable practical good for a human being. And *phronêsis* is not of universals only—it must also recognize the particulars. For it is concerned with action [*praktikê*], and action is concerned with particulars [*kath'hekasta*]. This is why some people who do not know are more practical [*praktikôteroi*] than others who know, and especially those who have experience [*hoi empeiroi*]. (*EN* VI.7/*EE* V.7, 1141b9–18)
>
> τοῦ γὰρ φρονίμου μάλιστα τοῦτ' ἔργον εἶναί φαμεν, τὸ εὖ βουλεύεσθαι, βουλεύεται δ' οὐδεὶς περὶ τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἄλλως ἔχειν, οὐδ' ὅσων μὴ τέλος τι ἔστι, καὶ τοῦτο πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν. ὁ δ' ἁπλῶς εὔβουλος ὁ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀνθρώπῳ τῶν πρακτῶν στοχαστικὸς κατὰ τὸν λογισμόν. οὐδ' ἐστὶν ἡ φρόνησις τῶν καθόλου μόνον, ἀλλὰ δεῖ καὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα γνωρίζειν· πρακτικὴ γάρ, ἡ δὲ πρᾶξις περὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα. διὸ καὶ ἔνιοι οὐκ εἰδότες ἑτέρων εἰδότων πρακτικώτεροι, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις οἱ ἔμπειροι·

Aristotle is making here a general claim about the practical success of *empeiria*: people with *empeiria* are more practical even if they "do not have knowledge" (*ouk eidotes*), because they are more familiar with the particular facts, and consequently better equipped to recognize the relevant features of their particular practical situations.[27] Mere knowledge of universal claims without familiarity with the particulars is less practical than having *empeiria*.

Although the context in *EN* VI.7/*EE* V.7 is the sphere of action, the example that Aristotle provides to support his point belongs to the productive sphere—concretely the *technê* of medicine:

> If someone knows that light meats are digestible and healthy, but does not know which sorts of meat are light, he will not be able to produce health, while the person who knows that bird meats are light and healthy is more likely to produce health. Now *phronêsis* is concerned with action. Therefore one should have both [the universal and the particular] forms of it, or the latter in preference to the former. (*EN* VI.7/*EE* V.7, 1141b18–22)
>
> εἰ γὰρ εἰδείη ὅτι τὰ κοῦφα εὔπεπτα κρέα καὶ ὑγιεινά, ποῖα δὲ κοῦφα ἀγνοοῖ, οὐ ποιήσει ὑγίειαν, ἀλλ' ὁ εἰδὼς ὅτι τὰ ὀρνίθεια (κοῦφα καὶ) ὑγιεινὰ ποιήσει μᾶλλον. ἡ δὲ φρόνησις πρακτική· ὥστε δεῖ ἄμφω ἔχειν, ἢ ταύτην μᾶλλον.

[27] That the practical success of experience is explained by the fact that experience is about particulars is discussed by Hasper and Yurdin, who rightly notice it is a point that has not been sufficiently acknowledged in the literature ("Aristotle's Account of Experience," 142n39).

That Aristotle offers an example from medicine is, I think, a sign that here he is not interested in drawing a hard and fast dividing line between the practical and the productive spheres, and that he sees certain continuity between them at least in the sense that people who do well in action will need to be at least minimally competent in reading the particulars of their situations. In the sphere of action, just as in the sphere of production, *empeiria* will play an important role in the acquisition of that competency. What makes the *empeiroi* more capable of practical success than the inexperienced is precisely their knowledge of particulars, and it is for this reason that *empeiria* contributes to *phronêsis*.

Aristotle makes a similar claim about the practical success of *empeiria* in the first chapter of *Metaphysics*. At *Metaphysics* I.1, 981a12–15, he states that *empeiria* is better than knowledge as a guide for practical success in the sphere of production: in the context of *technê*, *empeiria* without *logos* is "more successful" (*mallon epitunchanousin*) "in doing" (*pros men oun to prattein*), than *logos* without *empeiria*. Although the person with *empeiria* will not be able to offer an account of why things are the way they are, she will be able to produce better results. The explanation for the practicality of experience here is similar to the one found in the ethical treatises: experience is practical because it makes us familiar with the relevant particular cases.

