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亞里斯多德論道德責任

Aristotle on Our Responsibility for Moral Characters

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To Stephanie and Vivian

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Abstract

This thesis shall explore Aristotle's view on people's responsibility for their moral characters. It shall interpret his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* as arguing that Aristotle views individuals as fully responsible for their characters. That is, one can be morally praised if she is morally good, and blamed when bad.

The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first part shall focus on Aristotle's notion of virtue, where I argue that a virtue is best understood as a dynamic between rational and non-rational part of the soul. The second part shall argue that Aristotle takes that people are fully responsible for the characters formed. In the last part I turn to the *Politics*, where Aristotle proposes a specific kind of education. I argue that while this musical education makes character formation an easier task, it does not lessen one's responsibility for forming good characters. We are defined by the way we act and react to things, and we are responsible for how we define ourselves.

Keywords: Aristotle, Virtue, Moral Responsibility, Education, Virtue Ethics

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摘要

這份論文主要聚焦於討論亞里斯多德如何看待我們是否該為自己所形塑的道德性格負起道德責任。這份論文將透過詮釋《尼個馬各倫理學》與《政治學》兩部著作來論證亞里斯多德主張人們必須為自己的道德性格負起全責。也就是：如果一個人形塑了良好的道德性格，那麼她可以被我們讚揚；反之，如果形塑了不好的道德性格，則可以被批評。

這份論文將被分成三大部分：第一部分會聚焦於亞里斯多德如何看待德性。在那裡，我會論證一個好的理解亞里斯多德的德性觀是將德性看做是理性與非理性部分靈魂之間的動態平衡。第二部分將會論證亞里斯多德認為人們對其所形塑的德性負有完全責任。而在最後的第三部分，我將焦點轉至《政治學》，探討亞里斯多德在那裡所提出的教育制度。我將論證亞里斯多德所提出的音樂教育雖然讓形塑德性這件事情變得較為簡單，卻不會因此使人所需負的責任減輕。我們是經由我們的行為、以及對事物的回應而被決定為怎樣的人；而對此，我們需要負起完全的責任。

關鍵字：亞理斯多德、德性、道德責任、教育、德性倫理學

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Introduction[1]

> When Themistokles had left the Lacedaemonians and arrived back at Athens, an Athenian named Timodemos of the deme of Aphidna, who was an enemy of Themistokles but otherwise not a prominent man, rebuked him out of insane jealousy about his trip to Lacedaemon, asserting that he had been awarded all those honors because of Athens and not because of himself. Timodemos continued to say this without cease until Themistokles retorted, "The fact is that if I were from Belbina, I would not have been honored this way by the Spartans, but neither would you, my friend, even though you are an Athenian. (Herodotus VIII, 125)

In November 8, 2016, Trump won the election. During campaign, we learnt that he was not a decent man: he groped women; he bullied others on the internet; he constantly lies, and yet he became the 45th president of the United States. Before him, Barak Obama was the 44th president. Obama was, as the public would agree, a decent man: he thinks before he talks; he makes deliberate decisions; he treats people with respect. They are as different as they can be. Not only the personality, they have the exact opposite childhood experiences. Trump was born in a rich family, went on to receive elite education, and started a business with his father's help. On the other hand, Obama was born to an interracial family, grew up in deep south states, raised by his grandparents and his single mother. However, through his own diligence, he went

[1] I would like to thank Professor Paula Gottlieb for her help during my time in UW-Madison. I am also grateful to my teacher Professor Hsu for teaching me almost everything that I now know about ancient philosophy. Having him as my instructor in my undergraduate and graduate studies makes my time in NTU worthwhile.

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on to attend Harvard and then became a professor in Constitution, Senator, and finally the President of the United States.

These two presidents are so different that if there is a spectrum for the character where the one end is virtuous and the other is vicious, they seem to be the exact opposite to each other. But what makes this difference? Indeed, there are some commonality between these two presidents. They are all Americans; they all receive American education. They are all highly educated, and they are all successful, in politics or in business. There must be something that makes these two presidents so different in personality. Is it because, just like the quote points out, the society in which they have grown up? But they both grew up in American society, though one in northern states and the other southern. Do the regional differences matter? Or is it because of their own actions and decisions? As the saying goes, 'we are what we read.' If I can just rewrite this saying a little: we are how we act. That is, one is defined by both the way he acts and reacts to different situations, and his decisions in different circumstances. Is this the reason for the differences?

When we talk about one's characters, one's actions and one's decisions, we often think about Aristotle. Aristotle has a full theory that accounts for one's character, actions and decisions. And in Aristotle's theory, those three ideas are closely connected. Facing this question regarding President Obama and President Trump, I wonder what will Aristotle say about that. Thus, starting from this observation and this question, I endeavor in this thesis to find the answer to it.

This thesis shall proceed with a close reading of the texts. The texts used here are Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*.[2] The propose of this thesis is not proposing a pure exegesis of Aristotle's view, since, perhaps, nearly all Aristotle's views

[2] Throughout the thesis, I shall mostly use *EN* when talking about *Nicomachean Ethics*.

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are to some extent controversial for contemporary readers. In the following chapters, I shall first go through the texts, and then provide my own interpretations of the texts. In order to properly understand what Aristotle has in mind, I will take Aristotle's views seriously.

In *EN* VII 1145b4-6, Aristotle says that when dealing an issue, "we must set out the appearances, and first of all go through the puzzles." And this is the way the following chapters shall proceed. For in this thesis as a whole and in each chapter respectively, there will be a leading question, which will be addressed by the end of that chapter.

The leading question for this thesis is: Who, or what, for Aristotle, is responsible for one's moral character formed? To be more specific, is it *us* that are responsible, or is there something or someone else that can share the responsibility with us? Are we fully responsible for the characters formed? Intuitively, we might want to say no, since there can be too many things that affect our character formation. The education we receive, the society we are in, the family we are born to… etc. This is perhaps most scholars' stance, most recently proposed by Susan Sauvé Meyers in her 2011 work *Aristotle on Moral Responsibility*. However, my answer to this question differs from them. With closer examination of Aristotle's work in practical philosophy—both *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, I would answer otherwise. In this thesis, I will spell out my answer in more detail. I shall argue that Aristotle *does* think that we are fully responsible for the characters formed.

To that end, the thesis is divided into three main chapters. Each chapter answers one specific question. Ultimately, the thesis will form my answer to the abovementioned question: who, or what, for Aristotle, is responsible for one's moral character formed.

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Firstly, in chapter 2 I shall consider the question about the origin of virtue. The question 'What is virtue?' will be the leading question in this chapter. Starting from *EN* I 13, I review Aristotle's view on virtues. I argue that in *EN* I 13, Aristotle understands that it should be best understood as a dynamic between reason and emotions. And if the dynamic is a harmony between reason and emotions, then it is the *mean* that virtue reaches. There is a huge literature on the question what is the *mean*. Some argued that it is the right amount of emotions,[3] others argued that it is the correct reason,[4] still others argued that it is a balance between reason and emotion.[5] My interpretation is different from all these. In my interpretation, the *mean* is never a static thing; rather, as I have pointed out, it is a dynamic between reason and emotion, which, quite obviously, implies that there can never be a *point* or an *amount* where in which we find the mean. That is, the mean is always different for different people in different situations, and this view takes virtue as the combination of reason and emotion, so the *mean* is not simply to have the right reason or the correct amount of emotion; it is to have them *both*. This interpretation seems to be very much alike the third interpretation I mentioned above, but we are different on one important point: for the third interpretation, the mean is a *balanced state* between reason and emotion. As I shall consider in chapter two, the analogy of this third interpretation is that the mean is a *balanced scale*. While my interpretation takes the mean as *the balancing*, that is, the mean is *constantly in the working*. There is no *balanced scale* but a *constant balancing* that is in the working. This interpretation echoes what Aristotle says in *EN* II 1106b20-25, where Aristotle says that virtue "having these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way."

[3] For example, Urmson 1973 and Joachim 1951.
[4] See Hursthouse 1980.
[5] See, for example, Gottlieb 2009.

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Next, in chapter 3, I would like to examine Aristotle's view on moral responsibility in *Nicomachean Ethics* III, chapters 1-5. Since we have already seen Aristotle's view on virtue, and virtue can only be shown through one's action. And when it comes to action, the issue naturally leads to the responsibility for performing actions. Therefore, I turn our attention to Aristotle's remarks on responsibility. The question I consider here is 'What is Aristotle's view on moral responsibility?' In that chapter, I first reconstruct Aristotle's view on responsibility. Then, I consider Susan Sauvé Meyer's view that Aristotle thinks people are only partially responsible for the characters they formed. She argues that Aristotle thinks our responsibility for the characters formed is lessened by the fact that we receive education, and education plays a role in one's process of forming characters. However I give a concise reason for this idea, I disagree with professor Meyer, and argue that Aristotle holds that people are fully responsible for their characters formed. The fact that we receive education does not lessen our responsibility for forming good characters. That is, even though we are affected by things that are not in our control, like our fortune, there is, in Aristotle's view, at least one thing that is *in our control*: the way we act and react to things. We can control how to react in different situations, and we can control in what way should we act. The ability to control these things shows that we are *agents*, and that we are the *author of actions*. This much, at the very least, is "up to us." And it is because our actions and reactions to things are up to us that we are responsible for the outcomes of them. The outcomes of these actions and reactions are not just those immediate results that we experience; they are also the characters formed in us—the habituated way of feeling and acting.

But, indeed, Aristotle in his practical philosophy, especially in *Politics*, mentions education, and he does devote a considerable amount of space on this topic. Therefore,

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in chapter 4 I consider Aristotle's view on education. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the question: Does education lessen our responsibility for the characters formed? First, I review Aristotle's view on moral education in *EN*. I argue that in *EN*, Aristotle's view is more like moral reformation than moral education. I suggest that what Aristotle lays out in *EN* is a view that the laws should change people's usual way of action by nudging them into performing actions that have the appearance of virtuous actions. Then, I review Aristotle's view in *Politics*, and argue that the musical education Aristotle laying out in *Politics* does help the students in forming characters, but it does not determine which characters to form. That is, this education makes *forming characters* easier, though ideally students can finish this education with good characters being formed, this is not guaranteed. Whether the students form good or bad ones are mainly on student's own.

Finally, this thesis ends with a clear answer to the question I posed at the outset: Who, or what, is responsible for the characters formed? For Aristotle, I argue in this thesis, the answer is simply: *me*. *I myself* am responsible for the characters formed. Good or bad; virtues or vices, we are fully responsible for who we become, and this responsibility is not lessened by anything. So, President Obama can be a decent person is of his own choices; likewise, Mr. Trump turns out to be this vile figure is the result of his own making. They themselves are the ones that we should praise/condemn.

A brief account of the texts used in this thesis. For Greek texts, I use Oxford Classical Texts for both *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. For translations, I mainly use Irwin's translation for *Nicomachean Ethics*, but from time to time I also consult other translations such as Ross's, Reeve's and Rowe and Broadie's. For *Politics*, I mainly use Lord's translation, but I also find Reeve's and Barker's translation useful.

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Chapter 2 Aristotle on Moral Virtues

In this chapter, I consider Aristotle's discussion of moral virtue (or moral character) in *Nicomachean Ethics* book I and II. I provide an interpretation of the targeted text, and propose that a proper way to understand the idea of *mean* (τὸ μέσον) is to understood it as a dynamic between reason and emotion: the mean is not a static, balanced state, I shall argue, rather it is the constant balancing that we do.

The question asked in this chapter is this: what is Aristotle's view on moral virtue, and how should we best understand it.

In what follows, I shall first present my interpretation of *EN* I 13, and argue against past interpretations which propose a rather Humean reading of Aristotle's view on the relation between reason and emotion. Then, in sections II and III, I consider Aristotle's claim that virtue is a *state* (*hexis*), and that virtue is the *mean*. Drawing on Paula Gottlieb's analogy of a scale, I propose an interpretation that takes the mean as *the balancing*, rather than the *balanced* scale. That is, I argue, the mean is *constantly in the working*. Instead of being static; I suggest that this mean is a dynamic: a dynamic between reason and emotion, which would take other conditions into consideration to reach the harmonious state. And it is that harmonious state that is the mean, is the virtue. Finally, I shall give some examples to illustrate how my interpretation fits in Aristotle's view on moral virtues in *EN*.

I

Aristotle's account of moral virtues starts at *EN* I 13, where he first reminds the readers that this examination of virtue is for an investigation on human happiness. Since the happiness Aristotle is here looking for is a human one, the subject of present in-

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vestigation should also be about human soul (1102a10-20).[6] Generally, Aristotle divides the soul into two main parts: non-rational part and the part that has reason (1102a29-30). And the non-rational part can be further divided into two smaller parts: the nutritive part and the somewhat-shares-with-reason part.

Aristotle's treatment of the soul begins with a consideration of the non-rational part of the soul. He first accounts for only one part of it: "the cause of nutrition and growth", which Aristotle believes is to be "plantlike and shared [with all living things]" (1102a34-1102b1).[7] This nutrition part of the soul is endowed with the capacity related to growth: things that are related to nourishment, growing-up and the like. This is the part that is shared among all living things (1102b4).[8] We can see growth in all forms of life, and both good and bad person are grownups—if they are not already, then one day will. One feature of this nutritive part is that it is observed amongst all living forms. We can see it present in all souls (whether human or not). This part is, therefore, irrelevant to human virtue.

Another sub-part of the non-rational part of the soul is one that "in a way shares in reason" (1102b15). This non-rational-but-in-a-way-shares-in-reason part is the part that has something to do with "appetites and in general desires" (1102b30-31), but, unlike the nutritive part, this part obeys and listens to reason. In explaining this part of the soul, Aristotle employs the example of the continent and incontinent person:[9] Ar-

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[6] Aristotle here refers back to the definition of happiness in BK I, 7. There, Aristotle only identifies happiness to human good, and that happiness is an activity of the soul. However, Aristotle does not say what virtues are there.

[7] All translations of *EN* are from Irwin, 1999.

[8] However, nowhere in the *EN* does Aristotle talk about this third part of the soul. I think that it is because this third part of the soul is out of our control in the sense that we cannot decide whether or not we are to grow. For example, we can decide who we are to become by choosing different courses of actions, but we cannot decide how tall we are to become or what size we are to become—it does not depend on our decision, therefore lack the voluntariness we see in actions. And since it has nothing to do with our choices, it has nothing to do with ethics.

[9] Although Aristotle uses continent and incontinent person as examples, he does not think that continence is a virtue while incontinence is a vice. Aristotle states that continence "seems to be good and praiseworthy conditions, whereas incontinence … seem to be base and blameworthy conditions."

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istotle claims that people praise continent person for their reason: for "the part of the soul that has reason, because it exhorts them correctly and toward what is best" (1102b16-17), while "[the souls of the continent and incontinent person] evidently also have in them some other part that is by nature something apart from reason, clashing and struggling with reason" (1102b18-19). In the continent soul, Aristotle argues, we can see how the non-rational part of the soul "shares in reason": in that "the continent person obeys reason; and in the temperate and the brave person it presumably listens still better to reason, since there it agrees with reason in everything" (1102b25-28). On the other hand, we can observe the clashing and struggling in the incontinent person, since she "have impulses in contrary directions", just like the "paralyzed parts of a body, when we decide to move them to the right, do the contrary and move off to the left" (1102b20-22). And this example helps us see how this non-rational part only shares in reason in a way: it can go either way. It is therefore not at all rational, and not at all irrational.

But this way of explaining it is not clear enough. We can always further ask Aristotle: so *in what way* does this part of the soul shares in reason? Aristotle gives us an extremely vague answer: "it listens to reason and obeys it" (1102b31; ᾗ κατήκοόν ἐστιν αὐτοῦ [λόγου] καὶ πειθαρχικόν). But listen in what way? Aristotle gives another unsatisfactory answer: "This is the way in which we are said to 'listen to reason' from father or friends, as opposed to the way in which in mathematics. The non-rational part also [obeys and] is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by correction, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation" (1102b31-1103a1). These are inadequate answer since Aristotle does not further explain what does 'listen to reason from

(1145b9-12) However, continence is not a virtue, since a continent person still have base appetites whereas a virtuous person won't. On the other hand, incontinence is not a vice, since incontinent person still can make the right decision, just fails to abide by reason (1151b24-1152a4).

