

## The Role of Deliberative Reasoning (βούλευσις) in Becoming Good and Bad According to Aristotle

In the previous two chapters I attempted to provide two prerequisites for the justification of the hypothesis that is at the center of the first part of my dissertation, namely that Aristotle's ethical theory does not entirely deny that human reasoning plays a role in constituting human badness.<sup>1</sup> Hence, my aim was to prepare the ground for the more specific claim that someone who becomes bad fails during moral development not only in having the wrong nonrational desires, but also in the activity of practical reasoning that is supposed to direct, curb, and reflect on these desires. Put differently, the thesis to which I am trying to arrive is that the practical reason of the *μοχθηρός* was not merely 'dragged around' by nonrational desires during moral development, as it could and should have played an important role.<sup>2</sup>

The two prerequisites for which I argued can be summarized as follows. First, I showed that Aristotle conceives of the process of habituation (*ἐθισμός*) as admitting numerous stages, some potentially involving or at least going hand in hand with the activity of human reasoning. Most importantly, I tried to make it clear that the perfection of disposition (*ἔξις*) must involve and be infused with reasoning, which is also how it becomes an ethical virtue (*ἠθικὴ ἀρετή*). This happens in a more advanced stage of habituation that is characterized most of all by internalization of previously externally given standards, a stage where the 'seeds of virtue' that were planted through paternalistic education can be perfected. Second, the analysis of *NE* III.5 and Aristotle's passing remarks on the *μοχθηρός* showed that even when an agent is born with dispositions that lead to badness, and (or) has received a bad upbringing, it can still be blamed for the development of ethical vices. From what Aristotle claimed, it became clear that such an agent fails to properly constitute and develop actions that are *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* and either perfect good *ἔξεις* or ameliorate those that are morally deficient. I also tried to show that *NE* III.5 mainly ascribes this blame to the enigmatic notion of *ἀμέλεια* (lack of care or negligence). I closed the analysis of *NE* III.5 by hinting at some textual passages that proved how *ἀμέλεια* might be relevant for my hypothesis, insofar as it seems to be a failure of the rational part of the soul.

That leaves us with the need to look for concrete examples of failures of practical reasoning during the development of ethical badness. The possibility of a failure of reasoning in moral development appears to be plausible, but it needs to be fleshed out in terms of content. The ultimate aim of this chapter is to address this gap and show that Aristotle's ethical works

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<sup>1</sup> During this chapter, as in the whole dissertation, I use 'bad' and 'vicious' or 'badness' and 'vice' as interchangeable. The analogue in Greek is *κακός* and *κακία*.

I eschew the talk of reason being 'absolved of blame' or 'blameworthiness'. The reason for talking of 'role' is that it intuitively encompasses more variations in the failures of human reasoning.

<sup>2</sup> Importantly, this is not a question of 'moral reform'. At least if we define moral reform as something that occurs when someone who is already bad in a full-fledged way becomes morally good or better. I am not looking for the proof of Aristotle saying that reason is a sort of a 'transformative power'. I am looking at the possibility that reason plays a role in 'moral development' where this is understood as a process that happens before one becomes bad or good in a full-fledged way and that simultaneously involves external, as well as internal influences of reasoning. In the following paragraphs, I focus exclusively on the internal influences.

hint at some aspects of bad and vicious moral development due to the failure of reasoning. Nevertheless, my aim remains rather modest. The scope of this chapter is not an argument for an exhaustive list of failures of reasoning that can occur during moral development. This is primarily due to Aristotle not being really explicit about these topics. As is often the case when we try to understand his conception of badness, one has to reconstruct his views on the basis of mere suggestions and hints. In only very rare cases does Aristotle talk about concrete cases that would illustrate the development of the bad person.

Even more than in the previous chapter, my job here thus consists of summing up some general features of virtuous moral development, which I subsequently ‘invert’ so that we could reliably interpret Aristotle in trying to see what might happen when moral development fails to reach its natural end and results in vice. To be more specific, after I offer a general framing of the problem in section A, the section B will analyze what participation of practical reasoning in a good moral development could be, while the **section C [not finished]** tries to infer from it what could go wrong with someone who becomes *μοχθηρός*. With that in mind, it should be noted that the latter part of this chapter contains some of the most speculative passages from my dissertation. I hope they can still shed light on the role reasoning plays in human moral badness, while remaining true to Aristotle’s thoughts on moral development.

### **A. Prelude: Rachel Barney on habituation that results in vice**

Let me begin by reminding us, this time more at length, of one of the reasons why we are in need of an argument that shows how reasoning might fail during moral development, and thus contribute to the emergence of human badness. As I stated in the Introduction, it seems that some scholars argue for a limited contribution of reasoning to moral development, coming close to leaving reason out of the picture when this development fails succeed. An example of the tendency to minimize the role of reasoning in the formation of bad dispositions is Rachel Barney’s article ‘Aristotle on Vice and Moral Habituation’. The conclusion she reaches in her paper is the following. Compared to virtuous habituation, moral habituation resulting in vice (*κακία*) is not difficult to understand, mainly because it is generally less demanding. Her thesis is that vice requires only ‘brute habituation’, which means that humans become bad through simple repetition of actions that are done on the basis of simple pains and pleasures, and that sufficient conditions for this kind of habituation can be fulfilled by living in a bad society, where vices are inculcated in people who become vicious by people who are already bad.<sup>3</sup> In short, bad people come to be bad because they pursue the wrong pleasures and avoid the wrong pains. That is, in turn, caused by the state of the society and the imperfection of the educators.

At first, Barney’s description of this process seems to exclude substantial forms of reasoning on the part of the person who becomes bad.<sup>4</sup> In Barney’s account, brute habituation

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<sup>3</sup> Barney (2019, p. 305).