> The reason is that *empeiria* is knowledge of particulars, while *technê* is of universals, and actions and productions are all concerned with the particular; for the doctor does not cure the human, except in an incidental way, but Callias or Socrates or some other called by some such individual name, who happens to be a human. If, then, someone has theory without *empeiria*, and knows the universal but does not know the particular included in this, he will often fail to cure; for it is the individual that is to be cured. (*Met.* I.1, 981a15–22)

> αἴτιον δ' ὅτι ἡ μὲν ἐμπειρία τῶν καθ' ἕκαστόν ἐστι γνῶσις ἡ δὲ τέχνη τῶν καθόλου, αἱ δὲ πράξεις καὶ αἱ γενέσεις πᾶσαι περὶ τὸ καθ' ἕκαστόν εἰσιν· οὐ γὰρ ἄνθρωπον ὑγιάζει ὁ ἰατρεύων ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ἀλλὰ Καλλίαν ἢ Σωκράτην ἢ τῶν ἄλλων τινὰ τῶν οὕτω λεγομένων ᾧ συμβέβηκεν ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι· ἐὰν οὖν ἄνευ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ἔχῃ τις τὸν λόγον, καὶ τὸ καθόλου μὲν γνωρίζῃ τὸ δ' ἐν τούτῳ καθ' ἕκαστον ἀγνοῇ, πολλάκις διαμαρτήσεται τῆς θεραπείας· θεραπευτὸν γὰρ τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον.

That *empeiria* is crucial to *phronêsis* because it provides a grasp of the relevant particulars is emphasized again in a familiar passage from *EN* VI.8/*EE* V.8, where Aristotle explains that while young people may be able to become mathematicians, they cannot be *phronimoi*, because *phronêsis* requires the kind of knowledge of particulars provided by *empeiria*, and the one thing young people do not have is *empeiria*:

> What has been said is confirmed by the fact that while young people can become geometers and mathematicians and experts in matters of that kind, it is thought that a person of practical wisdom cannot be young. The reason is that *phronêsis* is concerned with particulars, and particulars become known from *empeiria*, but a young person has no *empeiria*—for it is length of time that gives *empeiria*. Indeed one might ask this question too, why is it that a child may become a mathematician, but not a philosopher or a natural scientist. Surely it is because the objects of mathematics exist by abstraction, while the starting points of these other subjects come from *empeiria*. Young people have no conviction about the latter but merely use that language, while the essence of mathematical objects is plain enough to them. (*EN* VI.8/*EE* V.8, 1142a11–20)

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· ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτ' ἄν τις σκέψαιτο, διὰ τί δὴ μαθηματικὸς μὲν παῖς γένοιτ' ἄν, σοφὸς δ' ἢ φυσικὸς οὔ. ἢ ὅτι τὰ μὲν δι' ἀφαιρέσεώς ἐστιν, τῶν δ' αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἐξ ἐμπειρίας· καὶ τὰ μὲν οὐ πιστεύουσιν οἱ νέοι ἀλλὰ λέγουσιν, τῶν δὲ τὸ τί ἐστιν οὐκ ἄδηλον;

Empeiria is presented, in general, at *EN* VI.8/*EE* V.8 1142a14–15, as the source of the content of *phronêsis*. It provides acquaintance with the phenomena that are relevant to properly understand practical life. Concretely, it equips us with a grasp of the practical particulars, that is, the concrete things achievable by action, which are what deliberation and *phronêsis* are about.

Moreover, at *EN* VI.8/*EE* V.8 1142a19–20, *empeiria* is presented as also providing conviction (*pistis*)—Aristotle says that young people "do not have conviction" (*ou pisteuousin*) because they lack *empeiria*. This is important because "conviction" (*pistis*) is what enables experienced people, on the one hand, to avoid the temptation of appetites,[28] and on the other hand, to avoid falling prey of bad arguments.[29] As a result, *empeiria* would not only be source for additional cognitive content for our deliberations about how to act, but also it would be a source of stability for our decisions.

An additional relevant point in *EN* VI.8/*EE* V.8, 1142a11–20 is the explicit parallelism between the role that *empeiria* plays in relation to *phronêsis* and other intellectual virtues. *Phronêsis* is said to be similar to some of the theoretical kinds of knowledge (like wisdom or natural philosophy) because in all of them *empeiria* provides "the starting points" (*hai archai*).

That Aristotle considers *empeiria* to be a necessary step in the acquisition of higher cognitive states is well established in two familiar passages from *Metaphysics* and *Posterior Analytics*. In *Metaphysics* I.1, Aristotle famously claims that "scientific knowledge and craft arise through *empeiria*" (*apobainei d' epistêmê kai technê dia tês empeirias* [981a2–3]). And the claim that "*empeiria* makes art" (*empeiria technên*

[28]About *empeiria* being important to ground one's knowledge as to be able to avoid the temptation of appetites, the discussion of *akrasia* at *EN* VII.3/*EE* VI.3, 1147a17–24, suggests that without sufficient *empeiria* people are just able to say the words, but they cannot be said to have the relevant knowledge or a kind of knowledge that can be sufficiently authoritative, because they have not made the principles part of themselves: "incontinent people must be said to be in a similar condition to these [i.e. people asleep, mad, or drunk]. Their use of the kind of language that flows from knowledge proves nothing; for even those under the influence of these passions utter scientific proofs and verses of Empedocles, and those who have just begun to learn a science can string together its phrases, but do not yet know it; for it has to become part of themselves, and that takes time. So that we must suppose that the use of language by people in an incontinent state means no more than its utterance by actors on the stage."