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father or friends' means. However, it is rather obvious why listening to reason is not like listening to mathematics: unlike actions, mathematics is much more precise. We do not have different courses of mathematics as we have different courses of actions. Learning math is not the same as guiding actions. How one acts can have an impact on how he forms his self; but how one calculates does not have the same impact. It is the case that we have different formulae in mathematics according to which we follow to solve math problems, and following those formulae we can find a clear answer to each problem; yet we don't find such formulae in ethical life: there is seldom a clear answer to ethical problems we encounter in life.[10] Mathematics has nothing to do with our ethical life, for instance, knowing a lot about trigonometric functions does not make one's action more virtuous,[11] but listening to one's father and friends might. Mathematic *logos* is impractical in the sense that it cannot guide one's action or teach how one should lead his life; whereas ethical *logos*, in this sense, is practical.

On the other hand, as far as we can see, people listen in different ways to their fathers or friends. Sometimes one might find one's friends' advices are more acceptable simple because the adviser is her friend, even these pieces of advice is exactly the same as her father's. Other times we listen to our father because he has a kind of parental authority over us. We do not listen to those advices *per se*, but because we *obey* our father's authority. [12] However, Aristotle cannot mean that the non-rational-but-share-in-reason part of the soul will *obey* the authority of the rational part of the soul, since nowhere in Aristotle's writing gives the rational part of the soul this special authority to rule over the other parts. If so, then what does Aristotle have

[10] There might be a related question about the function of moral rules when we are making moral judgments. But I'll set it aside right now, since this is not what is in question here.
[11] Plato might argue against this view, see *Republic* BK VII.
[12] Pakaluk does use the image of an immature child and his father to illustrate this point. However, he does not say that the child follows his father because he recognizes his father's authority; rather he follows because his reason is not yet full-blown. It is precisely because he is not rational enough to recognize it so he obeys. See Pakaluk 2008, 93.

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in mind when he talks about this special part of the soul?

David Bostock suggest that what Aristotle has in mind is really a Humean conception of reason and passion. Bostock argues that "Aristotle includes under 'reason' some of what Hume would count as 'passion' (i.e. desire)," and suggest that this interpretation can work since Aristotle's term for appetition, ὄρεξις (*orexis*), "covers *both* what we may call the 'bodily' desires—e.g. desires for food or drink or sex—*and* what we may call 'rational' desires, e.g. the long-term desires for health, or honour, or virtue."[13] So that both rational and irrational part of the soul contains passion, different in essence. Further, Bostock notes that "apparently we must think of the [rational desires] as belonging to the part of the soul that has reason 'in itself', not to that part which 'has reason' merely in the sense that it can 'listen to reason', for otherwise—as Hume rightly observed—the two parts could not conflict."[14] In support of this separation, Bostock reminds the readers that Aristotle himself credited a form of desire to reason: wish (βούλησις), for example, in 1111b11-30 Aristotle says that wish is a sort of appetite for an certain end. This separation allows Bostock to further draws on to modern scientific research that certain emotions to be cognitive—that there is a sense of rationality in play when emotions work.

On the other hand, Michael Pakaluk follows Aristotle's example to explain the 'listen to' or 'obey' relation between the two parts. Pakaluk sees the irrational but shares in reason part of the soul as having immature reason, that is, this part is persuadable by reason but not in itself rational. Just like, as he puts it, an immature child who has not yet reach 'the age of reason' so that he cannot do the kind of 'reasoning' that is required; however, such child is rational enough to obey his father's commands

[13] Bostock 2000, 34.
[14] Bostock 2000, 34.

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and does have a good grasp of his father's reasons for such commands.[15] In his view, as it seems to me, the relation is natural and evident enough that we don't need to further explain it.

Although I largely agree with Pakaluk's view, and I do agree that Aristotle does think there is an 'animal side' of human nature, and that some activities are different from other animal activities; I do not think Aristotle's explanation adequate.[16] Further, I also would suggest that Pakaluk's interpretation says nothing more than Aristotle did in *EN*, since Pakaluk's interpretation, though strictly follows the text, still uses obey to explain 'listen to', and the image of an immature child, though helpful, fall short of explaining what Aristotle means by 'listen to reason from fathers *or* friends'. Moreover, I don't think both Pakaluk and Bostocks' Humean interpretation of Aristotle can work, since, I shall argue, it does not fit with the progressive view that Aristotle holds.

Aristotle separates three major parts of the soul, signifying three different kinds of activities: the rational part, which signifies the activity of reason, of thought; and the irrational part, which signifies the activity of appetite, of animal-like activities, and the vegetate part, which is common to all living things, signifies the activity of taking in nutrition. The activities of reason and the activities of growth and nutrition distinguish human beings from non-human animated beings,[17] and this indicates that in every human soul there are three components: the vegetative one, that of animal-like and that of distinctively human. It signifies the two sides of a human being: that one has an animal side, and a properly human side. As human beings, we have something more than other animals, namely, *λόγος*. In *Politics*, Aristotle says that

[15] Pakaluk 2008, 93-4.
[16] Pakaluk 2008, 92.
[17] Cf. *EN* I, 7

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"man is much more a political animal than any kind of bee or any herd animal is clear. For, as we assert, nature does nothing in vain; and man alone among the animals has speech (λόγον)"[18] (1253a8-10). The ability to use language is distinctively human: we use language to converse to ourselves and to others. Λόγος, whether reason or language, in this sense plays the role of a gap-closer. Conversation means that people are trying to find common grounds amongst each other; similarly, for the two parts of the soul to converse to each other means that the two parts are finding ways to reach a common ground. And this common ground, as we shall later see, is the virtue. This is most obvious in the case of an incontinent person: we call this person incontinent since *knows* not to do certain action, but at the same time *want* (or *desire*) to do it, and in the end she caves in. There is a sense of disharmony in this notion, since the soul is in a state of inner conflict.

In order for the soul to be a united whole, Aristotle needs a way to link the two parts together. And that is where λόγος comes in play. As I mentioned earlier, what is special about human being is that a human being has the ability to use language to bridge two separate things. For the rational part of the soul, the function of λόγος is exactly to tame the irrational part. There is a portion of the irrational part of the soul that will *listen* to the rational part in the sense that they can *hear* the language said by the rational part. It does not have to have the ability to *comprehend* the meaning of the language used; all it has to do is to be tamed by the things it heard. It will follow, at first maybe not precisely, but generally on the right track, the things that rational part says. Just like a dog that 'follows' the order of their master. Over time, this irrational part will be tamed, and will be brought up in such way that it not only follows the orders given by the rational part, but that it will habitually act in a certain way. Through

[18] Translation of *Politics* is from Lord 2013.

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the taming by language, the irrational part will make its progress: its force is contained by λόγος, or better, it can *learn* from previous experiences, and therefore *habituated*, so that it is always in harmony with the rational part of the soul. With this taming by the external regulations, and the repetition of certain actions, desires develop certain habits. They are conditioned by reason's governing, and habitually follow the orders of the reason. Human soul, hence, is progressive. Not only the rational part but the irrational part will progress. Moreover, rather than saving a place for desire in rational part of the soul, this view suggest that it is the desires that become rational—rational part can still be purely rational, but the irrational part will come closer and closer to reason. It may never *be* rational, but can get close enough that it will *share* with reason: it seemed to have *taken* something from reason so that it appears to be rational.[19] We can thus see the progression here: at first the irrational part obeys the rational part just like an immature child obeys his father; as time goes by, and as the soul grows, the irrational part comes closer and closer to the rational part. And now it no longer obeys the reason as a child obeys his father; they are on an equal stance now—the irrational part listens to the reason as a friend listen to another. The entire soul is kept a harmonious unity.

Each part of the soul has its own virtues, as Aristotle puts it, "the division between virtues accords with this difference" (1103a5). Here Aristotle speaks of virtues as something that is about a thing which makes the thing such that it perform its function well.[20] For example, a car has the function of running on the road. If this car runs *well*, then there must be something that makes this car *runs well*. That *something* is what Aristotle called *a virtue.* Since virtues means simply the excellence of a thing, it

[19] I use take here since the word Aristotle uses to mean 'share in' is μετέχω, which also means 'partake in.' Etymologically, it is the combination of μετα- 'with, after' and ἔχω 'have, possess.'
[20] Pakaluk 2008, 88.

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is not confined to organic bodies. Everything can have a virtue or virtues. So is the soul, and the parts of the soul. For Aristotle, each part of the soul has its own distinctive virtue. For the rational part of the soul, Aristotle attributes wisdom, comprehension, and prudence as its virtues; whereas the irrational-but-shares-with-reason part of the soul, has temperance and generosity as its virtues (1103a5-7). The distinction corresponds to the two parts of the soul. The rational part of the soul that do the thinking and as responsible for though has wisdom as its virtue, which is a state of the soul; on the other hand the irrational but shares with reason part has states of characters as its virtue, since this part of the soul is concerned with appetites and desires, talk of quality is easier to distinguish one desire from another.[21] Aristotle does not specify the virtue of the nutritive part of the soul, but considering its function is simply growth, it is reasonable to exclude it from present discussion.

Having laid out the correlations between virtues and the soul, Aristotle turns to virtues of characters, or moral virtues, in *EN* II.

II

In 1103a, Aristotle defines moral virtues, or virtues of character, as the result of habit (ἔθος/*ethos*). Virtues of character do not arise in us naturally; rather, virtues of character "arise in us neither by nature nor against nature," and that "we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit" (1103a25-6). That is, people are not born virtuous. This is different from other things that arise in us by nature, for example senses:

> [I]f something arises in us by nature, we first have the capacity for it, and later

[21] This does not mean that virtues of characters are not states. It only means that talk of quality has a practical advantage.

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perform the activity. This is clear in the case of the senses; for we did not acquire them by frequent seeing or hearing, but we already had them when we exercised them, and did not get them by exercising them. Virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, by having first activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it; we become builders, for instance, by building, and we become harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions. (1103a27-1103b2)

We don't have to practice our senses to acquire them or to make them perfect (if there is such a thing as "perfect senses"). Senses are not the sort of thing that we *grow out of* us; rather, we are endowed with them—we already have them before we can consciously practice them. However, as Aristotle sees it, that is not the case for virtues. As the analogy between virtues and crafts show, Aristotle takes virtues as the capacity that we acquire through performing corresponding actions. We have to do those corresponding actions first, then we can talk about acquiring virtues. And virtues are not the kind of thing that we acquire by performing those corresponding actions *once*: recall 1103a18-2, that virtues do not arise in us naturally. One has to constantly practice those actions so that they become her habitual actions. And these actions will produce states (ἕξις/*hexis*) in that person's soul; different actions will produce their own corresponding states (1103b20-23).

Aristotle's point here is that people become virtuous by constantly doing corresponding actions, hence virtue of character is also completed or perfected by our repeatedly performing those actions. Since virtue of character is achieved through the repetition of actions, Aristotle concludes, it is therefore a state of character, stabilized

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by our practicing it. The point here is that we have to habituate these actions. It is not enough to merely *practicing* them; they have to become our *habit*.[22]

However, Aristotle also acknowledges that it may not be easy to make such actions our habits. The process of habituation may be different from one to another,

> For each of us seems to possess his type of character to some extent by nature; for in fact we are just, brave, prone to temperance, or have another feature, immediately from birth. (1144b4-7)

People are different, Aristotle admits, and we are endowed with different kinds of natural virtues (ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετὴ). These different natural virtues can help people to become certain kinds of people more easily, since they are by nature prone to do certain sort of action. For those who are naturally prone to temperance, it is easier for them to become temperate persons. It is therefore clear that we do not magically become virtuous, that is, we do not become virtuous without any precedent conditions. We do not magically perform virtuous actions out of nowhere. The starting point is our natural virtues; these natural virtues affects how easily we are to develop full virtues (ἡ κυρία ἀρετή).

Further, in *EN* II 2, Aristotle argues that virtue of character is preserved by the mean and destroyed by both excess and deficiency. He employs the analogy of health and strength, that both excessive and deficient exercises might ruin physical strength, so also too much or too little food, while the proportionate amount of exercises and food would increase and preserve our physical strength and bodily health. Virtue is similar to physical strength and bodily health: it could be ruined by both excess and

[22] I will say more about this process of habituation in later chapters. It is enough for present purpose to note that Aristotle's idea of habituation is related to moral education.

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deficiency, and preserved by the mean. This point is shown more clearly by Aristotle's own examples. Take bravery for example. Someone who is afraid of everything, that is, feeling too much fear, is a coward person, he acts cowardly. If, on the other hand, he is not afraid of everything, that is, feeling too little fear, then he is a rash person, he acts recklessly. Bravery, a virtue, can only be preserved by the mean, that is, generally speaking, feeling appropriate amount of fear, and act accordingly.

Thus, for Aristotle, virtue of character is a state of character concerned with feeling, and the agent acts according to these states of character. And a state (ἕξεις/*hexis*) of character is not itself a feeling or capacity of having feelings.

III

But what precisely is the relationship between a state and feelings? So far we only know that virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, and the mean preserves the virtue. Though Aristotle explains in *EN* II 5 that "by *hexis* I mean what we have when we are well or badly off in relation to the feelings" and if we are to be well off in relation to the feelings, we should be in the mean. But what does this *mean* means? What exactly is his doctrine of mean?

Aristotle introduces his doctrine of mean with an analogy:

> If, for instance, ten are many and two are few, we take six as intermediate in the object since it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount. This is what is intermediate by numerical proportion. But that is not how we must take the intermediate that is relative to us. For if ten pounds, for instance, are a lot for someone to eat, and two pounds a little, it does not follow that the trainer will prescribe six, since this might also be either a little or a lot for the person who

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is to take it—for Milo a little, but for the beginner in gymnastics a lot; and the same is true for running and wrestling. (1106a33-1106b5)

In regard to ethical virtues, the mean is not an objective, arithmetical mean; it is something "relative to us".[23] There are different ways for different people to be healthy or to maintain physical strength. What is suitable, or mean, for Milo may not be so for a beginner in gymnastics. Health is a mean 'relative to the agent'. The way to be healthy may differ from one to another, and so is being virtuous.

Virtue is also a 'mean relative to us.' To be virtuous is to act according to the right reason (1103b33), and have feelings for the right reason, at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, in the right way (1106b21-7). Paula Gottlieb proposes the idea that the doctrine of mean is in equilibrium, and she illustrate this point with an analogy of a scale:

Imagine an old-fashioned pair of scales. The empty scales consist of a pivot and a cross-bar with two pans. If the pivot is in the correct place, and the cross-bar is balanced on it, the scales are in equilibrium. Then, when an amount to be weighed is placed in one of the pans, the amount needed to balance it in the other pan will be the correct amount. The scales will work correctly.

The virtuous human being is analogous to the empty scales that are correctly balanced. When something happens, the virtuous human being, who is properly balanced, will respond and act in the correct way. The human being who lacks a balanced disposition will not have the right emotions and act correctly in the right situation, just as unbalanced scales will not correctly react to the weight in

[23] On the idea that mean is relative to us rather than an intermediate between two extremes, see also Brown 2014, p. 64-79.

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the pan. The analogy is between the virtuous human being and the correctly balanced empty scales.[24]

The analogy here is the virtuous agent and the empty scale. Gottlieb understands *virtue* as a correctly balanced empty scale, and *mean* is the correct balancing. This scale can correctly weight the situation, and relative aspects, in which the agent finds herself. If the scale is correct, then the action will be correct, and therefore the agent will act virtuously.

This analogy appears to capture an important aspect of mean: that it must be tuned. Yet this analogy leaves out another important aspect of mean: the relation between reason and emotion. Of course, it can be argued that the relation is one of balancing and being balanced. Reason is the one who does the balancing, while emotion is the one being balanced. However, this point is not obvious in Gottlieb's analogy. And I can hardly see how can this explanation fits in her picture. If the virtuous agent is the balanced scale, then there must be something, or someone, else that does the balancing. Perhaps it is the agent's teacher who does so, or it is balanced through education. Anyhow, it requires there be a presented other that does the balancing. If my earlier interpretation is right, then this analogy is at odd with Aristotle's account of virtue. Since virtue arises from the part that shares reason and that this part will listen to reason, it does seem to be that the agent can balance herself, or that a virtuous agent is one who can balance herself.

That said, I do think that the image of a balanced scale fits what Aristotle has in mind about virtue as a *hexis*. It is true that a balanced scale is a *stable* one, just as *hexis* is a stable state. And it is also true that the scale itself is not feeling nor the ca-

[24] Gottlieb 2009, 23.

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pacity of having feelings; it is a thing that *measures* feelings. It tells us how much feelings (since we are now measuring the amount of feeling) we feel, and if the scale is balanced, we can produce the right reaction.[25] Again, we still face the question: how can one become a balanced scale? Surely, she cannot *by herself* become a balanced scale. As I noted before, she will need help, and this help comes from *reason*.