<sup>4</sup> See for example the following description: “*Perhaps the actions the young person performs are not quite the ones intended; or perhaps their reactions of pleasure and pain are a bit off, due to some imbalance in their natural endowment; and so a vicious hexis results instead of the corresponding virtue. We might think of the case in which a parent tries to teach a child to be thrifty—shaming expenditure, praising and rewarding him for saving his allowance—but pushes a bit too hard, relative to that child’s natural propensities. As a result, the child comes to take excessive pleasure in saving, and ends up a miser instead.*” Ibid. (p. 287).

is a process of repetition of actions so that they become naturally pleasant to the agent. That alone does not demand any kind of participation of reasoning on the part of the person who becomes bad.<sup>5</sup> But as Barney acknowledges, Aristotle demands that the vicious person – in contrast to the ἀκρατής – acts with a choice (ἄγεται προαιρούμενος; VII.3, 1146b22),<sup>6</sup> his desires and reasoning being in agreement. Hence, as choice is a necessary condition of the κακός, there must be some cognitive factor involved that accompanies the previously habituated feelings of pain and pleasure. Barney describes this as the person rationally endorsing these previously acquired values, which in turn results in him endorsing actions that are pursued on the grounds of these values.<sup>7</sup>

What does this endorsement consist of? Fulfilling the requirement that there is no psychic conflict in the κακός, it differentiates him from the ἀκρατής. For Barney, this suggests that the endorsement can be rather minimal, seen as a mere acceptance of the already habituated bad ἔξεις. As she herself puts it: “*The contrast at hand with the akratic requires only that the vicious person does not think, as the akratic does, that he ought not to do as he does. Vice requires an absence of psychological conflict, sufficient to ensure reliability: not reflection or theoretical principles.*”<sup>8</sup> In her view, the reasoning of the bad person does not have to be seen as any kind of intellectually demanding activity: “*Bad people don’t act wrongly because of adopting the wrong theory: they adopt the wrong theory because it defends the comfort they have come to feel in doing the wrong thing.*”<sup>9</sup> Reason thus becomes a kind of a rationalizer of already inculcated values that are bad, not bringing anything new to the table, being merely at the service of bad desires.

Paraphrasing Plato, this comes dangerously close to the view where reason is merely ‘dragged around’ by desires and where it does not play a substantial role in moral development that ends up with badness.<sup>10</sup> Although Barney insists that reason remains ‘an active collaborator in vicious action’ – its corruption as a rationalizer still being a necessary condition of badness – she consistently depicts its contribution as overwhelmingly negative. Reason is a servant to the bad desires, not being able to do its job by making the correct end and correct set of values appear in front of our eyes,<sup>11</sup> which in effect leaves the previously established ‘positive side’ of the progress towards badness to the nonrational desires: “*The nonrational soul is evidently sufficient by itself for the positive task of coming up with the wrong ends; what a corrupted reason contributes can only be the suppression of the alternatives. It blocks recognition of the rightness of the right end; it makes moral truths invisible.*”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. (p. 286).

<sup>6</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all textual references are to *Nicomachean Ethics*.

<sup>7</sup> Barney (2019, p. 289).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. (p. 291).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. (p. 302)

<sup>10</sup> Barney herself uses the following formulation: “*The bad person is neither simply rational nor irrational. In him, reason formally governs; but it does so as a puppet regime, always busying itself to find some way to endorse what nonrational vice demands.*” Ibid. (p. 304). It seems that she wants to retain some ‘formal authority’ of reasoning but she does not explain what this means if it merely fulfills the nonrational ends.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. (p. 299).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. (p. 303).

Behind this role of reasoning as a mere endorser of already inculcated bad values is the idea of the rational defect that Barney calls a ‘dispositional corruption’. It is defined as perversion and damage to reasoning and its ἀρχαί.<sup>13</sup> Barney convincingly shows that this is how vice is described in *NE* VI: it destroys the first principles of actions that are supposed to be provided by reasoning (VI.5, 1140b11–20). The problem I see with Barney’s interpretation is that she thinks of this dispositional corruption as the cause of episodic deliberative ignorance, whereas dispositional corruption is, in turn, characterized as “*the result of bad habituation – of repeatedly experiencing pleasure and pain in the wrong ways*”.<sup>14</sup> Applying transitivity, it thus seems to be true to say that the ethically relevant failure of deliberative reasoning occurs because of bad habituation that occurs only at the level of nonrational affections. If we go back to what Barney says about bad habituation, it is then clear that she sees the sufficient conditions for the emergence of this dispositional corruption as fulfilled without any kind of activity of reason on the part of the agent in question. Hence, it is the crux of her interpretation that the dispositional corruption causing deliberative ignorance comes about without any necessary contribution of the rational part of the soul, from which she further implies that reason arrives pre-corrupted at a scene where the values in terms of bad pains and pleasures are already set in such a way that they are sufficient for badness. At least in the sense that reason merely endorses them.

Barney acknowledges that someone might think that there are other options on how reason contributes to badness. The alternative proposal to which she attends is the more intellectually demanding kind of κακία, where the rational part provides a complex and thought-out theory that gives one bad end to pursue. But if I am reading her right, she wants to discard this option on the grounds of reading Aristotle as saying that in bad habituation, reason always comes to an already inculcated value. It arrives *post factum*, as it were, its positive contribution not being a necessary condition for badness. From the conception of brute habituation that has as its sufficient factor mere repetition of actions on the grounds of pleasure and pain, she infers that reasoning of the agent is not necessary to a bad moral development. It comes only at the end of it, leaving us with a negative contribution of reason, since it merely endorses the already habituated values that are bad.