[29]In the final book of *EN*, at X.8, 1179a16–22, Aristotle claims that empirical facts have more weight in the discernment of practical truth than arguments do: "The opinions of the wise seem, then, to harmonize with our arguments. But while even such things carry some conviction (*pistin . . . tina*), the truth in practical matters is discerned from the facts and from life; for in these resides the authoritativeness. We must therefore survey what we have already said, bringing it to the test of the facts of life, and if it harmonizes with the facts we must accept it, but if it clashes with them we must suppose it to be mere words." (συμφωνεῖν δὴ τοῖς λόγοις ἐοίκασιν αἱ τῶν σοφῶν δόξαι. Πίστιν μὲν οὖν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔχει τινά, τὸ δ' ἀληθὲς ἐν τοῖς πρακτικοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἔργων καὶ τοῦ βίου κρίνεται· ἐν τούτοις γὰρ τὸ κύριον. σκοπεῖν δὴ τὰ προειρημένα χρὴ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὸν βίον φέροντας, καὶ συνᾳδόντων μὲν τοῖς ἔργοις ἀποδεκτέον, διαφωνούντων δὲ λόγους ὑποληπτέον.) See also *EN* X.1, 1172a34–b7, and *EE* I.6, 1216b27–1217a17.

epoiêsen), which he traces back to Polus (*Met.* I.1, 980a4),[30] is the heart of his account of the genesis of knowledge both in *Metaphysics* I.1 and *Posterior Analytics* II.19.

In *Posterior Analytics* II.19, he claims that *empeiria* provides the *archê* (first principle or starting point) of *epistêmê* and *technê*:

> So from perception there comes memory, as we call it, and from memory (when it occurs often in connection with the same thing), comes *empeiria*; for memories that are many in number form one single *empeiria*. And from *empeiria*, or from the whole universal that has come to rest in the soul (the one apart from the many, whatever is one and the same in all those things), there comes a principle [*archê*] of *technê* and of *epistêmê*—if it deals with how things come about, a principle of *technê*, and if it deals with what is the case, of *epistêmê*. (*APo.* II.19, 100a3–100a9)

> Ἐκ μὲν οὖν αἰσθήσεως γίνεται μνήμη, ὥσπερ λέγομεν, ἐκ δὲ μνήμης πολλάκις τοῦ αὐτοῦ γινομένης ἐμπειρία· αἱ γὰρ πολλαὶ μνῆμαι τῷ ἀριθμῷ ἐμπειρία μία ἐστίν. ἐκ δ' ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἠρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἑνὸς παρὰ τὰ πολλά, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἓν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτό, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης, ἐὰν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, τέχνης, ἐὰν δὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπιστήμης.

Aristotle is even more explicit about the role of *empeiria* at *Prior Analytics* I.30, 46a17–22, where he explains how we grasp through *empeiria* the starting points of each productive and scientific field:

> Consequently it is the business of *empeiria* to give the starting points [*archas*] which belong to each subject. I mean for example that astronomical *empeiria* supplies the starting points of astronomical science; for once the phenomena were adequately apprehended, the demonstrations of astronomy were discovered. Similarly with any other *technê* or *epistêmê*. (*APr.* I.30, 46a17–22)

> διὸ τὰς μὲν ἀρχὰς τὰς περὶ ἕκαστον ἐμπειρίας ἐστὶ παραδοῦναι, λέγω δ' οἷον τὴν ἀστρολογικὴν μὲν ἐμπειρίαν τῆς ἀστρολογικῆς ἐπιστήμης (ληφθέντων γὰρ ἱκανῶς τῶν φαινομένων οὕτως εὑρέθησαν αἱ ἀστρολογικαὶ ἀποδείξεις), ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ ἄλλην ὁποιανοῦν ἔχει τέχνην τε καὶ ἐπιστήμην.

Our passage from *EN* VI.8/*EE* V.8 also supports the view that *empeiria*'s role in the practical sphere is parallel to its role in other areas: it provides the particulars with which *phronêsis* is concerned, which are the things from which and about which ethical arguments are. Concretely, *empeiria* makes learners familiar with the relevant particulars that will eventually enable them to understand, be able to apply in practice, and be good judges of ethical arguments, just as in other areas it makes learners familiar with the phenomena from which and about which the demonstrations are.