Therefore, I propose that we understand *virtue* and *mean* differently: *virtue* can be understood as a balanced scale, while *mean* is probably better understood as a dynamic process of reason conversing with feelings—that is, *mean* is the constant *balancing*.[26] In this picture, thus, mean is not *static* whereas *virtue* is. Also, since it is mean that preserves virtue, and virtue is a state related to feelings, mean is what preserves a certain state of the soul that is related to feelings. Again, in Aristotle's picture, virtue arises from the part of the soul that shares in reason, which will listen to reason. As my interpretation indicated before, this part of the soul is conditioned by the rational part of the soul, and it is this conditioning that makes virtue possible. Therefore, mean is not something that will not change after formed; it is indeed *stable*, but not *inflexible* or *unchangeable.* That is, I am suggesting that we understand mean not as a static state but a state which is essentially a dynamic.

The dynamic I am suggesting here a dynamic of reason and feeling. As I noted earlier, for virtue to arise in our soul, there is a sort of interaction between the two parts of the soul. This dynamic is about two aspects of virtue: first, it is about the internal relation between reason and emotion; second, it is about the rational involvement in each ethical situation.

For the first aspect, this dynamic describes what Aristotle had said in *EN* I 13,

[25] On the view that virtue is related to the amount of feeling one feels, see Urmson 1973.

[26] I use "conversation" here to capture the analogy of father and son that Aristotle himself uses in *EN* I 13. We shall later see that Aristotle himself also uses "tune" to capture the relation. Regardless of the term chose, the general picture is that one part of the soul will condition the other part. And this "conditioning" relation is what I really want to capture here.

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that the part shares in reason will *listen* to the rational part of the soul. This listening relation is not merely one part listening to another; but one part speaks, the other listen, and what is being said and listened will be shown in through action. The action performed is the listening part responding to the speaking part's speech. So, there is a sort of *communication* between the two, and this communication is also the habituation of certain actions. And this brings us to the situation an agent finds herself in.

The second aspect is about this situation. In the ethical situation in question, the agent is confronted with some events, and it requires her action. What is the right action to do? As Aristotle puts it, the right action is one that is at the right time, about the right person, to the right object…etc. What counts as right? The rational part of the soul will judge what is right. What is right might differ from case to case, and feelings cannot by itself judge what is right. It is reason that do the judging. Indeed, feelings might respond faster than reason, but that does not mean a virtuous agent will only act on feelings. It might be the case that one got irritated by someone's remark, but that does not necessarily mean she has to act on that anger and yell back to the speaker. Her reason might step in and make other directions. And if, as reason directs, there arises another feeling that ends up motivating the agent to do this or that, and if that action is the correct action to do, then the agent is said to performed a virtuous action.

Further, since this dynamic is the relation between the two parts of the soul, one person's dynamic might be different from another's. And this difference is why Aristotle says "mean is relative to us". If my interpretation is correct, then "relative to us" means this dynamic is difference from one to another, and the kind of relation that each person will end up having will be different. But that does not affect one's being a virtuous agent. What is important is *to be* a virtuous person, but not *to be a specific*

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kind of virtuous person, for example, be a virtuous person *exactly* like Hector or Martin Luther King—recall that Aristotle admits that people are endowed with different natural virtues, and those natural virtues will figure in person's future development. It, therefore, makes perfect sense that people might have different dynamics in them, but they can still all be virtuous.

This interpretation can also accommodate Hursthouse's criticism to Urmson. In Hursthouse's view, the doctrine of the mean prescribes two ways of being wrong: either the person can be wrong for having *too many*, for example, having too many fear or anger, or the person can be wrong *outright*, for instance, *adultery* is one way of being wrong *outright*. There is no *right adultery* (1107a13ff.).[27] As she sees it, what the doctrine of the mean prescribes is more than just the quantity of feelings, but there is also a *qualitive* problem here. Aristotle himself says that

> But having these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue. (1106b21-23)

We can clearly see here that what virtue admits is not *just* the correct amount of feelings. It is also about make the *right judgments*.[28] Thus, Hursthouse emphasizes that, in the doctrine of the mean, there is always a *rational* part in play. Just as my interpretation points out, we cannot ignore the work of reason when we are talking about virtues. If we understand the doctrine of mean as I have suggested, then we can see that this doctrine expresses the cooperation of reason and feelings. Virtues, as state of characters, are a balanced scale, one that measures the amount of feelings one has,

[27] See Hursthouse 1980, 64.
[28] On this point, see Hursthouse 1980 and 2006.

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and the mean (*meson*) is the *balancing* of that scale, to accord this scale to different conditions the agent finds upon herself, so what we get from this doctrine of the mean is one balanced reaction from the agent, and the action thereby produced will be a virtuous one. It is, again, the factors that are being measured and balanced, not the scale itself that is being balanced. The scale is stable, but the outcome coming out of the balancing is not. Different virtuous agents can have different outcomes: their actions are the outcome of their own balancing. What might be call courageous actions for virtuous agent A may not be courageous for agent B. What can be called virtuous actions are different from one agent to another. But they still have one thing in common, that is: these virtuous actions are all the product of their balancing. Agents are stable—they tend to do this or that in such and such circumstances, and, analogously, so are the scales.

IV

In light of this discussion about the state of character and the doctrine of the mean, it might be helpful here to consider an example. In *EN* II 5 1105b25-28 Aristotle remarks that "by *hexis* I mean what we have when we are well or badly off in relation to the feelings. If, for instance, in relation to getting angry, we are too intensely or slackly off, we are badly off, if meanly off, well." And since his example is a virtue concerning anger, let us take the nameless virtue of mildness in *EN* IV 5 for example.

The namelessness of this virtue may be explained by Aristotle's own words: "Since the mean is nameless, and the extremes are practically nameless too, we call the intermediate condition mildness, inclining toward the deficiency, which is also nameless" (1125b1-4). It seems to me that Aristotle cannot find a word that accurately captures the notion he has in mind. And this situation, that our language cannot accu-

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rately express the virtue, can be seen also in the discussion of other virtues.[29] I therefore argue, in line with professor Gottlieb, that the reason for this particular virtue (or these virtues) to be nameless is simply because our ordinary language is not abundant enough to have a word (or words) that can accurately express them.

Aristotle describes this virtue as such:

> The person who is angry at the right things and toward the right people, and also in the right way, at the right time, and for the right length of time, is praised. … The deficiency…is blamed. For people who are not angered by the right things, or in the tight way, or at the right times, or toward the right people, all seem to be foolish. (1125b32-1126a7)

> The excess arises in all these ways—in anger toward the wrong people, at the wrong times, more than is right, more hastily than is right, and for a longer time—but they are not all found in the same person. (1126a10-3)

To be a mild person means to feel angry at the right time, for the right amount, for the right length of time, and so forth. It does not mean to feel angry moderately. For example, it could be mild for First Lady to feel pretty angry when she finds out that her speech is being plagiarized. It might be proper for one to feel extreme anger in some occasions, and proper to not feel that much anger in other occasions. There is no definite way do say what the proper amount of anger would be. But there is a way to say that the person in question acts properly: that he acts according to the reflective equilibrium he reaches, and again, this reflective equilibrium is relative to him. It is there-

[29] For the discussion of nameless virtues, see also Gottlieb 2009, 40-44.

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fore reasonable to conclude that this person in question is a virtuous person, and in this case, a mild person.

Aristotle does not clearly define what anger is in *Nicomachean Ethics*. But he does so in *Rhetoric*. In *Rhetoric* II 2 1378a Aristotle defines anger as "a desire involves pain" (*orexis meta lupos*), and anger is a desire for retaliation. Recall that being virtuous means getting everything right. So to be a mild person means one gets everything right. He should have the right amount of anger, and since anger is directed to the right object, he desires the right kind of retaliation to the right person (the one who irritates him), at the right time, and so forth. The amount of anger is measured by the scale, and which is the right object, when is the right time and who is the right person is the judgment made by reason. And the reason's making these judgments is the *balancing* of the scale.

In this view, what it means to be virtuous is to have the correct balancing and the balanced scale, and this is can be said to be a combination of feeling and action: the scale is the feeling part, and the balancing is the action part. That is, to be able to have the correct balancing requires our practice. Recall that this balancing requires the work of reason—it needs to make judgments about things like time, object, place… and so on. One cannot simply achieve this balancing by contemplating them; rather, one can only *get things right* by *experiencing* these situations and by learning from these experiences. This balancing needs to be practiced, and it needs to be practiced through our performing actions in ethical situations.

Again, recall that I had argued earlier that the relation between the rational and irrational part of the soul is one of conversation: that reason will, through *logos*, habituate the irrational part of the soul so that the latter will follow the order of the former. The balancing is in effect this 'conversation'. There are some judgments to be

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made about the relevant aspects of the action: the object, the timing, how to perform the action…and so on. These are given by the rational part of the soul, and the irrational part listens. The end point of this balancing is the action performed. That is to say, there isn't a single point when the balancing is *done for good*. We are constantly balancing, even if we are already virtuous, we still need to balance our scale to accord it to the different conditions we find upon ourselves. The dynamic is here for performing actions, and once everything is balanced, we perform certain action. And it is clear that this balancing is also our *becoming good*, for we well form habits about how we balance our scale. If we balance in the right way, then we are habituating ourselves to be virtuous. But what exactly is this *habituation*?

V

Now, as Aristotle sees it, the origin of an action is *decision* (προαίρεσις) while the principles (ἀρχὴ) of decision are *desire* and *goal-directed reason* (1139a32-33). Further, the state of character is a state that *decides*; the decisions are made by the virtues. This, again, fits in the picture I presented earlier: a virtuous action requires the two parts of the soul (the rational and irrational) to be in a harmonized dynamic. True, it is the *character* that makes the decision, as Aristotle says,

> For our decisions to do good or bad actions, not our beliefs, form the characters we have. Again, we decide to take or avoid something good or bad. We believe what it is, whom it benefits or how; but we do not exactly believe to take or avoid. Further, decision is praised more for deciding on what is right, whereas belief is praised for believing rightly. Moreover, we decide on something [even] when we know most completely that it is good; but [what] we believe [is] what

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we do not quite know. (1112a3-13)

The decision on performing this or that act is certainly made by our character—made by our irrational part of the soul, the part that is involved with feeling and desires. It accounts for the motivation for actions, but that is not the whole picture. Since it is not the motivation that makes the action virtuous. As I argued earlier, virtuous actions involve some *judgments* about a plurality of things, therefore an account of motivation cannot explain what makes an action virtuous. Aristotle knows that, and he further notes that

> Now virtue of character is a state that decides; and decision is a deliberative desire. If, then, the decision is excellent, the reason must be true and the desire correct, so that what reason asserts is what desire pursues. This, then, is thought and truth concerned with action. (1139a22-25)

> The principle of an action—the source of motion, not the goal—is decision; the principle of decision is desire and goal-directed reason. That is why decision requires understanding and thought, and also a state of character; for acting well or badly requires both thought and character. (1139a31-36)

Now it is clear that though virtues make decisions, they do not decide randomly. Virtues make decisions according to desires and goal-directed reason—this shows that, for Aristotle, there is always a *rational* element in a virtuous action. Aristotle also states the function of this rational element

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> For in all the states of character we have mentioned, as well as in the others, there is a target that the person who has reason focuses on and so tightens or relaxes; and there is a definition of the means, which we say are between excess and deficiency because they accord with the correct reason. (1138b20-24)

Note that Aristotle does not only emphasize the importance of right reason in these lines; but, as Burnet points out,[30] he also changes the metaphor. Previously, in *EN* II, the metaphor had been *hitting the right target*, but here the metaphor is to *tune the lyre*—it is lyre that requires more tightening and relaxing to hit the correct note. This metaphorical *tuning*, I suggest, is meant to describe the interaction between reason and emotion. This interaction, in my interpretation, is the *communication* between the two parts of the soul.

However, one might still wonder what exactly does reason, the rational part of the soul, do when we are making ethical decision? According to Aristotle, we deliberate:

> Then what, or what sort of thing, is decision, since it is none of the things mentioned? Well, apparently it is voluntary, but not everything voluntary is decided. Then perhaps what is decided is what has been previously deliberated. (1112a14-16)

An agent's decision is to decide on things that had been deliberated. But what do we deliberate?

[30] Burnet 1973.

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> We deliberate about what is up to us, that is to say, about the actions we can do. (1112a31)

> Deliberation concerns what is usually [one way rather than another], where the outcome is unclear and the right way to act is undefined. … We deliberate not about ends, but about what promotes ends… we lay down the end, and then examine the ways and means to achieve it. If it appears that any of several [possible] means will reach it, we examine which of them will reach it most easily and most finely; and if only one [possible] means reaches it, we examine how that means will reach it, and how the means itself is reached, until we come to the first cause, the last thing to be discovered. (1112b9-20)

What we deliberate are (a) means to the ends and (b) whether the object being deliberated is up to us, or possible to us. That is, in Aristotle's words, "what we could achieve through our agency" (1112b28). For example, in the famous 'Trolley Problem,' I find myself in a situation where in which I have to decide whether to push the guy on my right-hand side over the bridge to stop the trolley, or to pull a lever on my left, I will have to deliberate about the choices before I decide. I have to deliberate whether these actions can be achieved through my agency—whether or not I can perform this action, and whether these actions can bring about the wished ends. I have to make some calculations about the two courses of actions: which can stop the trolley in time? Is pushing the guy really the right thing to do? Am I strong enough to pull the lever? These questions require my rational calculation—not least ethical: I need to know what is the right thing to do, relative to me or in general. All these require my reason to work, so Aristotle identifies deliberation to the rational part of the soul:

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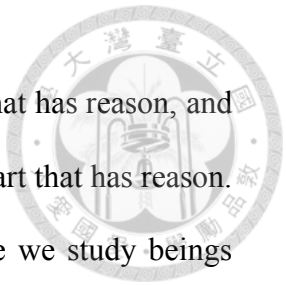

> Previously, then, we said there are two parts of the soul, one that has reason, and one non-rational. Now we should divide in the same way the part that has reason. Let us assume there are two parts that have reason: with one we study beings whose principles do not admit of being otherwise than they are, and with the other we study beings whose principles admit of being otherwise. … Let us call one of these the scientific part, and the other the rationally calculating part; for deliberating is the same as rationally calculating, and no one deliberates about what cannot be otherwise. Hence the rationally calculating part is one part of the part of the soul that has reason. (1139a5-18)

Further, Aristotle argues that deliberation, being the rationally calculating part of the soul, is also the mark of practical wisdom (φρώνεσις)[31]:

> It seems proper to a practically wise person to be able to deliberate finely about things that are good and beneficial for himself, not about some restricted area—about what sorts of things promote health or strength, for instance—but about what sorts of things promote living well in general. (1140a26-29)

A practically wise person will be one who deliberates well about things in life—things that are core to her living a good life. And, in the Aristotelian context, it can most appropriately be understood as living a *virtuous* life. To be virtuous thus requires one to be practically wise, since, again, practical wisdom is about our deliber-

[31] I render *phronesis* into *practical wisdom* whereas Irwin rendered it *prudence*. For the sake of consistency, I shall use practical wisdom throughout. I prefer *practical wisdom* since *prudence* in an ethical context might remind readers too much about contemporary meta-ethical debates about the idea of *prudential reasoning*.

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ating about things that are good and beneficial for oneself. Thus, practical wisdom

> Is a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being. (1140b5-6)

Since practical wisdom is about human concerns—concerns that are related our being good or bad; to the ends that we pursuit; to the best good we can achieve by action. In this way, a person who deliberates well is said to have practical wisdom.

Recall that according to Aristotle, people deliberate before making decisions. A virtuous action is decided according to the agent's deliberation. Since it is the state of character that decides, and it is the practical wisdom that deliberates; all the while state of character is said to be the part of the soul shares in reason and the practical wisdom is said to be the rational part of the soul, the interaction between the two parts of the soul can be seen more clearly. When we find ourselves in an ethical situation where we have to perform an action, we first deliberate. We take relevant factors into consideration and deliberates. Our deliberation leads to some ethical judgments. Our reason then *tells* the emotion that some ethical judgments are made. Our emotion then decides, and finally we perform that action. This entire process of deliberating, telling and deciding can be repeated again and again; through repetition, we will naturally produce some tendency to perform in certain way. And this is the *habituation* that helps us become a virtuous person.