As might be clear from the two previous chapters, I want to disagree with Barney’s conclusion. I will do this by making two main claims: first, bad habituation and bad moral development of the μοχθηρός involves aspects and moments where his reasoning plays a role. Its role there could remain negative because it does not contribute to the moral development, but, as I want to stress, the capacity to reason is present during some stages of the inculcation of values that result in what Barney calls ‘dispositional corruption’. Vice, as a result of bad habituation, does not appear without reason having the chance to have its say and influence its emergence. Being a capacity of practical deliberation, reason does not merely arrive at a job that is done, playing the role of a passive endorser after vice already came about. It may remain passive during the formation of κακία but its failure will consist of remaining insufficiently active *during* this chapter of moral development, not only staying silent *after* the ethical vices

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. (p. 297).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. (p. 298).

arise. Its contribution might remain negative, but it will occur during the habituation process, earlier than Barney admits. I will also put forward a second claim, emphasizing that Aristotle's conception of the role of practical deliberation in moral development makes room for failures of reasoning that at the same time do not overintellectualize his account of how the bad person comes to be. In other words, I think Barney's options of how reason can contribute to badness are not exhaustive and that there are ways it can fail in the habituation process *without* the necessity of engaging in some intellectually demanding ethical reflections. Morally relevant forms of reasoning in the bad person can be richer than Barney would have us thinking.

With that being said, Barney's article is a useful resource that includes many valuable insights into badness. In fact, this chapter will be mostly built around a claim on which I agree with her, at least on a general level. She describes the correctly functioning practical reason as a 'kind of scrutiny of the ends proposed by the nonrational soul', implying that this reflective and critical function is what is missing in the bad person.<sup>15</sup> In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to show that this scrutiny of ends is something the vicious person fails to do or do properly, especially when being in the middle of moral development where the ends of the nonrational soul are not yet firmly established and do not amount to full-fledged 'dispositional corruption'. Thus, my disagreement with Barney is mostly found in the scope of this scrutiny and the time at which it might occur. On my view, it will be the case that reason in this critical function influences the process of habituation, and it achieves this through basic and rudimentary instantiations of deliberative reasoning. Hence, we shall see that the failure of deliberative reasoning in its basic forms is highly relevant for the outcome of later stages of habituation. My claims in this chapter will align with my interpretation of *NE* III.5, for I will also affirm that the critical function of reasoning cannot miraculously transform the most wretched child into a φρόνιμος. But that is compatible with conceiving of cases where reason attempts to provide a remedy to bad education and defective natural endowment to ameliorate what Aristotle calls the seeds of ethical vice and virtue. When it fails to do so, full-fledged human badness develops. With the terminology of *NE* III.5, reason fails to constitute and direct 'the remaining actions' (τὰ λοιπὰ πράττειν'; 1114b20).<sup>16</sup> The task of this chapter is to better understand how this failure unfolds, either through Aristotle's own contributions to this topic or through inferences in which I try to remain consistent with what he says about moral development elsewhere.

## **B. Deliberating while being habituated in ethical virtues**

As I already mentioned, the problem with Aristotle's ethical writings is that they do not give us many details about the role of practical reason in bad habituation. Therefore, this section [B] offers a general account of the role of reasoning in virtuous moral development. Section [C] will try to identify the ways in which a vicious person might fail during this process. The goal of this section is thus to argue for two distinct claims:

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. (p. 300).

<sup>16</sup> [*Synaitia, the person as such.*]

A] Habituation of ethical virtues necessarily depends on the activity of correct reasoning that situationally and critically contextualizes, enriches and reflects on the ends provided by the nonrational part of the soul. This is what Aristotle demands of the activity of deliberation. We might, like Barney, call this activity a ‘scrutiny of ends’.

B] The activity of deliberation does not – at least at first – have as its prerequisite and product intellectual reflection and ordering of ends. The ‘scrutiny of ends’ at a rudimentary level does not entail a deeply thought out theory of moral life. Such an activity will first require its training, in which it will be at first sufficient that it hits the practical truth in some of its instances. In this sense, correct deliberation must be differentiated from virtuous deliberation, which involves more demanding forms of practical reasoning.

These two claims add up to the following picture. Habituation will not result in ethical virtues unless it at some point of the moral development coincides with the ‘scrutiny of ends’.<sup>17</sup> Rudimentary forms of deliberation must gradually integrate themselves into this process, so that the critical function of reasoning in deliberation eventually develops to its perfection: the excellence of practical reasoning (φρόνησις). Thus, particular instances of deliberatively informed choices precede the acquirement of φρόνησις. If we broaden Barney’s ‘scrutiny of ends’ in this sense, it will eventually open up the possibility that the practical reasoning of a bad person fails in these basic and particular instances of deliberative reasoning, not in some higher-order practical reflection.

### B.1. Deliberation, Correct Deliberation, and Virtuous Deliberation

To argue for claims A] and B], first, I should properly introduce the concept of deliberation (βούλευσις) and discuss its relation to the habituation of the nonrational part of the human soul. Let me begin with the first task by making a very general reminder of the famous Aristotelian dictum that one becomes virtuous by doing virtuous actions: we become just by doing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, and so on (II.4; cf. II.1, 1103a34-b4). Behind this axiom stands the even more general claim that dispositions are realized and arise through activities that are similar to them (ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεργειῶν αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται; II.1 1103b22-23). To the puzzle of how one gets from mere actions to dispositions, Aristotle responds by listing three conditions of virtuous actions that must be true of the agent in question. I will concentrate on the second one, which states that actions done as a virtuous person would have done them are made on the grounds of decision (προαίρεσις) that is simultaneously a

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<sup>17</sup> Maybe we should qualify it as ‘the majority of cases of habituation’ because in *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle seems to allow that very fortunate people become good without deliberation (*EE* VIII.2). Interestingly, what he seems to say here is that these kinds of people need *neither* habituation *nor* deliberation. When someone is born with already perfect natural dispositions that lead him to the right things, it is not only the fact that deliberation will not be needed, but habituation can be discarded as well. **I will return to this passage later.**

decision to do them for themselves (ἔπειτ' ἐὰν προαιρούμενος, καὶ προαιρούμενος δι' αὐτά; II.4, 1105a31-34).<sup>18</sup>

The second condition is crucial for us here because the concept of προαίρεσις brings with it Aristotle's key conviction that virtuous action requires two elements: desire and reasoning. Desires are primarily supplied by our dispositions, and they give our actions motivational power and ends, while reasoning takes care of the task of deliberating about how to achieve these ends (βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη; III.3, 1112b11-12).<sup>19</sup> This division of labor is transferred to the cases where we talk not only about particular instances of actions, but about someone who is virtuous and acts virtuously in a consistent way: “*Again, our characteristic activity is achieved in accordance with practical wisdom and virtue of character; for virtue makes the aim right, and practical wisdom the things towards it.*” (VI.12, 1144a6-9).<sup>20</sup> The perspectives of individual actions and the virtuous states differ, but they share structural elements (desire and reasoning) and their division of labor (ends and means). The main difference being that the virtuous person has these elements in an excellent way, that is, as stable features of his soul that are rooted in practical wisdom and ethical virtues.