A final crucial passage that illuminates the intimate relation between *empeiria* and *phronêsis* is *EN* VI.11/*EE* V.11, 1143b6–14. Aristotle claims that both old and experienced people and *phronimoi* are worth listening to in the practical sphere because *empeiria* has given them an "eye" (*omma*) to perceive situations properly.[31]

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[30] Aristotle's allusion to Polus as the intellectual father of the idea that experience makes art is, I think, his way of referring us to Plato's *Gorgias*, where we find Socrates dismissing the value of *empeiria* in his conversations with Polus and Callicles. Aristotle indicates in this way that he favors Polus's view that the origin of knowledge is experience over Plato's innatist account.

[31] Hutchinson, "Doctrines of the Mean", 44, and Coope, "Ethical Virtue", 149, observe that the metaphor of the "eye of the soul" that Aristotle uses to characterize *phronêsis* is directed against Plato (*Republic* 519a–b).

> Therefore we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and old people or of people of practical wisdom not less than to demonstrations, because *from empeiria they have an eye to see aright.* (*EN*VI.11/*EE*V.11, 1143b11–14, emphasis added)
>
> ὥστε δεῖ προσέχειν τῶν ἐμπείρων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἢ φρονίμων ταῖς ἀναποδείκτοις φάσεσι καὶ δόξαις οὐχ ἧττον τῶν ἀποδείξεων· διὰ γὰρ τὸ ἔχειν ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὄμμα ὁρῶσιν ὀρθῶς.

Here Aristotle attributes an "eye to see aright" (*omma orôsin orthôs*) not only to the *phronimoi*, but also, and more generally, to "experienced people and old people" (*tôn empeirôn kai presbuterôn*). The reason for this must be that even though not all experienced and old people are *phronimoi*, they all might have good advice in relation to action because of their familiarity with the facts, a familiarity that arises (as we saw in our first passage from *EN* II.1) from *empeiria* and time.

For the most part, and with the exception of extreme or difficult situations, *empeiria* is a good guide of action—even if *empeiria* on its own, without good habits, is not able to turn us towards the right ends, namely, those characteristic of virtue. For through *empeiria* we become familiar with the phenomena that practical deliberations are about, and having a solid grasp of those phenomena is important to avoid practical errors.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have explored the consequences of taking seriously the distinction between the roles of *empeiria* and good habits in moral development, a distinction suggested by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1. I have argued, first, that, for Aristotle, *empeiria* is different from habituation in that it does not include the shaping of our emotions and desires towards the noble and the good, but it nonetheless plays an important and distinct part in shaping the content of our thoughts about what to do by equipping learners with a grasp of the relevant particulars for action. While habituation is responsible for properly orienting us to aim towards the noble, bringing us to grasp the concept of the noble and see that noble actions are to be done for the sake of their nobility, *empeiria* enables us to properly discriminate among the relevant features of each situation and decide on each occasion how to successfully achieve our ends. In Aristotle's words, *empeiria* gives us "an eye" (*omma*) to see aright, but this eye is not fully formed into proper *phronêsis* until we acquire good habits and are thus capable of also grasping the appropriate end of action.

My second goal has been to show that there is a continuity in the treatment of *empeiria* between Aristotle's ethical treatises and his epistemological treatises. In *Nicomachean Ethics* I.3, Aristotle indicates that having *empeiria* equips people with a grasp of the things from which and about which ethical arguments are. Moreover, in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI/*Eudemian Ethics* V, he establishes a parallelism between the role that *empeiria* plays in *phronêsis* and the role that it plays in wisdom and natural science, where it provides the starting points or *archai*. Thus, just as *empeiria* provides the starting points for the scientific and productive kinds of knowledge, it provides starting points for practical knowledge as well. It equips learners with the kind of grasp of the particulars in the practical sphere that will contribute to the formation of *phronêsis*.

There is, however, an important difference between the role of *empeiria* in the formation of *phronêsis* and its role in the formation of the other higher cognitive states such as *technê* and *epistêmê*. In the case of practical knowledge, we are not allowed to directly paraphrase the famous claim by Polus that "*empeiria* makes *technê*" and say that "*empeiria* makes *phronêsis*." That is because while *empeiria* provides some of the starting points of *phronêsis*, good habits also contribute to the formation and maintenance of *phronêsis* by equipping us with a proper grasp of the goal of action, and thus providing us with crucial starting points for ethical arguments.

The role of *empeiria* is to provide the learner with a proper grasp of the relevant particulars in practical situations, and so guarantee the starting points of *phronêsis* that will allow us to assess situations and know what means are adequate in a given situation. Aristotle makes it clear that the *phronimos* will require not only the correct grasp of the goal achieved through the right shaping of our emotional tendencies, but also a kind of knowledge that goes beyond that. The *phronimos* needs to have the ability to recognize in each situation the particular instantiation of the end and to get things right in relation to the rest of the relevant particulars. I have argued that, although good habits are necessary for supplying the goal, the main path to acquiring this ability is *empeiria*.[32]

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