VI

In this chapter, I reviewed Aristotle's account of the soul, and that of virtue. I argued that the interaction between the rational part and the irrational part of the soul should

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be understood as the two parts conversing with each other, and the irrational part will follow the order of the rational part. And I later argued that this relation can best be shown in the doctrine of the mean. Following Paula Gottlieb's idea that virtue is the balanced scale, I suggest that we understand the doctrine of the mean is the *balancing* of the scale. Since the doctrine of the mean prescribes more than simply the amount of feelings; it also considers the where, when, who, what, how questions in respect to the action. The working of this doctrine, I argue, just like that relation between the two parts of the soul: there is a dynamic between the reason and feelings in play. And it is this dynamic that accounts for our becoming virtuous or not. That is, this constant *balancing* is our moral progress. We are not born virtuous; we *become* virtuous. This balancing *is* our becoming and being virtuous.

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Chapter 3 Aristotle on Responsibility for One's Own Character

In this chapter, I consider Aristotle's discussion of our responsibility for moral character in *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*) III 5. Aristotle argues that we are responsible for our moral character, but it is unclear *how much* we are responsible for it. I provide an interpretation of *EN* III 5, and propose that Aristotle holds the *full responsibility* thesis: that since our moral character is formed through our actions, we are fully responsible for our moral character, even if we are affected by things that are not up to us (e.g., our upbringing, family background, early education, etc.).

The question asked in this chapter is this: whether we are fully or partly responsible for our character, given that Aristotle says that virtues and vices are up to us (1113b7), and that we are affected by things not up to us, for example, our nature.

Susan Sauvé Meyer, in her book *Aristotle on Moral Responsibility*, endorses the view that Aristotle holds a *qualified responsibility* thesis: that we are only *partly* responsible for our moral character. Since things that are not up to us can affect our characters, we are therefore not fully responsible for our character. On the other hand, I argue that Aristotle actually holds a *full responsibility* thesis: that we are responsible for our moral character *no matter what.* True, there are indeed these things that are not up to us and can affect our characters. Yet the presence of these things that are not up to us does not lessen or undermine our responsibility. We are fully responsible for the characters we form, and we are praised and blamed accordingly.

In what follows I first present my interpretation of *EN* III 5, and propose that Aristotle actually holds the *full responsibility* thesis. Then I reconstruct Meyer's inter-

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pretation of *EN* III 5. In the next section, I give a reading of συναίτιοί (*synaitioi*) as 'joint cause' rather than 'co-cause', and argue that my reading is consistent with what Aristotle says throughout *EN* III 5. Drawing on my interpretation, I shall point out that Meyer's view might make Aristotle inconsistent: since she omits the statements Aristotle made in 1115a1-4, which imply the *full responsibility* thesis. By considering two possible real-life cases, I will contrast my interpretation with Meyer's, and show that Meyer's interpretation may cause some uneasiness and result in counter-intuitive judgments about how one is responsible for her character while mine will not run into these problems.

I

In *EN* II, 1 Aristotle gives an account of virtue of character:

> Virtue of character [i.e., of *ethos*] results from habit [*ethos*]; hence its name 'ethical', slightly varied from *ethos*. (1103a17-18)

> Virtues arise in us neither by nature nor against nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit. Further if something arises in us by nature, we first have the capacity for it, and later perform the activity. This is clear in the case of the senses; for we did not acquire them by frequent seeing or hearing, but we already had them when we exercised them, and did not get them by exercising them. Virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, by having first activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it; we become builders, for instance, by building, and we become harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, then,

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we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions. (1103a24-1103b2)[32]

Note that virtues are perfected by our own practicing virtuous actions. Now we turn to *EN* III, 5. There, Aristotle first gives a preliminary account of our responsibility for character. We are responsible for our character fundamentally because moral characters are formed through our actions; further, whether or not we perform these actions are up to us, as Aristotle notes:

> For when acting is up to us, so is not acting, and when no is up to us, so is yes. And so if acting, when it is fine, is up to us, not acting, when it is shameful is also up to us; and if not acting, when it is fine, is up to us, then acting, when it is shameful, is also up to us. (1113b8-10)

Since it is our actions that form our character, and it is up to us whether or not to perform those actions, it is therefore up to us to form certain kind of character. And thus both virtue and vice are up to us (1113b7).

Aristotle believes that this account can be further justified by the fact that legislators 'impose corrective treatments and penalties on anyone who does vicious actions' (1113b25) and they 'honor anyone who does fine actions' (1113b27). These practices are as such precisely because legislators hold this view that actions are up to us; and since actions are up to us, we are praise- or blame-worthy for these actions that originates from us as agents. However, Aristotle specifically excludes actions that are

[32] Unless otherwise noted, translations are all taken from Irwin 1999. With regard to my original translations, I try to keep them conservative in light of available translations and other scholarly literatures. My references include Irwin 1999, Reeve 2014, Rowe and Broadie 2002 and Ross 1923.

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'forced or is caused by ignorance' (1113b26), for those actions are not up to us and not voluntary. Here Aristotle is referring back to *EN* III 1, where he says 'things coming about by force or because of ignorance are involuntary' (1110a1-2). In other words, actions whose first principles are not in us are considered not to be voluntary, and thus we are not responsible for. The same logic applies to moral characters. Since we form our character through performing actions, if we are to be responsible for our action, then the actions must be done voluntarily; and if we are to be responsible for our characters, then the foundation of these characters must be some voluntarily actions. So if we refer back to the very first action that we made, that very first action should equally be made voluntarily. As Aristotle points out in the case of a drunken person: if his drunkenness is brought about by his own voluntary action, that is, he gets drunk all by himself—drinks unlimitedly—then he is responsible for this state of drunkenness; although he may not be responsible for what he does when he is drunk, since he is in a state of ignorance, he is still responsible for getting drunk in the first place.

So far, we can make a preliminary conclusion: one is responsible for her characters because her characters are formed through her actions. The moment she starts to engage in performing actions, she is thereby responsible for her moral characters.

Aristotle immediately considers a possible objection to this view, which claims that the drunken person is simply not taking care of himself. So he should not be responsible for his drunkenness (1114a2-3). Aristotle argues against this objection, claiming again that this person is still responsible for his state of carelessness, since this is the way of life he chooses to live in the first place. He goes on to remind us that each type of activity will produce that type of person (1114a7), and our continually practicing a certain type of activity will make us that particular type of person. So

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granted that this drunken person is careless, he still should be responsible for his carelessness, since this state of carelessness is brought about by himself through his own actions. Further, Aristotle even claims that when someone S is engaging in certain type of activity, she should already know which type of state of character would this activity brings about. For example, if S decides to φ, then she should already know—at the point of deciding to φ—which state of character corresponds to φ and will be cultivated by her performing φ.

Thus far, we do have a clearer picture of Aristotle's view: since both virtue and vice are formed through our constantly performing a certain type of action, and we know that each type of action corresponds to a particular type of state, and we perform φ voluntarily, then we are responsible for the corresponding φ-state of character that is brought about by our decision to do φ (and successfully doing it).

Having argued for the first-step of moral cultivation, Aristotle turns to consider another possible objection to his view in 1114a31. The objection goes like this:

> Someone might say that we all pursue the apparent good but are not in control of the appearance; that, rather, whatever sort of person someone is determines how the end appears to him (1114a31-b1).

Here, Aristotle considers the objection that there is something about us that is *not* up to us, and we are not responsible for whatever that brings about.

And his conclusion of this objection appears in a short paragraph in 1114b15-25. What is interesting, though, appears in 1114b24, in which he says "we are co-causes (συναίτιοί) of how our states are". It is not clear right away what might be the co-causes. We know that we are one of the co-causes, what is the other one?

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Right before 1114b24, Aristotle says that "let us suppose that [how] the end [appears] is natural, but virtue is voluntary because the virtuous person does the other things voluntarily. In either case, vice will be no less voluntary than virtue; for the bad person, no less than the good, is responsible for his own actions, even if not for [how] the end [appears]" (1114b17-22). On face value, Aristotle is conceding the point that, indeed, how things appeared to you may not be up to you. However, Aristotle insists on the point that since virtues and vices both are brought about through our actions, and since actions are up to us, we are still responsible for both virtues and vices. So Aristotle here seems to be indicating that we are not fully responsible as the first-step view may suggest. Our responsibility for character is actually lessened, since we are only co-cause of our character. There is a part of the cause that is not up to us. We are, in this sense, not fully responsible.

But we should not jump to this conclusion at this point, since the chapter does not end here. At the end of *EN* III, 5 Aristotle says:

> Actions and states, however, are not voluntary in the same way. For we are in control of actions from the beginning to the end, when we know the particulars. With states, however, we are in control of the beginning, but do not know, any more than with sicknesses, what the cumulative effect of particular actions will be. Nonetheless, since it was up to us to exercise a capacity either this way or another way, states are voluntary. (1114b30-1115a4)

Aristotle appears to be stating an even *stronger* position on responsibility for our characters. Previously, in 1113a4-1114b1, Aristotle says that when someone S decides to φ, she should already know—at the point of deciding to φ, which state of

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character corresponds to φ and will be cultivated by her performing φ. But here, Aristotle is not stating that S should already be known; rather, he states that *even if S does not know* the corresponding relation between action φ and φ-state, S *is still responsible for her character* (which, in this case, would be the φ-state of character). In other words, you are responsible for your character *unqualifiedly*. Thus I suggest that Aristotle is not backing down; he rather is strengthening his stance: S is really *fully* responsible for her character no matter what.

Now I will turn to Meyer's interpretation, and then present my own interpretation.

II

Meyer, in her *Aristotle on Moral Responsibility*, distinguishes two kinds of responsibility for character: full responsibility and qualified responsibility. Full responsibility is the thesis that "an agent is responsible for her character in the deepest sense, in which the moral quality of an agent's character is in no way due to factors beyond her control" while a qualified responsibility is the thesis that an agent is "responsible for our characters in a qualified way (on the assumption that our early moral education has already identified to us that correct goals to pursue)".[33] Meyer argues that Aristotle is claiming that we are only qualifiedly responsible for our moral character.

Meyer argues that since Aristotle's account of responsibility for moral character relies heavily on character formation, and since states of character are formed by habituation, Aristotle therefore concludes that what is process of character formation satisfies the voluntariness requirement for responsibility; that process originates in the

[33] Meyer 2011, 126.

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agent, and the agent knows what he is doing.[34] But, she also admits that this account may face the problem that we are not in control of some conditions by which we might be influenced, and these conditions may so deeply intertwined with our living environment that we are influenced by them right from our birth. Admitting this, Meyer argues that Aristotle thinks that our early moral educators should compensate for these disadvantageous conditions;[35] it is their job to take control of those external conditions and put everyone in a situation that helps us develop moral characters.

Holding fixed our growing environment, Meyer argues for a two-stage view of character formation through reconstructing an argument in Book X, where, she believes, Aristotle points out two stages in our character formation:[36]

> That is why laws must prescribe their upbringing and practices; for they will not find these things painful when they get used to them. Presumably, however, it is not enough if they get the correct upbringing and attention when they are young; rather, they must continue the same practices and be habituated to them when they become men. Hence we need laws concerned with these things also, and in general with all of life. (1179b34-1180a4)

Meyer argues that the first stage of our moral formation is the stage in which our upbringing and practices are prescribed by laws.[37] During this stage our character education is under the control of our parents or other educators, or even the state. But, she argues, this first stage is not sufficient for the formation of moral character, since "they must continue the same practices and be habituated to then when they become

[34] *Ibid,* 123.
[35] *Ibid*, 123.
[36] *Ibid,* 124.
[37] *Ibid*, 124.

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men". Thus, Meyer argues that there is a second stage of character formation, which is the stage when we are "men". During this stage we continue to practice certain types of actions, and through habituation, and we thereby form our character.

It is in this way we are only qualifiedly responsible for our moral character. Since we are truly responsible for our characters only when we reach the second stage, when we have already received proper moral education. The first stage of formation clears those hostile conditions up for us, and in this stage we are provided with ample education, proper growing environment and presumably the knowledge about the correlation between types of activities and moral characters. Having these, we are ushered in the second stage of character formation, in which our moral characters would be solidified through our continually performing certain types of actions and activities, and through our habituating those actions and activities. It is in this second stage that we really are responsible for the outcomes.

Thus Meyer gives us a clear picture of Aristotle's account of responsibility for character. She apparently puts Aristotle's view in *EN* III, 5 within a larger Aristotelian moral and political theory, argues for a two-stage view of character formation, and thereby argues for *qualified* responsibility. Meyer could object that she does not have this grand picture of ideal polis prescribed by Aristotle in his moral and political treatises. Indeed she might not hold this premise when arguing for her two-stage view. But I shall argue that her interpretation is mistaken, that Aristotle does not hold a *qualified thesis* of responsibility for character. Reason for this claim that Meyer is mistaken is this: she left a tiny bit of *EN* III, 5 out in her interpretation, and that bit is crucial when we are trying to make clear exactly which thesis Aristotle really holds when he is talking about responsibility for character. Again, Aristotle actually holds a *full* responsibility thesis, and that Meyer is mistaken because she omitted the very last

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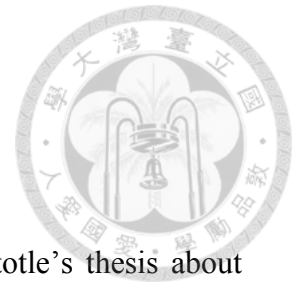
paragraph in *EN* III, 5.



III

In this section I will present an alternative interpretation of Aristotle's thesis about responsibility for action. And it would be helpful to first make sense of Aristotle's different claim in *EN* III, 5, which is the tension between the first-step view, the claim of συναίτιοί and the concluding paragraph in 1114b30-1115a4. I will suggest that he is in fact consistent on the view that we are fully responsible for our character, and nothing really lessens our responsibility.[38]

A way to make sense of this tension is to figure out what συναίτιοί means in 1114b24. Etymologically, the prefix συν- can be rendered into English as 'co-', 'together', or 'joint(ly)'. And αίτιοί is the plural form of the noun αἴτιος, which mainly means 'cause' or 'author'. This word is also used in *EN* III, 5 as 'responsible for'. There are two general ways to translate this term; either rendered it into 'co-cause'[39], 'joint cause'[40], or 'contributing cause'[41]. The difference between the two translations is subtle. Co-cause has the sense that the two causes *mutually* cause something to be

[38] Aristotle uses this word in other places, including: *Physics* 192a13, R. P Hardie and R. K. Gale take it as 'joint cause', here Aristotle is talking about the first principle of things, and stating that the matter is a joint cause with the form, together brings about all things; *De Anima* 416a14, J. A. Smith renders it as 'concurrent cause [of growth]', here Aristotle is arguing that fire is not the principle cause of operative force. Instead fire is only a 'concurrent cause' while the principle cause should be the soul; *Genealogy of Animals* 782a26, Arthur Platt translated it as 'helping cause', here Aristotle is talking about the causes of thickness and thinness of hair, and he maintains that skin is the principle cause while moisture is a helping cause, together they explain why some animals have thick hair and some thin; in 783b18 and 783b21, Platt renders the word in 'causes also contribute to [the condition of leafs]', here Aristotle is talking about the causes that can explain the changes in leafs; *PMA* 634a17, and *Metaphysics* 1015a21, W. D. Ross takes it as 'a condition', here Aristotle is explaining the notion of 'necessity'. All of the above translations are from W. D. Ross 1928. It is obvious that, from all these translations, there is no one single proper translation for this word, and scholars might differ on what Aristotle has in mind when he uses this word. It should be safe to say that Aristotle does not really have a strong view about how this word should be used. He generally uses it to indicate that there might be more than one cause of something. There are some room left for different relationships between the two (or more) causes.

[39] Meyer 2011, 127.

[40] Irwin 1999, 39.

[41] Reeve 2014, 45.

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so and so, which implies that if one of the causes does not hold, then the causal relationship would not hold. On the other hand, joint causes designate that the two causes *come together and* causes so and so, which implies that if one of the two causes does not hold, the causal relation might or might not hold. The last one is more flexible in terms of the causal relationship, since it does not require the presence of both causes, while the former presents a more robust view of causation, namely, both causes have to be the case in order for the relationship to hold.

These two different translations, obviously lead to two quite different interpretations here.

If we take συναίτιοί here to mean 'co-cause', then Aristotle's view here would be that both the nature (how things appears to us) and our actions are responsible for our characters. This interpretation implies that the responsibility of our actions is *diminished* or *lessened* since *both causes* must be the case in order for the *consequent* to hold. That is, if we are to assert the thesis that we are responsible for our character, then we are only responsible in a *qualified way*, a way that our actions are *not fully responsible* for what is brought about. *Our nature must share a part of the responsibility, too*. We are not, in this view, *fully* responsible for our action in the sense that *no matter what, we are responsible for our characters* since there is a second factor that shares the responsibility, and it shares in a way that get our actions off the hook, so to speak.