On the basis of being conditioned by desires *and* reasoning, in *NE* III.2-3 Aristotle differentiates the concept of προαίρεσις from desires, and also makes it clearer how reason contributes to choice, namely, through deliberation (βούλευσις). Deliberation is presented here as a normatively neutral analogue to what φρόνησις is doing for the φρόνιμος in VI.12: it makes him capable of deliberating about what can be done, about things that are conducive to the ends (βουλευόμεθα περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη; III.3, 1112b12). Furthermore, the object of deliberation is specified as that which is in our power (ἐφ' ἡμῖν; III.3 1113a10), that is, things that are possible for the agent to do in a given situation. The structure of action thus follows an order in which the desire gives the end, is deliberated on by reasoning, and if deliberation finds a way to realize that end in the given circumstances, προαίρεσις follows. It is in this sense that προαίρεσις is defined as “*deliberative desire for things in our power*” (ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτικὴ ὄρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν; III.3, 1113a10-11). As stated few lines earlier, it brings together reason and desire, where the former fulfills the deliberative role. Aristotle summarizes by saying that choice occurs “*when we have decided on the basis of deliberation*” or when “*we desire in accordance with our deliberation*” (ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν; III.3 1113a11-12).

At this moment, I want to shift the focus to the richness of Aristotle's concept of βούλευσις, even in its normatively neutral form. I will do that by identifying three important aspects of βούλευσις. First, it involves a *practical aspect*. Comparing it with rational desire (βούλησις) Aristotle says that choosing concerns only things that one considers to be in one's

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<sup>18</sup> The other conditions being that the action is done a] knowingly (εἰδώς) and b] from a stable disposition (βεβαίως καὶ ἀμετακινήτως ἔχων;).

<sup>19</sup> As we shall see later, Aristotle claims that ‘thought moves nothing’, which probably aligns with his claim made in *De Anima* that there is no action without desire, *DA* 433a21-5.

<sup>20</sup> ἔτι τὸ ἔργον ἀποτελεῖται κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴν ἀρετὴν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθόν, ἡ δὲ φρόνησις τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον. Unless noted otherwise all translations from *Nicomachean Ethics* are by Roger Crisp (2014), Cambridge University Press.

power (προαιρείται δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα [things that are not brought about by one's agency] οὐδεὶς, ἀλλ' ὅσα οἶεται γενέσθαι ἂν δι' αὐτοῦ; III.2 1111b25-6). That this applies also to deliberation is expressed by Aristotle in saying that people give up a pursuit of an end if they recognize it as impossible in realization (III.3 1112b25). In this sense, deliberation involves a certain opinion of the agent in terms of what is doable in light of the end (πρακτῶν; III.3, 1112a31). Importantly, this practical aspect is tied to the circumstances one finds himself in, so it is that what is *doable here and now*, which might differ from occasion to occasion.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, deliberation has an *evaluative aspect*. By evaluating the situation and saying that the end desired is doable in such and such a way, a way that is the best under the specific circumstances (III.3, 1112b18), deliberation introduces a new kind of evaluation, which eventually results in προαίρεσις being for what one most thinks to be good (καὶ προαιρούμεθα μὲν ἃ μάλιστα ἴσμεν ἀγαθὰ ὄντα; III.2, 1112a7-8). That this evaluative aspect is not only derived from the given desires appears evident from the fact that προαίρεσις, as a result of deliberation coupled with desires, can introduce conflict with appetites, which have as their only value the pleasant and painful, making them incapable of even conflicting with one another (III.2, 1111b16-17).<sup>22</sup> Additionally, it is clear that the hints of cognitive language in these passages imply a faculty that supersedes desires that follow purely nonrational tendencies. Therefore, choosing an act as something that is in one's own power simultaneously brings with itself the fact that it is pursued as something good and is recognized as such. Sarah Broadie's description of προαίρεσις brings these two aspects together very nicely: "*What is distinctive about the Aristotelian prohairesis, and why it is essentially practical, is that it is an endorsement of some action as good or appropriate simpliciter, not merely good from a limited and overrideable point of view. It is an all-things-considered rational decision, one that represents my sense of how under these circumstances I as a human being should simply act or behave, or what I should simply go for, or what counts as unqualified doing well (eupraxia), for me here and now.*"<sup>23</sup>

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Given the fact that προαίρεσις and βούλευσις apparently share the *practical* and *evaluative* aspects, where do we draw the line between them? As Aristotle puts it, the objects of these things are the same, "*except that the object of rational choice has already been determined, since it is what has been decided upon as the result of deliberation that is the object of rational choice.*" (III.3 1113a2-5).<sup>24</sup> This is in accordance with Aristotle's classification of

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<sup>21</sup> Aristotle's deep conviction that this is truly necessary stems from his beliefs that the realm of things that relate to action is contingent (NE I.3, 1094b11-27, cf. I.7 1098a26-9). Hence, the things that are πρακτῶν continually change, which in turn seems to demand that in each situation – at least to some extent – the agent must assess the circumstances anew (NE II.2, 1104a4-12). Of course, one must also mention the fact that the *doable here and now* is still guided by the posited end from which deliberation starts. So, it is not *doable here and now simpliciter* but *doable here and now with respect of the end that is pursued*. In this way, deliberation reaches beyond the contingency of the practical realm.