One major problem facing this line of interpretation is that it is inconsistent with what Aristotle says in 1114b30-1115a4. Recall that Aristotle states that *even if S does not know* the corresponding relation between action φ and φ-state, S *is still responsible for her character*. No matter how the end appears to S, if she decides to φ, then she is responsible for the corresponding φ-state. In other words, S is *fully* responsible

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for her character. Nothing would diminish her responsibility. And that clearly at odds with 'co-cause' interpretation, since it claims that S is *not fully* responsible for her character; rather, she is only *qualified* responsible for her action since she is only *part* of the causes. And there seems to be no way for 'co-cause' interpretation to reconcile the statements Aristotle made in 1115a1-4.

On the other hand, the 'joint causes' interpretation can reconcile these seemingly inconsistent paragraphs. What the joint causes interpretation means is that both causes *come together and cause* S's character. However, this by no means implies there is an overdetermination between the two causes. It is not the case that had one of the causes not held; the other would have caused S's character. It is absurd, since simply human nature, namely, how things appear to us, itself cannot cause any character; only our actions can bring about our character. So it is more proper to say that had S's nature not been the way it is, or it should, S's actions would have caused her characters, but not the other way round. This way of interpreting seems to fit what Aristotle is claiming both in the first-step view, and in 1115a1-4. At the end of the day, what really matters is S's action, not anything else.

But then why Aristotle abruptly claims that our actions and nature are 'joint causes' of our character? A possible answer is that he is indeed conceding this point to his opponents. However, his concession does not weaken his claim, rather it strengthens the claim. Granted, Aristotle might say, that what you, my opponent, said are true, that how things appear to us is *not* up to us. Yet, again, this fact does not challenge my claim. Still we are responsible for our characters precisely because characters *are brought about through* our actions. Even if the fact that how things appear to us is *given*, this only figures in our responsibility for so much, it never diminishes or lessens the responsibility of our actions. They are *joint causes* of our

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characters, that is, they *come together and cause* our characters. Does that in any way implies that *had the two causes not come together*, *our character would not have been caused*? No. Our character would, again, still be brought about solely by our own actions. So we arrive at the claim appeared in 1115a1-4: no matter how the end appears to S, if she decides to φ, then she is responsible for the corresponding state that is brought about.

IV

In section III I gave an alternative interpretation favoring 'joint causes' translation, and developed a consistent interpretation of Aristotle's account of responsibility for character base on that interpretation. Having the view in mind, we are now able to see why Meyer is mistaken.

Meyer' argument starts by arguing that Aristotle has a two-stage view of moral habituation in mind: moral education and a good upbringing, which helps agents to identify the real good happens in the first stage; it is in the second stage, in which agents are already well educated and known what the real good is, that they are left on their own to perform actions and thus form characters.[42] And an agent's responsibility for her character comes into play in this second stage. Moreover, this responsibility is a *qualified* one, since what happened in the first is not a part of the agent's responsibility.[43]

I think this view is mistaken because Meyer does not take Aristotle's claim in 1115a1-4 in to account. There, Aristotle clearly declares that an agent is *fully responsible* for her own character *no matter what*. And, obviously, that view is at odds with Meyer's interpretation.

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[42] Meyer 2011, 123-5.
[43] *Ibid,* 126-8.

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Further, my joint causes interpretation is, in a way, compatible with Meyer's two-stage view. The two stages in Meyer's two-stage view are now, in my interpretation, part one and part two of the joint causes. Meyer argues that the first stage will qualified our responsibility for characters, and what we are really responsible for are the actions we do in the second stage. I am not arguing that there are *two* things that have something to do with our responsibility for character. I'm not disagreeing with that. What I do disagree with is that our responsibility is qualified because there are two things that have to do with our responsibility, and one of which is out of our control. I maintain that *even if* there is one thing that is out of our control, we are still *fully* responsibility for the characters we form.

According to the interpretation I developed in III, there are two parts of the 'joint causes'. One part of which includes external conditions, in the sense that these condition are *external to the agent's control*, that is, conditions that are not up to the agent, e.g., one's upbringing, the education that one received—frankly, those are the conditions that Meyer would identified as conditions belonging to the first stage.[44] The other part of which includes an agent's actions—which Meyer would identified as belonging to the second stage.

Within *EN* III, 5, it might be doubted, though, whether the move from nature to external conditions is justified. Since Aristotle is only talking about how things appear to us, it seems like he has a pretty narrow and straightforward object in mind, namely, nature. Indeed, judging from the context, Aristotle does appear to be simply talking about nature. However, that is what we get *judging from the context*. Literally, in 1114b21-25, Aristotle says:

[44] This talk of external condition would probably trigger some doubt, since nowhere in *EN* III, 5 does Aristotle explicitly talk about external conditions. I shall discuss this point later.

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> Now if, as we say, virtues are voluntary (in fact we ourselves are, in a way, joint causes of the states, and what sort of people we are determines the [sort of] ends we lay down), and vices are voluntary for they are the same.[45]

It is worth noting that Aristotle never explicitly points out what the other part of the joint causes is. He simply introduces this word and then moves on to argue that vices are voluntary in the same way that virtues are. It is never clear what is the thing that comes together with us and causes our character. Judging from the context, it could be nature, since that is what he is talking about earlier. Yet, nature is not the only option, since Aristotle talks about an unspecified 'whatever' (ὁπωσδήποτε):

> For both good and bad person alike, the end appears and is set by nature (φύσει) or whatever, with reference to the end they do whatever they do. (1114b14-16)[46]

So the options are open here: nature is certainly the plausible reading, but it is also possible that Aristotle is gesturing to some unspecified external conditions. Or, perhaps, we could read it as pointing actually to two different things: nature and whatever. But none of the aforementioned readings pose serious challenges to my interpretation: the general term 'external conditions' is able to include both nature and whatever, whatever that may be. Thus I believe the move from simply nature as I mentioned in previous sections to a more general external conditions is warranted.[47]

Indeed, an interpretation of the passages mentioned (1114b15-25) maintains that Aristotle is here *replying* to an objection, which argues that virtuous and vicious ac-

[45] My translation.
[46] My translation.
[47] It is worth noting here that what I am talking here is simply *one* part of the 'joint causes', that is, the part that includes *things that are not up to us*.

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tions are all involuntary actions, since our perception of good or bad are given by the nature. This interpretation, rightly, as I believe, contends that Aristotle here is appealing to the distinction between the development of sense perception and that of virtues: sense perception is a prenatal condition while virtue is a capacity that we can develop by our activities.[48] But this interpretation does not question my interpretation; quite contrary, it further strengthens my interpretation. Since, again, characters are deeply involved with our activities, and our prenatal conditions are something that is not up to us, we can categorise our given nature as an external condition.

However, this discussion only deals with texts in *EN* III, 5. Aristotle does not talk about external conditions in the sense I am using here anywhere in *EN* III, 5; rather, his talk about external conditions is seen in *EN* I. And it might be useful to see how he talks about external conditions there, and the relation between agents and external conditions.

V

In *EN* I, Aristotle introduces the notion of external conditions (fortunes, τύχη) by considering happiness (εὐδαιμονία). He first explore the relation between external conditions and happiness in *EN* I, 9:

> Is happiness acquired by learning, or habituation, or by some other form of cultivation? Or is it the result of some divine fate, or even of fortune? (1099b9-11)

Aristotle implies that happiness is achieved through our virtuous actions rather than fortune:

[48] Joachim 1951, 106-7.

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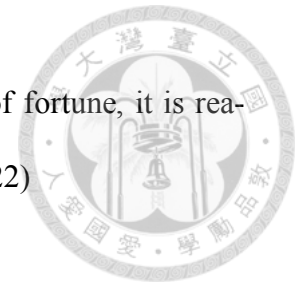

> And since it is better to be happy in this way than because of fortune, it is reasonable for this to be the way [we become] happy. (1099b21-22)

> For we have said that happiness is a certain sort of activity of the soul in accord with virtue, [and hence not a result of fortune]. Of the other goods, some are necessary conditions of happiness, while others are naturally useful and cooperative as instruments [but are not parts of it]. (1099b25-29)

So far, it is clear that Aristotle regards happiness (a) to be in accord with virtuous activity and (b) may include some external conditions. Now it is obvious that characters and external conditions are two different things, and both of them contribute something to happiness. But, back to present task, what is the relation between external conditions and character formation? Does the presence of these external conditions *qualify* our responsibility for character? That is, do external conditions in anyway impede, obstruct, or support our performing virtuous actions?

Aristotle does not directly answer these questions; he appears to be more concerned about the relationship between happiness and external conditions.[49] Nevertheless, he does indicate that one's external conditions will not qualify her ability to perform virtuous actions:

> And since it is activities that control life, as we said, no blessed person could ever become miserable, since he will never do hateful and base actions. For a truly good and prudent person, we suppose, will bear strokes of fortune suitably, and

[49] For relevant debate, for example, see Irwin 1985 and Cooper 1985.

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> from his resources at any time will do the finest actions, just as a good general will make the best use of his forces in way, and a good shoemaker will make the finest shoe from the hides given to him, and similarly for all other craftsmen. (1100b34-1101a6)

Aristotle indicates that, for any person, how she deals with her external conditions has to do with what kind of person she is. She may be obstructed by ill fortune, or impeded by bad luck, and these external conditions make her unable to perform certain actions; but, for Aristotle, that does not make her *entirely* unable to perform virtuous actions, or to be virtuous. [50] Since she is the one who perform actions, and our characters are formed out of our actions. Whether or not the external conditions are in your favor, that fact does not affect what kind of person you are, or will become. What kind of person you end up becoming is *entirely* your own doing.

It is possible, though, to object to this interpretation by pointing out Aristotle here is referring to *virtuous* people. That is, he is talking about people whose *characters are already formed*. So it would be absurd to say that Aristotle is here indicating a view about *character formation*. True, judging from the language Aristotle is employing here, it does appear that he is referring to people who are *already* virtuous. Nonetheless, Aristotle never draws a clear line between *forming characters* and *characters formed*. He never says categorically what amounts to a *formed character*. It is always possible that when we come across a person whom we really tend to call him virtuous, he is in fact still forming his virtues. Recall that Aristotle takes virtues as a state (ἕξις), reached through habituation, a repetition of similar activities

[50] As Gottlieb points out, "what *happens* to a person is less important than how the person deals with circumstances, through virtuous activity." The point is, again, not how your external conditions are, but how one answers to these conditions through actions. See Gottlieb 2013, 4.

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(1103b21-22). For anyone who might be virtuous, he or she might still be forming his or her character. There is no clear line as to when the formation process is done. Since there is no way for us to see definitely when a character is formed, my suggestion about Aristotle's indication would hold.

Still there is a tension between external conditions and virtuous actions: what if these external conditions are meant to *help* agents to be virtuous? Is not the agent's responsibility for character thereby qualified?[51]

Irwin and Cooper disagree with each other on how important external conditions are for happiness. Irwin treats external conditions as minor components, they are good for an agent only when she is virtuous; while Cooper seems to treat the two as equally important.[52] Underlining this disagreement is the agreement that external conditions do not make virtuous person virtuous. The reason a person is virtuous is that she does virtuous actions, not that she has favorable external conditions. Having favorable external conditions may make it easier for someone to perform virtuous activities,[53] but that does not ensure she would therefore be a virtuous person. In the end, how one acts depends on her, not on external conditions. Helpful or not, an agent's actions are determined by her, not the external conditions.

Indeed, external conditions do figure in one's actions, but only as *part* of the causes of one's characters, whether they are virtuous or vicious ones.

VI

[51] Some commenters contend that external conditions are only count as good if the agent is virtuous. See Roche 2014. But I am not committed to a debate about *how* these external conditions are good; I am here simply considering whether or not these external conditions are *helpful* for forming characters. That does not necessarily mean these external conditions are good ones.

[52] Irwin: "For the virtuous person always retains one crucial part of happiness, without which none of the other goods is a part of happiness at all". Cooper: "external goods are a *second* component of *eudaimonia,* alongside virtuous activity". See Irwin 1985, 100; Cooper 1985, 196.

[53] Irwin 1985, 94; Cooper 1985, 178-79.

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Taking together what we have said about external conditions in the previous two sections, we now have a clearer idea that the two parts of the joint causes of character are (1) our actions and (2) some external conditions. Again, these external conditions include all that is *not* up to us, which is, actually, broader than Meyer's first-stage. Since the contents of the first-stage in Meyer's view are earliest moral education, who one's moral educators are and who one's parents are, etc.[54] But the external conditions I'm talking here include more: whether one is wealthy, whether one is given the opportunity to perform particular virtuous action (e.g., courageous actions, generous actions), whether one is in an upper social class, how one's nature is, and so on. Those things can all be categorized as external conditions in the sense I'm using here. In any event, those that Meyer would put into the first stage in her two-stage view are definitely included here.

So we now have two competing views: on the one hand is my joint causes view, on the other hand is Meyer's two-stage view. She thinks that, supported by this two-stage picture, Aristotle is arguing for a *qualified* responsibility thesis, which claims that an agent is "responsible for [her] characters in a qualified way (on the assumption that our early moral education has already identified to us that correct goals to pursue)". And this view naturally leads to rendering συναίτιοί into 'co-cause', and she in fact does so.[55] But, as I argued earlier, this reading is inconsistent with what Aristotle says *throughout EN* III, 5. The reading I proposed, which renders συναίτιοί into joint causes, provides a more consistent reading of Aristotle. I take Aristotle as claiming a *full* responsibility thesis throughout *EN* III, 5, which is that an agent is *responsible for her character no matter what*. When it comes to responsibility for one's character, it is our actions that matter. Indeed, actions and external conditions are joint

[54] Meyer 2011, 124.
[55] *Ibid*, 144.

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causes of one's characters. Yet, since our characters are ultimately determined by our actions, external conditions do not matter in the sense that they do not in any way *diminish* or *lessen* the responsibility our actions bare.

Consider these two examples. We know that blacks suffer great injustice in American society, and whites are more likely to benefit from present social structure.[56] Given this background knowledge, say we now have two cases: a black person B and a white person D. B is born into a single-mother family and was brought up by his grandparents, while D is born into a wealthy upper-class family. B's family was not rich, yet he made his way through the education system and turned out to be a constitution scholar and a tenderhearted gentleman. B is the kind of person that we would be willing to call virtuous. On the other hand, D, with the help from his parents, received a private-school education, went on to get a diploma from a prestigious business school, and wound up being a somewhat successful businessman. However, D is not in any way a virtuous person: he is ruthless, uncompassionate, intemperate, and misogynistic. They are two utterly different kinds of person, not only in terms of character, but also in terms of external conditions.

If we are to ask Aristotle: are they responsible for their characters? He would no doubt replies 'yes, they are.' If we further inquire: Are they *fully* responsible for their characters? Intuitively, we tend to say yes. What kind of person B and D are, are of their own making. But if this question is addressed to Aristotle, depending on different interpretations, we might get quite different answers. According to Meyer, they are *not* fully responsible. But that sounds odd—how are they not fully responsible? Meyer would reply that, well, their early moral educations are not up to them, and since they cannot be responsible for what is not up to them, they are not *fully* respon-

[56] For relevant discussion, see Shelby, 2016, especially introduction and chapter 1.

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sible for the characters they end up having. Given what I have said, this reply sounds oddly uncomfortable. D is not fully responsible for his characters because his early moral education—given his family background and the resources he has—is also responsible for his characters too, but as it turned out, the education he had received seems not really helping. D's possession of the vices of ruthlessness, uncompassionate-ness, intemperance, and misogyny seems to be the result of his own actions. In other words, *through every fault of his own*, he acquires these vices and habituates them. Similarly, to say that B is not fully responsible for his virtuous sounds oddly unconvincing. Since the educations B supposedly received are also not really helping. And B's possession of the virtues of self-control, temperance, sympathy seems to be the result of his own actions. To say that B and D are both *qualified responsible for* their characters appears to be counter-intuitive.

This problem would not arise in my interpretation. If my interpretation is correct, then Aristotle would say B and D are both *fully* responsible for their characters, since they are the product of B and Ds' actions. Though their upbringing, family background, etc. do figure in their responsibility for characters, we should bare in mind that it is the agent's actions that are *ultimate* causes of the agent's character. So B and Ds' actions are the *ultimate* causes of their characters respectively, and they are, thereby, *fully* responsible for their characters. In this way, my interpretation of Aristotle's account can avoid the uneasiness Meyer's might face, and still ascribe to Aristotle a consistent account of one's responsibility for characters.