<sup>22</sup> "*Also, appetite can be in opposition to rational choice, but not to appetite. Again, appetite is concerned with what is pleasant and what is painful, rational choice with neither.*" (NE III.2, 1111b15-18).

<sup>23</sup> Broadie (2019, p. 255).

<sup>24</sup> βουλευτὸν δὲ καὶ προαιρετὸν τὸ αὐτό, πλὴν ἀφορισμένον ἤδη τὸ προαιρετὸν· τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς κριθὲν προαιρετὸν ἐστίν.



deliberation as a species of search or inquiry (ζήτησις; III.3 1113a6; cf. 1112b23 and VI.9 1142a31-2). While προαίρεσις already is a decision for what is to be pursued, deliberation is a process in which one searches for what is to be pursued. Thus, we arrive at the third distinctive mark of deliberation, its *investigative* or *zetetic aspect*. On its own, it is a process with an indeterminate result, where one looks for what is deemed doable and good in these circumstances. Therefore, deliberation implies an indeterminacy (ἀδιόριστον; III.3 1112b9), as attested by the fact that it is during the deliberative process that one decides how the end might be achieved. In light of this characteristic feature of this process, deliberation might make one to give up the end that is pursued under the condition that the search for proper means fails.

This summary gives us a normatively neutral characterization (i.e., applicable to bad and good deliberation) of προαίρεσις and βούλευσις. What could we say about their virtuous analogues? Aristotle begins to spell out his conditions in a more specific manner in *NE* VI.2, where he begins to fulfill his promise of specifying what was already established, namely the claim that the virtues of character require ὀρθός λόγος (*NE* II.2). Of course, we do not get content-specific rules of reasoning that determine what ὀρθός λόγος means on each and every occasion, but we get a clearer picture of what it is like to carry out the work of successful and correct deliberation that leads to a correct προαίρεσις and virtuous life, that is, towards this kind of standard. Let me quote the passage at length:

T1: *“There are three things in the soul controlling action and truth: perception, intellect, and desire. Of these, perception is clearly not the first principle of any action, since animals have perception, but no share in action. Pursuit and avoidance in the sphere of desire correspond to affirmation and denial in that of thought. So, since virtue of character is a state involving rational choice [ἔξις προαιρετική], and rational choice is deliberative desire [ὄρεξις βουλευτική], the reason must be true and the desire correct, if the rational choice is to be good, and desire must pursue what reason asserts. Such thought and truth are practical. [αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ διάνοια καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια πρακτική] (...) in the case of what is practical and concerned with thought, its being good consists in truth in agreement with correct desire. The first principle of action – its moving cause, not its goal – is rational choice; and that of rational choice is desire, and goal-directed reason. This is why rational choice involves not only intellect and thought, but a state of character; for acting well and its contrary require thought and character. Mere thought, however, moves nothing; it must be goal-directed and practical. Such thought governs productive thought as well, in that everyone who produces aims at some goal, and the product is not the goal without qualification, but only relative to something, and instrumental to something [πρὸς τι καὶ τινός]; for the goal without qualification is what is done, because acting well is the goal, and the object of desire. So rational choice is either desire-related intellect or thought-related desire, and such a first principle is a human being.”<sup>25</sup> VI.2, 1139a17-b5.*

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<sup>25</sup> Τρία δὴ ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τὰ κύρια πράξεως καὶ ἀληθείας, αἰσθησις νοῦς ὄρεξις. τούτων δ' ἡ αἰσθησις οὐδεμιᾶς ἀρχὴ πράξεως· δῆλον δὲ τῶ τὰ θηρία αἰσθησιν μὲν ἔχειν πράξεως δὲ μὴ κοινωνεῖν. ἔστι δ' ὅπερ ἐν διανοίᾳ

First, the passage confirms some of the claims that I have already established. It reaffirms the conception of προαίρεσις as in need of desire and thought,<sup>26</sup> and fuses these two elements even more firmly together, speaking of ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς and ὄρεξις διανοητική. Furthermore, it explains that reason on its own lacks the direction and motivation to realize something, whereas desires need the specification of the goal being grasped in relation to something. Second, the excerpt also elaborates on what correctness of reasoning amounts to. I take it as highly plausible that the ὀρθὸς λόγος lies very close to the notion of ἀλήθεια πρακτική.<sup>27</sup> The former is a standard to which virtues must adhere, the second is something that contributes to the achievement of this standard by being the ἔργον of successful deliberation, which is further confirmed by a passage from *Metaphysics* that establishes the difference between theoretical and practical inquiry, saying that even if the objective of practical philosophy is acting (labelled again as ἔργον), οἱ πρακτικοί also necessarily investigate ‘how things are’ (τὸ πῶς ἔχει σκοπῶσιν). Therefore, practical philosophy also strives for truth, the difference being that what “*they get a theoretical grasp on is the cause not intrinsically but in relation to something and now* [πρὸς τι καὶ νῦν].”<sup>28</sup> Taken together with T1, we see clear hints of the investigative aspect of deliberation reminiscent of ζήτησις in III.3, while also encountering the evaluative aspect (ἀλήθεια πρακτική) and the practical aspect (looking at what is πρὸς τι καὶ νῦν).