Thus far, I've given an interpretation of Aristotle's account of responsibility for characters in *EN* III, 5. My proposed reading is not only faithful to what Aristotle says *throughout EN* III, 5, but also understands Aristotle in a consistent way. Moreover, it need not provoke further argumentation work about Aristotle's overall view in order

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to employ a particular premise. Moreover, my interpretation, when applied to hypothetical (albeit very much possible) cases, will not have the kind of uneasiness that Meyer's would have. On these bases, my reading would be better than that of Meyer's.

VII

The topic of this chapter is Aristotle's view on one's responsibility for character in *EN* III 5. I have proposed my interpretation of III 5, and by reading συναίτιοί as 'joint-cause', I argued against Meyer's proposal that Aristotle holds the qualified responsibility thesis. Instead, I claimed that Aristotle actually holds a full responsibility thesis. Meyer's qualified responsibility thesis needs to be supplemented with a two-stage view, which separates human life into two stages: in the first stage we received education, and in the second stage we are free to do whatever we are capable of. Meyer maintains that our responsibility for character only kicks in when we enter this second stage, and therefore our responsibilities are qualified by how good or bad the first stage is. She refers to *EN* X to argue for this view, but she fails to make this view consistent within *EN* III 5 since she doesn't take entire chapter into consideration. I, on the other hand, argued for the full responsibility thesis, which maintains that we are *fully responsible for* our character *no matter what*. I labelled everything other than our actions as 'external conditions': our upbringings, the education we received, how our family backgrounds are...etc. In other words, *everything* Meyer puts into the first stage can be categorized as 'external conditions' in my view. Moreover, my view takes the entire chapter into consideration while keeps the interpretation of III 5 consistent. I do not have to refer to later books in *EN* to support my view, and even if we refer to other books in *EN*, my view would still be intact.

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Further, I compared both mine and Meyer's view with possible cases. I pointed out Meyer's view would cause some uneasiness. Her interpretation seems to imply that if someone who was born with a silver spoon, yet turned out to be a vicious person, through every fault of his own, he is still not fully responsible for his vices, and not fully blameworthy for that. In the meantime, if there is another person who was born to a poor family with little resources yet he still turned out to be a decent human being, he is not fully responsible for his character, and not fully praiseworthy for that. That is counter intuitive, and considering Aristotle's emphasis on human's activity, it seems implausible that he would think we are not fully responsible for the result of our own actions.

My interpretation would avoid this problem. In my view, both these two persons are fully responsible for their character, and therefore they are fully blameworthy and praiseworthy, respectively. I argued that we are the *ultimate* cause of our actions, and thereby our characters, we are therefore *fully* responsible for what comes as a result. External conditions, I admitted, do fare in our course of performing virtuous actions; their presence do make a difference—they make performing virtuous actions easier, or a lot harder. But either way, they do not undermine our responsibility. Our activities are not taken over by them.

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Chapter 4 Aristotle on Moral Education

In this chapter, I consider Aristotle's discussion of moral education in both *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. My aim is to answer the question 'Does education lessen our responsibility for the characters formed? And this question is related to another question that 'whether we are affected by things not up to us?' Thus, I shall also touch on the question that whether or not our responsibility for character is qualified by things that are not up to us, e.g., luck or fortune?

In what follows, I shall first review Aristotle's discussion about moral education *EN*. I suggest that instead of taking it as *education*, the discussion shows that Aristotle actually has a view of *moral reformation* through nudging in *EN*. I then will review Aristotle's discussion about moral education in *Politics*. Everyone who reads *Politics* knows that Aristotle proposes a musical education for his best constitution. I shall argue that this musical education is beneficial to forming characters. A student who receive this musical education will end up developing certain taste for music, and this taste will help condition the student's soul. As the next sections will show, this molding or conditioning process helps: it makes forming habits easier. Finally, I shall argue that although the education is in place, the best it can do is to make the process of forming characters easier, but the education itself does not determine which character to form—the job of forming good characters are still up to the students. Therefore, our responsibility is not lessened.

Finally, I shall consider the objection which draws on Nussbaum's insight about human goodness (εὐδαιμονία/eudaimonia): that my interpretation might, in effect, make eudaimonia too strong so as to be immune to all external changes. I reply to this objection by pointing out that it confuses eudaimonia with responsibility for

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character. I will further clarify that I am arguing for one's responsibility, and I do not commit myself to any view about eudaimonia and its fragility.

I

Aristotle first mentions moral education in *EN* II 3, where he states that

> But we must take someone's pleasure or pain following on his cations to be a sign of his state. For if someone who abstains from bodily pleasures enjoys the abstinence itself, he is temperate; if he is grieved by it, he is intemperate. Again, if he stands firm against terrifying situations and enjoys it, or at least does not find it painful, he is brave; if he finds it painful, he is cowardly. For virtue of character is about pleasures and pains. For pleasure causes 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—[57]to make us find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for this is the correct education. (1104b5-13)

Here, Aristotle affirms that moral virtues are concerned with and accompanied by pleasures and pains. Naturally, we will do actions that can bring about pleasures and avoid that brings about pains. So, it would be natural for us to indulge in all kinds of bodily pleasures and avoid abstaining from these pleasures, since keeping ourselves from enjoying pleasures is itself a kind of pain.

However, even though these lines seem to suggest that virtues are pleasurable, virtues are not all about pleasure—for example, courage is to have the correct amount

[57] See Plato, *Republic* 410e-402a; *Laws* 653e.

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of *fear*, whereas *fear* is not a pleasurable feeling. The emotions involved in virtues are not necessarily pleasure; rather, it is both pleasure and pain. But what Aristotle has in mind is perhaps some peculiar kind of pleasure and pain, which he turns to in *EN* VII. All we have to know for present inquiry is that Aristotle here is talking about different kinds of pleasure and pain, and, as we shall later see, these feelings have the power to motivate us to do different things.

Following this point on pleasure and pain, Aristotle goes on to argue that a part of this education should be about inflicting pain, namely, punishment:

> Further, virtues are concerned with actions and feelings; but every feeling and every action implies pleasure or pain; hence, for this reason too, virtue is about pleasures and pains. Punishments (κόλασις)[58] also indicate this, since they use pleasures and pains; for correction is a form of medical treatment, and medical treatment naturally operates through contraries. (1104b14-18).

Here, again, Aristotle reiterates the point that virtues are about pleasures and pains. But he further indicates that punishments, especially, are powerful enough to change peoples' behavior through its function of inflicting pains. The rationale is this: since one is incline to do what is most pleasurable, and if one were enjoying this pleasure in a wrongful way, she would then be doing something that is un-virtuous.[59] Now, since she is doing something un-virtuous due to her indulgence in pleasures, Aristotle proposes that she be punished, that is, be inflicted with some pain. Through pain, one is, in a way, *learning* to avoid doing the same things again and again. Punishments are

[58] Following Ross and Reeve to translate κόλασις as punishment. Though there are other translations that try to capture the corrective sense in this word: e.g. Irwin 1999 takes it as 'corrective treatment', and Rowe and Broadie render it 'forcible correction.'

[59] I use un-virtuous to denote those actions that are not regarded virtuous; they might not be outright vicious, but just not virtuous.

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therefore a *curative treatment*, since it can *cure* one of her un-virtuous-ness.

Here, it is worthy to note that when Aristotle is talking about *punishment*, he does not think of *punishing for the wrong deeds*—that is, this punishment is not a backward-looking one; it is not meant for the wrong doer to pay his due. The meaning of punishment is for the person *not to* make the same mistake again—more so, it is meant for the person *to do the right thing*, to act differently in similar situations in the future. And this is why Aristotle wants to *change the way this person used to act*. After all, it is *this wrong doer* who is facing the choices of life and making decisions, it is therefore much more important for him not to do the same, wrong thing again than penalize him.

Having said that, it is now possible to see why punishments are important. People are motivated to do certain things, and people are primitively motivated by pleasures and pains. According to Aristotle, one is virtuous only when she has developed a stable state of character, and during the process of development that stable state of character, she will development a different set of motivation. One will be rightly motivated,[60] and that means she is no longer simply motivated by pleasures and pains. But how could one be correctly motivated? Aristotle here suggests a possible answer: through punishments. With the power of inflicting pains, punishments can function as a way to force one to conform to certain rules, and act according to that rule. In a way, punishments force one not to be motivated simply by pleasures, and start to be motivated by some further reflections. But what kind of reflections are they? I suggest that this is some very simple reflections: reflections on our further actions, "whether or not I should do such and such" or "is it lawful to do such and such", and so on. It is these very reflections that further invite the discussion of practical wisdom, and presumably,

[60] For example, see Kosman 1980, or Joachim 1951.

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of which the development is the project of *Nicomachean Ethics*.[61]

Thus far, what Aristotle has in mind is something more like moral *reformation*. The point of punishment, as I noted earlier, is not to *teach* the wrong doers what are the right thing to do; rather, it aims at *changing the way he acts* by *nudging* people in the right direction. Now, we can turn to *EN* X 9, where Aristotle further explain what he has in mind about moral education.

At the start of the chapter, Aristotle reminds the audience that the purpose of this political inquiry is not merely to *know* what is good but to *become* good (1179a31-b4). There are two ways to be good: by speech or by fear (1179b7-12).

The first way cannot make *everyone* good, but only those who already has a "wellborn character and is truly a lover of what is noble" (1179b9-10). The second way can make *the many*, who are not "naturally obedient to the governance supplied by a sense of shame", but are "rather to that supplied by fear" (1179b10-12). Since these people are not a lover of what is noble, they therefore "do not naturally abstain from base things because of the shamefulness involved but do so rather because of the vengeance that may be exacted" (1179b12-14). Moreover, as Aristotle points out, the only way for them to be virtuous, or become good, is to appropriate them by laws, by the threat to inflict greater pain. As Kamtekar points out, the need for laws to confine human action arises from the fact that virtuous conduct requires people to act in a way that is contrary to our natural desires, and laws are present as a means to obligate people to act in a certain way which is in line with virtues.[62]

With the laws in place, Aristotle believes, the

> [R]earing and the regular practices involved must have already been put into the

[61] For a similar point, see Kamtekar 2014.
[62] Kamtekar 2014, 370.

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> proper order, for once these become habitual, they will not be painful. And, in like manner, it is not sufficient if people when they are young attain the correct rearing and care; rather, once they have reached adulthood, they must also make a practice of these things and be thus habituated. (1179b35-1180a3)

It is through the regulations of the laws that *the many* are habituated. The proper actions become habitual not because these actions are in any deep sense *theirs*, but because *these actions are regulated by law*. These actions gradually become less and less painful because *the many* is used to these kinds of actions. But that does not imply people are therefore *virtuous*. They are *acting according to the law*, not necessarily *acting according to virtues*.[63] And, again, it is *us as agents* that are performing the actions, so we are the ones who can decide what to do and how to do it. The best case is to be so habituated that people become virtuous; if not, at least people can be habituated to act according to the law.

Next, Aristotle concludes that

> Hence some suppose that legislators ought to encourage people in the direction of virtue and exhort them to act for the sake of what is noble, on the grounds that those who have been decently guided beforehand by means of habits will be obedient, where as for those who are disobedient and too deficient in nature, they suppose the legislators ought to inflict on them various chastisements as well as acts of vengeance; the wholly incurable, they ought to banish. (1180a6-10)

Here Aristotle concludes that it is indeed legislators' job to set up laws that would en-

[63] But for a virtuous person, she is acting according to virtue, which will be lawful.

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courage people to act *virtuously*, and *for the sake of* noble, but I would suggest that this is only *legislators' job*, not what *they should achieve*. What I mean in this: what Aristotle set for the legislators to do is to set up laws that will regulate people's actions so that these actions would *appears* to be virtuous. However, there is a gap between acting *virtuously* and acting in a way that seems to be virtuous. What Aristotle envisions in *EN* X 9 can at best support that view that laws should be given to nudge people into acting *virtuous-like*, not acting *virtuously*.[64] He probably knows that limit of laws, so he says that laws can only *encourage* (παρακαλεῖν) people to act in the direction of virtue (ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν) but not *according to* virtues (κατ᾽ ἀρετήν).

II

The interpretation I gave out above suggests that what Aristotle talks about in *EN* is more like moral *reformation* than *education*. Since what I am suggesting, in effect, is that in *EN* X 9, Aristotle is talking about a kind of moral education that cannot really make people moral, and that punishment is meant to motivate people into changing their usual course of action, the picture we have in *EN* is therefore less like an *education*. What reformation can do is make people to *be apparently moral*, not to *be moral*. Aristotle implicitly acknowledges a limitation of the laws: namely, laws cannot have someone learn how to be good. Laws can only regulate one's actions, but cannot regulate one's *motivations for actions*—that is, we cannot change the entire set of moti-

[64] On the idea of nudging, some readers might immediately have in mind Thaler and Sunstein's work in 2009. Indeed, I am inspired by their work. In that book, they define *a nudge* as such: "a nudge is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any option or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be easy and cheap to avoid. Nudges are not mandates. Putting the fruit at eye level counts as a nudge. Banning junk food does not." (p.6) What I'm suggesting here is not that Aristotle employs this *economic* idea when he is talking about law's function on changing people's behavior. What I'm arguing here is that Aristotle does think that laws can change people's behavior, and the effect of which is *similar* to nudging—the functioning of the laws is also *indirect* in that laws do not *ban* one from doing this or that, but it does *provide an incentive* for people to avoid doing certain things in the future.

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vation on a person simply through law. But we can nudge them into doing things we want them to do, and this appears to be what Aristotle means in *EN*. This view is much more practical when we take the audience he is talking to into consideration. We have to bear in mind that Aristotle has something to say about his students:

> Hence of the political art, a young person is not an appropriate student, for he is inexperienced in the actions pertaining to life, and the arguments are based on these actions and concern them. Further, because he is disposed to follow the passions, he will listen pointlessly and unprofitably, since the end involved is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference at all whether he is young in age or immature in character: the deficiency is not related to time but instead arises on account of living in accord with passion and pursuing each passion in turn. For to people of that sort, just as to those lacking self-restraint, knowledge is without benefit. (1094b28-1095a10)

Aristotle expects his students to be people who are old enough to have some living experiences and not following passions. In reality, this might be a quite practical standard for choosing students. After all, *EN* is dealing with some real-life problems, and Aristotle, in a way, is telling his students how to lead a good life in this imperfect world. And for these students who have already developed some habituated ways of responding to the live world, it might be hard to ask them to change the established way of acting. Nudging them into doing what is better might be a more practical approach.

However, Aristotle's narrative changes in *Politics*. There, Aristotle is no longer dealing just with realities; he also talks about *the best possible constitutions*. Which is

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no longer about *what actually is*, but steps into the realm of *what can possibly be*. And there, when talking about *what can possibly be*, Aristotle appears to have a different view on education.

In *Politics*, Aristotle tells us that a city must be a self-sufficient community, and for that matter it will need "a multitude of farmers to provide the food; and craftsmen; and a fighting element and a rich element and priests and judges of necessary matters and advantageous ones" (*Pol.* VII 8, 1328b20-23).[65] The best constitution is the one that assign these things to the appropriate persons, so he sets the tone for further investigation:

> For, as we said, it is possible both for all to participate in everything and for all not to participate in everything, but some in some things. These things too make regimes different: in democracies all take part in everything, while in oligarchies it is the opposite. Since we happen to be investigating concerning the best regime, and this is the one in accordance with which the city would be happy above all, and since it was said earlier that happiness cannot be present apart from virtue, it is evident from these things that in the city that is most finely governed—one possessing men who are just unqualifiedly and not relative to a presupposition—the citizens should not live a worker's or a merchant's way of life, for this sort of way of life is ignoble and contrary to virtue. Nor, indeed, should those who are going to be citizens in such a regime be farmers; for there is a need for leisure both with a view to the creation of virtue and with a view to political activities. But since both the military element and the element that deliberates concerning the advantageous things and judg-

[65] All translations of *Politics* are taken from Lord 2013

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es concerning the just things inhere in the city and are evidently parts of it above all, must these too be regarded as different, or are both to be assigned to the same persons? This too is evident: in a manner it should be to the same persons, and in a manner to different persons. Insofar as each of these tasks belongs to a different prime of life, the one requiring prudence (*φρονήσεως*), the other power, it should be to different persons; but insofar as it is impossible that those who are capable of using compulsion and preventing its being used against them will always put up with being ruled, to this extent they should be the same persons. For those who have authority over arms also have authority over whether the regime will last or not. What remains is for this regime to assign both things to the same persons, though not at the same time, but as it is natural for power to be found among younger persons and prudence among older persons, it is advantageous and just to distribute them to both, for this division reflects what accords with merit. (1328b33-1329a17)

As Aristotle points out here, there are two functions that are assigned to the citizens: military and political. Those military citizens are soldiers while those political citizens are the rulers. The education system, therefore, is meant to produce citizens who can properly function as soldiers and rulers. However, these two functions require two different elements in life: the former power while the latter prudence. Aristotle further identifies these two elements to younger persons and older persons, respectively. And Aristotle sets up institutions of this best regime largely mirroring this like: in education, it is physical training comes prior to intellectual training; in governing, citizens being soldiers comes prior to being rulers. The assignment of these functions is for the endurance and for the great good of the city—as Aristotle himself says, “those who

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have the authority over arms also have authority over whether the regime will last or not," and that it is the legislator's job to decide on those things that matter to the public, things that can make sure that the city is a happy one. It is not an easy task to decide on these matters. To do this job the deciders need to be prudent: these people should have practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Those elder citizens, who have experienced life long enough to know the complexity of human life, and have cultivated and practiced virtues are the best candidates for being rulers. And, again, for the city to be a happy one, that is, every citizen in which can lead a happy life, all citizens must be virtuous. Happiness necessarily involves virtue, and one of the jobs that the legislators in the best regime should do is to make sure that every citizen can be virtuous, so that they can be happy. And who is best fit for the job instead of those elder, experienced virtuous citizens? Therefore, the best regime should be one that can make every citizen virtuous, and that requires the city to provide a kind of education that can achieve this end.

In *Politics* VII and VIII, Aristotle sets up an education system that aims at helping citizens to develop the two functions mentioned earlier, and aims also at helping citizens to become virtuous. To this end, Aristotle claims that this education system is one about *habit*:

> That the sort of virtue is rather to be cultivated that governs the use of these good things, that this is preeminently the sort of virtue that is cultivated in leisure, and that it is to be cultivated on its own account, is evident from these things. How and through what things it will exist is what must be studied now. We made a distinction earlier to the effect that there is a need for nature, habit, and reason. Of these things, what quality the citizens ought to be in their na-

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ture was discussed earlier; what remains is to study whether they are to be educated first by means of reason or by means of habits. These should be consonant with one another, and the consonance should be the best; for it is possible for one or both to have missed the best presupposition in respect of reason and to have been similarly guided by habits. This, then, is evident at any rate in the first instance, with men just as among other things—that birth derives from a beginning point, and the end from some beginning point, and the end from some beginning point that is an end of something else; but reason and intellect are the end of our nature, so that it is with a view to these that birth and the concern with habits should be handled. Next, just as soul and body are two things, so also do we see two parts of the soul, the irrational and that having reason, and the dispositions belonging to these are two in number, one of which is appetite and the other intellect; and just as the body is prior in birth to the soul, so is the irrational part to that having reason. This too is evident, for spiritedness and will, and furthermore desire, are present in children immediately on their being born, while reasoning and intellect develop naturally in them as they go along. Hence in the first instance the superintendence of the body must necessarily precede that of the soul; next comes that of appetite; but that of appetite is for the sake of intellect, and that of the body for the sake of the soul. (1334b4-26)

There are, thus, different stages of education: first the education is about the student's *body*, then *non-rational* part of the soul, and finally the *rational* part of the soul. Aristotle also separates the education of reason from the education of habit. For the body and the non-rational part of the soul, the appropriate education seems to be that of

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habit, and for the rational part of the soul, the education of reason. And since the non-rational part of the soul can be seen even in children, we can assume that this Aristotelian education starts in an early age. Aristotle does not specifically list out at which age should children receive what kind of education, but he does give us a general view on what should be in this education system: "reading and writing, athletics, music, and fourth, in some cases, drawing" (1137b24-25). In these, reading, writing, and drawing are for useful needs: "reading, writing, and drawing are taught because they are useful for life and have many uses" (1137b25-26). Athletics, on the other hand, is consisted of light exercises and some sort of diet. The reason for only light exercises is so that it does not impedes thought. That much for the education of body.

Moving on, Aristotle uses devotes more space to illustrate the education of the non-rational part of the soul. And this education is music. Aristotle argues that music has the effect of influencing the non-rational part of the soul, that

> [W]e do become of a certain quality is evident through many things, and not least through the tunes of Olympus; for it is agreed that these make souls inspired, and inspiration is a passion of the character connected with the soul. Further, all who listen to imitations come to experience similar passions, even apart from rhythms and tunes themselves. Since music belongs accidentally among pleasant things, and virtue is connected with enjoying in correct fashion and feeling affection and hatred, it is therefore clear that one should learn and become habituated to nothing so much as to judging in correct fashion of, and enjoying, respectable characters and noble actions. For in rhythms and tunes there are likenesses particularly close to the genuine natures of anger and gentleness, and further of courage and moderation and of all the things

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> opposite to these and of the other things pertaining to character. This is clear from the facts: we are altered in soul when we listen to such things. (1340a9-23)

Here, Aristotle links music with feelings. It is peculiar that Aristotle mentions music here as "even in separation from rhythms and melodies". This seems to suggest that Aristotle is talking about music in a more modern sense, that it consists of vocal and/or instrumental sounds combined in such a way as to produce a beauty of form and harmony. Without rhythms and melodies, the music Aristotle is talking about is more like the "music bare"[66]—the "music by itself" (καὶ ψιλὴν οὖσαν). Here, as Lord remarked, this "music by itself" can be applied to poetry unaccompanied by music, and what would poetry left without rhythms and melodies? Lyrics. That is, words. Words that has the effect of influencing one's feelings towards decent characters and noble actions. Not only does Aristotle believes words have the power to affect people's emotions, but he believes that poetry has the power to *educate* people. Words persuades us, but they may not *habituate* us. We are habituated to do certain thing or to be certain people by being exposed to something constantly. I would therefore suggest that Aristotle is not merely talking about music in the narrow sense—that it means poetry unaccompanied by music—here; rather, he is using music in its broader sense, which comes close to our present conception of music—that which contains lyrics, rhythms, melodies, vocal and/or instrumental sounds.

This point is more obvious if we consider his later remark, regarding melodies and rhythms:

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[66] Following Lord 1982, 86; cf. *Symposium* 215c.

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> In tunes by themselves, however, there are imitations of characters. This is evident: the nature of the harmonies diverged at the outset, so that those listening are in a different state and not in the same condition in relation to each of them. In relation to some—for example, the so-called Mixed Lydian—they are in a state more of grief and apprehension; in relation to others—for example, the relaxed harmonies—they are softer of mind; they are in a middling and settled state in relation to one above all, this being what Dorian alone among the harmonies is held to make them; and Phrygian makes them inspired. This is what those who have philosophized in connection with this sort of education argue, and finely; they find proofs for their arguments in the facts themselves. Things stand in the same manner in connection with rhythms as well: some of them have a character that is more steadfast, others a character marked by movement, and of these some have movements of a cruder, others of a more liberal sort. (1340a38-1340b10)

Rhythms and melodies have greater likenesses to the nature of those virtues: they have the power to change our soul when we are listening. This is quite evident: for example, songs with slow tempo, like Fritz Kreisler's *Liebesleid* (*Love's sorrow*) often make listeners feel sorrow or nostalgia; while fast tempo often make listeners happy and joy, like the second movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Our feelings are, in this way, touched on and excited by rhythms and melodies, and so is our souls. And by listening to these kinds of music repeatedly, we are thereby habituated—we form a preference for certain kind of music, and not familiar to other kinds. Those who prefer K-pop might not be so comfortable with R&B; while those who like boss nova better might not sit well listening to J-pop. Those who like Wagner may not have

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the ear for Mozart.

This preference of music will develop through time, the more one listen to certain kind of music, the more she is affected by that kind of music. One will, in effect, develop a taste for music. This taste is the product of her being habituated by the kind of music she listens to the most often. And if music is so power as Aristotle indicates that it can alter our souls, then it will not come as surprise that the taste of music will have something to do with her character. That is, one's character is related to her taste of music: *you are what you listen to.*

But there's more than that. In this musical education, listening to music is not the only aspect of the process of habituation. Aristotle also emphasizes the importance for these students to *practice* the music themselves. Of course, the point of practicing music is not to make these students professional musicians; in fact, Aristotle talks a lot about the negative impacts of teaching students to be professional (1341a16-1341b6). The point is, rather, to make the students *be able to judge* how good or bad this music is. And if one successfully develops this ability to judge *correctly*, then she can apply it later in life, so that she can correctly judge the noble things and enjoy them in correct fashion:[67]

> That there is to be education in music in such a way that they will share in the performance, therefore, is evident from such things. … In the first place, since one should take part in performing them for the sake of judging, on this account they should engage in performing when they are young, and when they become older leave off it, and be able to judge the noble things and to enjoy in correct fashion through the learning that occurred in their youth. (1340b31-39)

[67] This view seems to imply that musical education does not only train the student's non-rational part of the soul, it also trains the rational part of the soul—since the students have to *judge correctly*.

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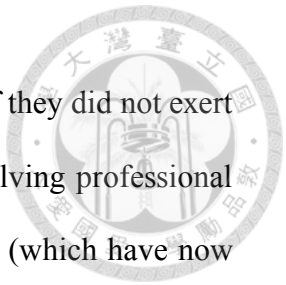

> This would result in connection with the learning of music if they did not exert themselves to learn either what contributes to contests involving professional expertise or those works that are difficult and extraordinary (which have now come into the contests, and from the contests into education), but learned such things as well [as other works of music only] up to the point where they are capable of enjoying noble tunes and rhythms and not merely the common element of music, as is the case even for some of the other animals, and further for the multitude of salves and children. (1341a10-16)

Listening to music matters, and so does practicing it. Music affects directly our emotion and how we might rationally respond to these emotions: as Aristotle says, "[people] respond to some in a more mournful and anxious way; to others they respond with softer thought (τὴν διάνοιαν)" (1340a43-1340b2). In this view, it seems that not only our emotions can respond to music, but also our reasonings. What is being trained in this education is both the non-rational part of the soul and the rational part of the soul, since the student have to be trained to *judge correctly* whether a piece of music is being played nobly or not. Further, music can also affect our rational thoughts—this is quite intuitive: think of movies. With different background music, we approach the scene differently. For example, if the opening scene of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* wasn't paired up with Richard Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Op. 30 but Johannes Brahms' *Hungarian Dance* No. 5 in G minor, we might have a totally different review of that scene. And if our thought can be influenced by music, then it does show that people may not be perfectly rational after all—we are all, at some point and to some degree, affected by our feelings.

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Moreover, people should also practice music. One does not have to be professional in playing musical instruments, as Aristotle himself noted, but one should be able to play the music to such a point that she can be familiar with the composition and the expression of the piece. It is not enough to simply know, for example, what Chopin's Waltz in A-flat major sounds like and which emotion it touches on; one should also know *how* this piece is played, so that she could be the judge for the performance of it. Similarly, virtuous actions have these two aspects of emotion and action. It is not enough for one to simply be properly affected and motivated; she should also *perform* that action. A virtuous action cannot be one that is performed only in mind; it has to be actuated in real life. Again, this performing of actions is the process of habituation.

What musical education does, as have been shown, is (a) for one to develop a taste for music and (b) for one to practice playing the music. This taste of music is a habit of listening to certain kind of music; and once this taste is formed, it means that this person is more prone to be certain kind of people—that is, her emotions are conditioned by her taste of music. Listening to music, in this view, is to produce in the listener a certain state of the soul; but one also has to judge *by herself* which music is good and which is bad. On the other hand, one also has to be educated to be able to play some music. The act of practicing music is not to make playing music a profession; rather, it is a way to enable the agent to become a good judge about "the noble things". People should have the ability to discern good music from bad ones, and likewise, people should be able to distinguish good actions from bad ones. And these two aspects of music mirrors that of ethics: on the one hand, virtues are about our emotional reactions, and it is important to condition one's emotion for her to become virtuous. On the other hand, virtues are not just state of the soul; virtues need to be

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practiced in the sense that one can only be called virtuous whence she performs some virtuous actions. And the musical education, as I interpreted, is perfect for helping the students to develop virtues. This musical education wants to condition the emotional part of the soul while the student can also practice those pieces music: what this education teaches is not only *how* to listen to music, but also *in what way* can these pieces music be played. The result of this education is a certain taste of music. What comes with this taste of music is a conditioned emotional part of the soul, some familiarity with playing musical instruments, and the ability to judge whether a performance is good or bad. With these, the students are sent off to lead their own life.

Some might argue that since this education had already molded the emotional part of the soul, it had already determined *who* this person will become. Indeed, it might have a great deal to do with who this person will become, but this is not definite. We all are affected by what happen in our youth, and what kind of education we receive when we were young. But things change; people change. We might be able to predict what kind of people B will be based simply on his childhood experiences, and we might have a fair guess on that of D's based on our knowledge to his family background and his education history. However, this prediction or guess is not a hundred percent accurate. Things change and people change. Education does not shield us from those happenings—be they good or bad—in life; education also does not keep us away from the joy and sorrow, pleasure and sufferings in life. What education does is to prepare us: it gives us something that we find *useful*—a way not to devastate ourselves when we lost the loved ones; a way to be upbeat when struck by misfortune. People cope with their lives differently, and it is this difference in coping that gradually makes us who we are. In this Aristotelian musical education, people are not taught *how to cope with life*. This education gives students a conditioned soul and the

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ability to judge—something that is habituated through the education, and more importantly, it teaches the students *how to habituate* yourself into doing something. Then send them off the live their respective lives. What will happen next will be different for each and every one of them, and it is *up to them* to decide what to do next. And it is these decisions that one makes will cumulatively determine who this particular person will become. Education has its limitations.

III

In the previous two sections I discussed Aristotle's view on moral education in both *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. I argued that he holds two different views in these two works. The one in *EN* focuses on changing adults while the one in *Politics* aims at educating children. What this means, I argue, is that Aristotle is focusing on two different subjects. The discussion in *EN* is more realistic, in the sense that it resonates better to *what the realities are*, while the discussion in *Politics* is more idealistic, in that Aristotle is *creating* a system that could bring about the *best possible constitution*. I suggest that if we put the two discussions together, we can better see what role does moral education plays in forming one's character: it prepares the students for living a life in which they can form good habits.

First, however, there might be a concern that my interpretation seems to suggest that Aristotle's view in *Politics* is not meant to be realized, and that it will make *Politics* and *EN* two unrelated work. In response to this concern, I would like to point out that my interpretation argues *not* that the view in *Politics* is unrealizable, but that it is *forward-looking*. As I argued, Aristotle sets up that education system with an eye to make *future* kids better. That is, this education system proposed in *Politics* is meant for those kids *who have not yet been born*—this proposal is like all reforms, it aims at

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making the future better.[68] And it is this reformistic character that makes Aristotle's proposal in *Politics* not a utopian ideal. It is attainable that it can be implemented in real life. Moreover, because this proposal in *Politics* is not unrealizable, it therefore has a continuous relation to *EN*. We can look at the two like this: in *EN*, Aristotle is talking about how to change those adults, who have already formed their habituated ways of action, so that they are able to do things that seems to be in line with virtues;[69] meanwhile, in *Politics*, Aristotle is talking about how to teach future adults, who haven't yet formed their habituated ways of action, or who haven't really born yet, so that these future adults can start off with good preparations.

Let's look at *EN* first. If the discussion is indeed answering to the realities, then, for Aristotle, *the many* had already formed their characters. Once the characters are formed and habits are established, the agent has already become certain kind of person. Actions that are performed out of these characters are of her own, and she is responsible for the actions done. The way in which that can change her established patterns of action is through punishment: by providing pain as the result of certain ways of acting, the law aims at *nudging* people into doing what seems to be virtuous.[70]

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[68] However, this education system does require a certain kind of political system. This political system is discussed in *Politics* VII-VIII (e.g. VII 9, 1328b24ff.). There, Aristotle lays out the parts that an ideal city should contain. In the discussion, Aristotle points out that the 'integral part' (following Barker) of the city should be the body of *full citizens*, that is, men who will serve to defense the city, to deliberate and judge, and to worship the gods throughout their lives (1329a2-17). The education system Aristotle lays out in *Politics* VII and VIII are exceptionally made for this ideal city, so there's a mutual relation between the ideal city and this education system: the education system needs the ideal city to support it, while the ideal city can be solidified through this education system.