Now, does the notion of practical truth bring anything new to the table? First and foremost, it allows Aristotle to denote something as an ἔργον of reasoning, as its standard, which is achieved through deliberation, and together with the correct desire achieves virtuous actions. Therefore, it shows that instances of virtuous actions – in T1, as I see it, not yet necessarily the virtuous actions of the φρόνιμος – are necessarily composed of two elements that both need to achieve a certain normative standard, one of those elements being reserved for reasoning,<sup>29</sup> thus, the goal of correct deliberation is not only to find any kind of means to

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κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφασις, τοῦτ' ἐν ὀρέξει δίωξις καὶ φυγή· ὥστ' ἐπειδὴ ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ ἔξις προαιρετικὴ, ἡ δὲ προαίρεσις ὄρεξις βουλευτικὴ, δεῖ διὰ ταῦτα μὲν τὸν τε λόγον ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθήν, εἴπερ ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ τὸν μὲν φάναι τὴν δὲ διώκειν. αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ διάνοια καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια πρακτικὴ· τοῦ δὲ πρακτικοῦ καὶ διανοητικοῦ ἀλήθεια ὁμολόγως ἔχουσα τῇ ὀρέξει τῇ ὀρθῇ. Πράξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις – ὅθεν ἡ κίνησις ἀλλ' οὐχ οὗ ἕνεκα – προαιρέσεως δὲ ὄρεξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἕνεκά τινος. διὸ οὗτ' ἄνευ νοῦ καὶ διανοίας οὗτ' ἄνευ ἠθικῆς ἐστὶν ἕξεως ἡ προαίρεσις· εὐπραξία γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐν πράξει ἄνευ διανοίας καὶ ἠθους οὐκ ἐστίν. διάνοια δ' αὐτῇ οὐθὲν κινεῖ, ἀλλ' ἡ ἕνεκά του καὶ πρακτικὴ· αὕτη γὰρ καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἄρχη· ἕνεκα γὰρ του ποιεῖ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν, καὶ οὐ τέλος ἀπλῶς (ἀλλὰ πρὸς τι καὶ τινός) τὸ ποιητόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ πρακτόν· ἡ γὰρ εὐπραξία τέλος, ἡ δ' ὄρεξις τούτου. διὸ ἡ ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς ἡ προαίρεσις ἡ ὄρεξις διανοητικὴ, καὶ ἡ τοιαύτη ἀρχὴ ἄνθρωπος.

<sup>26</sup> Compare with “*when we have decided on the basis of deliberation*” or when “*we desire in accordance with our deliberation*”, III.3 1113a11-12.

<sup>27</sup> Hence fulfilling the promise of II.2, 1103b32-35, which presupposed the concept of ὀρθὸς λόγος. Its relation to other excellences will be made clearer in *NE* VI.12-13.

<sup>28</sup> *Metaphysics* 993b20-23.

<sup>29</sup> **Some**, of course, dispute that both elements are needed, but I see no other way around the fact that Aristotle describes both factors in VI.12-13 as indispensable, and even if the expert does not have to have articulated reasons for his actions (VI.12, 1143b11–13), he still possesses φρόνησις that was established by instances of correct deliberation. Broadie (2019, p. 269-270) seems to also suggest that the necessity of practical reasoning being present in the ideal of good action has to do with the fact that the characteristically perfect activity

the ends that are correct, but to contribute to them in a way that amounts to ἀλήθεια πρακτική. This implies that when we take seriously the aspects of deliberation as laid out in the previous paragraphs, the notion of practical truth arrived at by reasoning in deliberation must reach the normative standard by searching and assessing what is doable and good here and now in light of the correct end.

There are different views on how to specify what this standard of correct deliberation really amounts to. For one thing, it is unclear whether it is *the* ἀλήθεια πρακτική that is the standard or if ἀλήθεια πρακτική merely agrees with a standard that remains distinct from it, and which would, for example, be common to desire and reasoning. It is also evident that the notion of practical truth is controversial, so let me propose a very general reading. If we return to the above-quoted *Metaphysics* passage, we might take it as probable that Aristotle takes practical truth to be in a certain relationship to the way the world is.<sup>30</sup> Although something is practically true only relative to someone and in a certain moment, thus differing from what is discovered in the theoretical inquiry (some kind of per se causes that are necessary and universal),<sup>31</sup> it still means that it amounts to a standard one can strive to reach and that is there to be discovered. It is not hard to see how this causes flashbacks to the notion of mean (μέσον) as laid out in the discussion of ethical virtues, where it embodied the standard of correctness to which one strives if one is to become virtuous. There, the mean was described as something that is hard to determine and depends on person and their circumstances, but simultaneously as something that can be achieved in every kind of situation (II.6, 1106b23-25). What we have here is thus an assignment of the task of further determining the mean to deliberative reasoning, while describing it as its genuine ἔργον with the help of the notion of practical truth.

Thus, there is a certain affinity between the terms ὀρθός λόγος, ἀλήθεια πρακτική and μέσον. Although what is hit upon as μέσον must be more than just correct instances of practical deliberation, when one returns to the chapters where ethical virtues are at issue, Aristotle emphasizes that the mean is determined through situational awareness, similarly to the notion of practical truth. He repeats tirelessly that the virtuous person is not someone who acts on rigid rules that apply necessarily and cross-situationally. What is to be done must be determined in light of the situation,<sup>32</sup> and the decisions the virtuous person forms are thus informed by the

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of humans is theoretical reasoning. That the aim of *NE* is to strive for this contemplative ideal, or at least point it as the most perfect life, becomes clear in *NE* X.7.

<sup>30</sup> I think Olfert offers a helpful emphasis of this idea by saying that in Aristotle we discover how we can fit ourselves to the world and how the world is, see Olfert (2017, p. 159). Of course, action still changes things, but it is taken to be substantially informed by the way the contingent world around us is constituted, see Olfert (2017, p. 107). The direction of fit in Aristotle is thus mostly characterized as us trying to fit to the world, not to make the world fit to us.

<sup>31</sup> *APo* 71b9–16.

<sup>32</sup> Most helpful illustration of this is the following passage: “*In the same way, people think that knowing what is just and what is unjust does not require any wisdom, because it is not difficult to grasp what the laws say, though the acts they prescribe are not just other than in an incidental way. But knowing how acts are to be done and distributions to be effected if they are to be just is more of a job than knowing what health requires. Though, even in the case of health, knowing about honey, wine, hellebore, cautery and surgery may be easy, knowing how one should prescribe them to make people healthy, and to whom and at what time, is as demanding a task as it is to be a doctor.*” (V.9 1137a9-17).

factors of the situation and determine the how, with what, etc. (II.6, 1106b21-23).<sup>33</sup> Again, the basic idea is that the virtuous person and, even broadly, virtuous actions are correct if they accord with how the world is, how such agent finds himself in a certain situation, and what he should pursue in that situation.<sup>34</sup> We see now more clearly how correct deliberation is a scrutiny of ends that should achieve what is practically true in a given situation.

Let me summarize what was achieved in this subsection. First, I analyzed three characteristic features of deliberation: its *practical*, *evaluative*, and *zetetic* aspects. Second, I have also shown that VI.2 gives us an idea of what happens in cases where the deliberation is correct, that is, when it hits what is labeled as ἀλήθεια πρακτική. We now have tools in hand to understand what happens in *NE* VI.7, where Aristotle further expands his analysis of deliberation by explicitly labelling φρόνησις to be the virtue of deliberation. If someone possesses this virtue, he will be a perfect deliberator, which comes down to the following: “*The person unqualifiedly good at deliberation is the one who tends to aim, in accordance with his calculation, at the best of the goods for a human being that are achievable in action.*” (ὁ δ' ἀπλῶς εὐβουλος ὁ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀνθρώπου τῶν πρακτῶν στοχαστικὸς κατὰ τὸν λογισμόν; VI.7, 1141b12–1141b14). Thus, we arrive at a description of someone who not only occasionally deliberates in a good way, but someone who is an εὐβουλος and can, according to Aristotle, deliberate well cross-situationally and constantly. The introduction of this character then leads Aristotle to address the relation of φρόνησις to ἠθικὴ ἀρετή. In *NE* VI.12-13, it is confirmed and further explained that analogously to correct desire and practical truth, the fully virtuous person will need virtues that arm him with success in achieving success in both. That is, Aristotle affirms the mutual conditioning of correct desire and practical truth by making their corresponding states indispensable to being virtuous. Once again, we encounter the interdependence of these elements, making it clear that the ideal endpoint of moral education is a state where desires become infused with reasoning, the two parts of the human soul working in a stable psychic harmony, pursuing the right ends with the right means.<sup>35</sup> These are, as it is established in *NE* VI.12-13, necessary and sufficient conditions of decisions that qualify someone as the φρόνιμος.

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<sup>33</sup> “(...) to have them at the right time, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the mean and best; and this is the business of virtue.” (II.6 1106b21-23).

<sup>34</sup> This is somewhat close to Olfert’s interpretation where practical truth is defined as a *kind of truth* that is “*unqualifiedly good for a particular person when all of her particular circumstances are taken into account.*”, Olfert (2017, p. 105). Nonetheless, as Broadie rightly notes, it is hard to see to which thing we precisely ascribe practical truth and how far the notion of truth as a genus that includes theoretical and practical truth can be stretched. Broadie ‘source’. Her main point of contention is that practical truth must apply not only to what is done by the rational activity and what is the work of reasoning, but also to what the desire does (source). Additionally, her interest also lies in keeping Aristotle’s general theory of truth as assertoric in compatibility with the fact that practical truth seem to be a broader concept, that does not necessarily always conform to an assertoric form (source).

<sup>35</sup> This is, to my mind, compatible with the fact that the perfect moral agent becomes such an expert that the practical reason is sort of a ‘moral vision’ where he almost ‘sees what is correct’ even without necessarily deliberating on each and every occasion. This nonetheless, as I read it, is a rather advanced stage (or even the most advanced stage) of a moral development, preceded by habituation that did include many instances of deliberation, more or less explicit and more or less made throughout large amount of time, not at an instant (quote).

## B.2. Being habituated to listen to reason and deliberate (claim A)

So far, I have distinguished what I call neutral, correct, and virtuous deliberation. In the current subsection my aim will be to substantiate claim A], by showing that moral development and, more specifically, habituation of ethical virtues depend on instances of correct deliberation that scrutinizes the ends provided by the nonrational part of the soul. Only then can we say that it ensures that the person will become φρόνιμος, with fully developed ethical virtues and a state that is equated with virtuous deliberation, φρόνησις. The virtues of the nonrational and rational part of the soul are interdependent in him, and their interdependence is established during the habituation of ethical virtues. Among other things, thesis A thus finds the roots of this interdependence in an advanced stage of moral development.

We can begin to support this interdependence by noting some fundamental characteristics of ἠθικὴ ἀρετή. First, the dictum: virtues arise through virtuous action. Virtuous action by definition entails προαίρεσις, where προαίρεσις entails correct deliberation. It surely cannot mean virtuous deliberation because, at the stage which precedes the formation of virtues, one is doing these actions only as the virtuous person would have done them (II.4, 1105b5-7), not necessarily by being already fully virtuous. This brings us to the fact that there must be the possibility of occasionally acting virtuously without yet being virtuous, thus occasionally striking the mean and with it the practical truth in deliberation. This is hardly surprising, because virtue is defined as entailing ὀρθὸς λόγος: “*Virtue, then, is a state involving rational choice, consisting in a mean relative to us and determined by reason – the reason, that is, by reference to which the practically wise person would determine it.*” (II.6, 1106b36-1107a2).<sup>36</sup> I assume that the entailment signifies the mutual interdependence that is definitional of fully developed virtue, which intuitively means that the development of virtue already presupposes making correct deliberations that are developed simultaneously. Ethical virtues do not arise without deliberation, they are developed along with it (αἱ δ' ἀρεταὶ προαιρέσεις τινὲς ἢ οὐκ ἄνευ προαιρέσεως; II.5, 1106a3–4).