[69] Some scholars, e.g. Hutchinson and Johson 2014, might think that Aristotle's students are those who already have virtues, and the purpose of this course is "to acquire some of his philosophical tools of analysis, so that they would be able to develop their own practical philosophies based on his outline account, not to motivate them to become morally better." (p. 389) This may be true about Aristotle's lecture and his targeted students. But what I am arguing here is rather about 'what this teaching can do for general public' and not specifically to those who attend the course.

[70] Indeed, who should receive which kind of punishment may be decided in individual cases. People probably don't get identical punishment in different cases. If punishment is there only to nudge people into doing what seems virtuous, it has its own limitation: it cannot tell people *why* your doing so and so is beneficial to your living a good life. This relation between doing in a certain way and the reason why doing in such way can contribute to one's own good life can only be drawn through philosophy. That is to say, people can see the *reason* for doing so-and-so *after* they learned philosophy. It is philosophy

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This kind of reformation is meant for those *grown-ups,* those who had already formed their character and it might be difficult to change them through *education*. For these people, re-educate them is infeasible: they have already formed a firm grip of knowing this world and handling the dealings in life—that inertia makes it hard for educators to make a difference. It might just be more attainable to regulate these people through law.

Some might wonder: is it not Aristotle's view that we should always make an effort in making progress in virtue? If so, then how can it be difficult for people to change? Indeed, Aristotle does hold that making moral progress is something that one should do throughout their life; however, it is also the case that people can be reluctant to make changes. Those are compatible. Who we are is defined by the way we act and react to things, and this definition is not definite: we are the kind of creature that can change—hard, indeed, but changeable. We as human being are changeable since we have the capability (δύναμις/*dunamis*)[71] to become either good or bad through our action, and this is exactly why we can make moral progress.

Furthermore, as I previously argued, *I* as an agent is responsible for the character formed, *I* am the one who holds the power to decide what to do, and *I* am the one who perform the action. The responsibility of the action, and the character thereby formed is on *me*. And if that is the case, then for Aristotle, it is *my* responsibility for who *I* in fact am.

But that is for people who already are. For those who have not yet be, we should turn to *Politics*. In *Politics* VII and VIII, Aristotle sets up an education system that involves both physical and psychological training. As I pointed out earlier, the physi-

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that gives people a fuller picture of the best ethical life. Mere punishment cannot make people understand the relation, it can only correct them.

[71] For Aristotle's idea on *dunamis*, see *Metaphysics* book Θ.

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cal training comes prior to psychological, and the education of habit prior to that of reason. The entire system of education is meant to help children in the early age to be better at forming habits—preferably *good* habits. This education is a musical education, and it aims at (a) helping the students to develop a taste in music and (b) enabling the students to really play the music. This education is primarily for the non-rational part of the soul, since music has this ability to touch on people's emotion,[72] but it also trains the rational part of the soul, since it wants the students to be able to *correctly* judge whether a piece of music is play nobly. It seems that this education has the ability to make students form good habits and therefore becomes a good person. However, that is not necessarily the case.

There are limits to this education. Though Aristotle believes that musical education can indeed help children to form good habits, it cannot be guaranteed. Musical education tells students how to form habits, and preferably good habits, but that is not entailed by the education—it is always possible that children form bad habits instead. One might argue that since this education requires students to *correctly* judge a piece of music to be good or bad, it therefore can make the student form good habits. The students should be able to judge a habit to be good or bad after this education. Ture, the education does want the student to have the ability to judge, but it is not the case that the students can do exactly as they are taught. That is, what the education system teaches and what the student really acquires are two different things. This point is obvious enough—do we really know how to do trigonometric functions *right after* we take courses about them? No. When do we *really know* how to do them? Probably after constant practicing: we have to do a lot of exercises so that we can instantly react to the questions. We have to put theory into practices for us to be correct all the time.

[72] Also, in *Poetics* VI, Aristotle claims that music provides "purification (κάθαρσις/*katharsis*) of [pity and fear]" (1149b28)

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A similar thing goes with musical education: students can learn about all kinds of music, cultivate certain taste of music, and learn about how each piece of music is supposed to be played. More importantly, this education is proceeded in *play* (παιδιά/*paidia*). Students do not learn music the way we do now: we often don't have music classes, or we learn music the way we learn math—we listen to lectures about theories and practices. But Aristotle wants the students to learn music by really *playing* those pieces of music. If this process really forms characters, then they are formed when the students are playing, rather than merely listening. However, this does not guarantee that students can one hundred percent follow; it is often the case that students deviate and make mistakes. Not that this musical education does not want its students to be virtuous; but that it is not *necessary* the case that students will definitely become virtuous. People make mistakes, and that is the characteristic of being human, but we can still try our best not to make the same mistake twice. The problem would rather be: what if this mistake has never been rectify? Ideally this never happens, but Aristotle is not looking for an ideal. Aristotle knows well that in reality people do err, and that's why he emphasis that being virtuous is something we should make an effort to. People need to work hard to become, or remain, virtuous. Once one had given up on being virtuous, then she would no longer be a virtuous agent. This shows that education has its limit: it cannot produce virtuous students; it can only have the students start their life in a better position.

What musical education does, it seems, is *to aid in* forming good habits, rather than *forming good habits*. Again, it is one's job to form *good* habits; but it is the education's job to make it easier for people to form good habits. If this is the case, then, for Aristotle, this education system *does not* figure in an agent's process of character-forming. Since which character to form is mainly on her own, not decided by the

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education. The education helps, but it helps in the sense that it teaches *how to form*, not *what to form*.

IV

Recall that in Chapter 2 I argued that the *mean* (*to meson*) is best understood as a dynamic between reason and emotion. And I argued that it is our job, as an agent, to reach a harmonious dynamic, so that we can acquire virtue.

Now we have seen Aristotle's view on moral education, what does this view have to say about this dynamic? Well, according to my interpretation, this musical education helps the students so that it is easier for them to form good characters. In this Aristotelian context, good characters are virtues. Again, virtue is the mean that one reaches, and, as I argued, this mean is the harmonious dynamic between reason and emotion. We can conclude that this musical education aims at helping students reach the harmonious dynamic between reason and emotion.

The musical education, as I interpreted in previous sections, is one that will mold the student's emotions. By developing a taste for music, the students' emotional part of the soul is thereby conditioned. The conditioned soul supposed to be in a particular state—a state where in which one's emotions are stabilized. Once the emotions are stabilized, the communication between the rational and the emotional (non-rational) part of the soul can successfully go underway. In chapter 2, I argued that the emotional part of the soul is habituated by the *logos* of the rational part of the soul. This habituation helps the soul reach a harmonious state. But that is for the soul as a whole. Here in the musical education, when it comes to conditioning the soul, it is for the *emotional* part of the soul alone. This conditioning helps the emotional part to *calm*, so to speak, so that it can interact with the rational part of the soul; rather than roam-

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ing around, taking no cue from reason.

However, it is one thing to condition the emotional part of the soul, it is quite another to condition the entire soul so that it can be in the harmonious dynamic between reason and emotion. The former is the job of this musical education while the latter is that of each and every one of us. In this interpretation, though we probably do not have a say over the education we receive, we are nonetheless responsible for the latter job—that is, we are responsible for reaching and staying in that harmonious dynamic.

But what about those who are born to cities with no education system? If someone is so unfortunate that she was born to a corrupt city, where in which no education system is established for her. Is she still responsible for the characters formed? Moreover, one might wonder that, if my interpretation is correct, then it follows that we are fully responsible for how our life turns out to be. Further, we might be fully responsible for our own happiness. Since in my interpretation, we are fully responsible for our character, and our character determines whether or not we can perform virtuous actions; and given that Aristotle takes virtuous as a major part of our happiness,[73] we are therefore fully responsible for the lives we ourselves bring about. What follows from my argument is an odd conclusion: our happiness is not affected by external conditions.

As Nussbaum points out, in *Fragility of Goodness,* that "luck has the power to obstruct" our activities, and she indicates four different ways our external conditions may interfere with virtuous activities:

[73] Since both inclusivist and exclusivist views about happiness both agree that virtuous actions are a large part of happiness, I am not here committing myself to any particular view. For inclusivist view, see, for example, Broadie 1991; for exclusivist view, see, for example, Cooper 1985.

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> They may (1) deprive it of some instrumental means or resource. This resource, in turn, may be either (a) absolutely necessary for excellent activity, so that its absence altogether blocks the activity; or (b) its absence may simply constrain or impede the performance of the activity. (2) Circumstances may block activity by depriving it, not merely of an external instrument, but of the very object or recipient of the activity (The death of a friend blocks friendship in this more intimate way.) Here again, the activity may be either (a) completely blocked, if the loss is permanent and complete; or (b) impeded, if the loss is temporary and/or partial.[74]

My argument, as my potential opponent would maintain, would be so strong that none of the above ways would obstruct an agent's formation of character. Consider (2a). The death of a really close friend definitely blocked our ability to practice an aspect of the virtue of friendship, since the proper object for this virtue does not exist anymore. Or consider (1b), if I do not possess enough money, my ability to perform the virtue of magnificence is thereby constrained or impeded. To say that our responsibilities are not affected by external conditions is counter-intuitive, given that we in fact feels that our abilities to perform virtuous actions *are* quite vulnerable to external conditions.

However, I think this objection misses the point. I'm not arguing *against* Nussbaum's idea. I *do agree* with her that *eudaimonia* is fragile.[75] I *do agree* with her that our actions are vulnerable to external conditions. What I'm arguing, again, is that *we are fully responsible for our character*. What this claim implies is that *even though* our abilities are in fact vulnerable facing external conditions, we still have *full control* over *how should we respond* to these conditions.

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[74] Nussbaum 2001, 327.
[75] Following Nussbaum, I shall keep the word *eudaimonia* (happiness) untranslated.

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We are fully responsible for our actions not because our character is immune to external conditions, but because *we have control over our actions*. In Aristotle's words, our actions are something that is 'up to us.' I agree that the death of my friend will certainly impede my ability to perform friendly actions, but that does not mean I am thereby *not* responsible for my characters. Whether or not I am responsible for my characters is a different question from *what kind of* character can I form, or am I given the possibility to form.

This objection confuses what I am *responsible for* with what I am *capable of* doing. I am responsible for the character formed since characters are formed through my practicing certain actions. But, what kinds of actions I am capable of performing is a quite different question. I am not capable of performing magnificent actions only means I may not be capable of forming the character of magnificence, yet that does not mean I am therefore irresponsible for the character of justice that I have formed. I may not be capable of doing many things, but I am responsible for the actions performed, and also the characters formed.

My argument emphasizes the *activity* of human beings while Nussbaum's concern is mainly on the *passivity* side. We are, as Nussbaum rightly observes, vulnerable to the changes of external conditions, and how luck is important to *eudaimonia*.[76] I'm not arguing against this. What I'm arguing is that we are not off the hook of moral responsibility *simply because* of this fact. Our responsibilities are not conditioned because there is a passive side of us as human beings. What responsibility is essentially about is the active side of us: the side of us that can make actions. Responsibility is essentially tied up with praise and blame-worthiness. It is because of the idea of praise and blame that we have this talk about responsibility. For Aristotle, praise and blame

[76] Nussbaum 2001, 327-42.

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is essentially attributed to actions, and external conditions are not sufficient for praise and blame.[77] And this view emphasizes the fact that we, as human beings, can indeed perform actions.

Thus this objection, which claims that my argument makes it too strong that our *eudaimonia* will not be affected by external conditions, actually misses the point. The point is that we are responsible for our character because our characters are the product of our actions, which is something that is in our control, and thereby we are properly attributed to responsibilities. The objection mistakenly thinks that I am claiming that our *eudaimonia* is in our control. I didn't make that claim. I do claim that we can control *part of* our *eudaimonia*, but whether we are happy depends on some other conditions, and I'm not committing myself to any one of the possible positions. I agree that our *eudaimonia* is fragile *vis-à-vis* external conditions, over which we have no control. But that is not what I'm arguing here. The point I am arguing here, and throughout the thesis, is that since being virtuous is in our power, is up to us, then we are *fully* responsible for that. We may not have the ability to decide which family we shall born into, and nor do we able to choose the neighborhood in which we grow up; but at least we have the choice, have the ability to decide for ourselves *who we want to become*, and *who we shall be*. And it is because this fact that we do have a choice and can indeed decide for ourselves that we are fully responsible for it.

[77] 1109b30-33; Nussbaum 2001, 324.

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Chapter 5 Conclusion

This thesis begins with the question 'Who, or what, is responsible for our characters formed?' To answer this question, I reviewed Aristotle's work on practical philosophy, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*.

I have argued, all in all, that Aristotle holds that people are fully responsible for their characters formed. Nothing can lessen one's responsibility for that. That is, I argued, Aristotle thinks that we are *fully responsible* for becoming morally good; people can be morally criticized if they fail to do so. The argument was set in three steps. In each step there is a leading question to be answer.

First, in chapter 2, I ask the question 'What is virtue?' I reviewed Aristotle's view about virtue in *EN*, and proposed that virtue as a mean is best understood as a dynamic between reason and emotion. This interpretation differs from most interpretations before; it does not make either reason or emotion the core idea of mean. It makes both reason and emotion essential to maintaining the mean. So, virtue does not simply have a rational aspect or an emotional aspect; it has both aspects. Both reason *and* emotion are important for virtue. Further, since it is a *dynamic*, there is no such thing as a static reference point for us to see if one is virtuous. Being virtuous is, in this interpretation, quite literally in a dynamic. But how we reach the proper dynamic is through our own actions and choices.

And this leads us to the next chapter, where I asked the question 'What is Aristotle's view on moral responsibility?' and reviewed Aristotle's view on responsibility for actions in *EN* III 1-5. There, I argued that Aristotle holds the view that people are responsible for the actions and choices we make, and therefore we are responsible for the characters thus formed. I also reconstructed Susan Sauvé Meyer's argument that

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Aristotle holds that people are only partially responsible for the actions and the characters formed, since people are in fact affected by the education they received. It is because we are *educated* so that we are not *fully responsible* for what comes after these actions. Contrary to Meyer's view, I argued that, for Aristotle, our responsibility is not diminished by the fact that we do receive education. It is said that the education one received figures in the process of one's character formation, thus education shares some responsibility. But my argument pointed out that Aristotle emphasizes the fact that if actions and choices are in fact *up to us*, then we are responsible for them. Indeed, Aristotle seems to indicate that education and our decision are joint-cause of our character, but that does not diminish our responsibility for cultivating good characters. I argued that the two causes do not overdetermine the outcome; however one of the two causes change, as long as the other cause holds, that cause is responsible for the outcome. Indeed, this interpretation does not say that education is therefore not responsible for one's moral character formed. To see more clearly how Aristotle thinks about the role that education plays, I then turned to *Politics*, where he spells out his view on education.

In the next chapter, I discussed Aristotle's view on moral education in both *EN* and *Politics*. There, the question I wish to answer is 'What is the role of education?' I argued that in *EN*, Aristotle provides a view that aims at dealing with people *in reality*—people we are around us: our friends, neighbors…etc. For these people, I argued, Aristotle proposed a kind of moral reformation through nudging. The aim is not making these people morally good, but to make people do things that appears to be good. In *Politics*, however, Aristotle is talking about a more ideal situation. There, he imagines an education system in which students can receive proper musical education, the kind of education that can make forming characters easier. But it only makes forming

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characters easier, it does not produce good characters in the students' soul. What kind of character that will end up being formed by these students is, again, determined by these students' own actions and choices.

And this leads us back not only to the first part of the thesis, that the kind of dynamic reached is the product of one's own actions and choices, but also to the answer to the question that this thesis presses: for Aristotle, who or what is responsible for the characters formed? The answer is simple: us. After all, we are how we act. We are *fully responsible* for the characters formed, in that our education does not determine the kind of characters we achieve, and actions are *up to us*. We are responsible for the characters formed.

This thesis starts from a mundane question: what makes the two presidents of the United States so different from each other? And who, or what, is responsible for that? In this thesis, I have explored Aristotle's ethical thought to give an answer to this question. I have argued that Aristotle thinks that we are fully responsible for the character formed, that is, if someone turns out to be a morally bad person, we can, on an Aristotelian ground, condemn him for becoming a bad person. Echoing a recent Taiwanese TV series, for Aristotle, we are not really at a distance from being vicious, and we have to be aware of that. In a world where things are changing so fast that sometime it is exhausting to keep track of, we should, more than ever, be more cognizant of the actions we perform and the practices we live by.

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