At this point, one might simply qualify this claim by retorting that the correct decisions and correct deliberation are supplied externally, from the educators who are supposed to guide one to a proper character. No one in their right mind would dispute the importance that Aristotle assigns to externally driven education that supplies correct reasoning.<sup>37</sup> However, it hardly seems to be the case that someone who possesses virtue defined as ἔξις προαιρετική (II.6, 1106b36-1107a2; *EE* II.5, 1222a31) can be strictly speaking in possession of it without eventually coming to make these choices and deliberations on his own. Given the fact that the virtuous person needs φρόνησις that is specified as deliberatively searching for what is good relative to the agent here and now, it cannot be realistically expected that the virtuous person

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<sup>36</sup> Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἔξις προαιρετική, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὠρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ᾧ ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν.

<sup>37</sup> One of the most explicit affirmations of the fact that ethical ἔξεις can be changed from the outside is that Aristotle talks about someone who lacks the notion of guidance (ἀπαιδαγωγότητος; IV.1 1121b11). The mean is achieved with the help of someone else implying that correct deliberations might be, to some extent, communicated and lead to successful moral development, also through ἐπιμέλεια. Cf. *Politics* VII.3 1338b3-8, where education through habituation precedes education through reasoning.

can do this without trained disposition to deliberate. After all, the contingency of the realm of what is *πρακτῶν* demands the ability to determine what is *ἀλήθεια πρακτική* in any given situation that, on its own, excludes continuous external guidance.<sup>38</sup>

From these remarks, I think we can safely assume that the capacity of deliberation is not only something that develops along with ethical virtues, it is something that needs to be trained and tested, even by the agent himself. This should not be surprising, since the eventual excellence in deliberation is a disposition after all (*ἔξις*; VI.12, 1143b25), thus a state that is definitionally – at least in the scope of Aristotle’s ethical works – developed by giving a certain character to activities (II.1, 1103b22-23).<sup>39</sup> Therefore, when Aristotle claims that we become virtuous by acting as if we were already virtuous, I think it is safe to say that this involves the training in deliberative reasoning that attempts to hit at the practical truth.<sup>40</sup> In the terminology of VI.2, the *ἔργον* of practical reasoning precedes its *ἀρετή* (1139b11–14).<sup>41</sup>

The last piece of evidence that points to the interdependence of habituation and practical deliberation is Aristotle’s requirement that *ἠθική ἀρετή*, as a virtue of the nonrational part of the soul, listens to reason as an authority (I.13, 1102b26-29; cf. *EE* II.2 1220b5-7 and *Politics* IV.11, 1295b5-6).<sup>42</sup> The *ἔξις προαιρετική* label therefore does not mean that it itself makes these decisions, since that is impossible given its nonrationality, but that it tends to listen to

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<sup>38</sup> The conclusions from the previous chapter showed us, that we can make sense of this by distinguishing different stages of moral development and allow for the fact that in some, one relies overwhelmingly at the care from the outside, whereas in others the care is supposed to come from inside (X.9, 1180a1-5). Furthermore, as one distinguishes between different stages of deliberative virtues – for the contrast between occasionally being correct and possessing virtuous deliberation might be taken as evidence of gradual progress towards certain disposition – one should also distinguish between different stages of ethical virtues. We might thus distinguish between natural virtue (see the contrast between *ἀρετή φυσική* and *ἀρετή ἐθίστη* VII.8 1151a), something I called seeds of ethical virtue (X.9 1179b23-31 and 1180a5-8; cf. *Politics* VII.1 1337a18-21 and Lawrence (2011, p. 276) and ethical virtue par excellence (*ἀρετή κύρια*, VI.13 1144b8-14).

*[As far as the notion of deliberation being always investigative, I think some commentators are right to point out that deliberation, given its zetetic nature through which it constantly readjust itself in light of the circumstances, is akin to some kind of excellence in learning: “Euboulia does not consist in one’s being equipped with a full body of practical knowledge which would enable one to arrive at a correct choice in any given situation. Aristotle’s conception of the good deliberator is primarily a conception of someone who, in addition to having some body of practical knowledge, has the ability to acquire the further knowledge he needs in order to deal with the new circumstances he finds himself in. Thus, Aristotle thinks of practical wisdom as, among other things, an excellence of learning.” Segvic (2009, p. 169). See also footnote no.]*

<sup>39</sup> As Aristotle succinctly puts it, if the goal of the practical part of reasoning is to grasp the practical truth, its excellence consists in successful development of such *ἔξις* with which one will “grasp truth to the highest degree” (*καθ’ ἃς οὐδ’ ἄλλοι μάλιστα ἔξεις ἀληθεύσει ἐκάτερον, αὐταὶ ἀρεταὶ ἀμφοῖν.*; I.2, 1139b11–14).

<sup>40</sup> There is a danger, which was kindly pointed out to me by Matyáš Havrda, that this blurs the distinction between *ἠθική ἀρετή* and *διανοητική ἀρετή*, the former acquired by habituation, the latter by learning (II.1, 1103a14-18). But the claim I pursue here is not that *φρόνησις* develops through habituation, which seems to be mostly a mindless repetition based on simple pleasures and pains, but merely the fact that any kind of *ἔξις* will require many instances of activity that correspond to the kind of *ἔξις* in question. This applies to deliberation as well.

<sup>41</sup> In his analysis, Aristotle postpones the discussion of the *ἀρετή* of deliberation until VI.5, further justifying its need in VI.12-13.

<sup>42</sup> *[Aristotle also claims that humans are properly identified with the rational part (IX.4, 1166a17).]*

reason in terms of decisions and deliberation. Müller offers a helpful interpretation of this phrase. According to him, habituation of the nonrational part entails that it is trained to listen to reason in a way that is noncoercive and non-discursive. He characterizes it as a kind of preparedness of the nonrational part of the soul, where the virtuous agent is “*already sensitive to what reason says because of their habitual attachment to (their own) true deliberative efforts and decisions.*”<sup>43</sup> The ideal of ἔξις προαιρετική is that the nonrational part of the soul enjoys the fact that deliberation and decision take control and steer it (Müller (2019, p. 22); cf. IX.8, 1168b30-35),<sup>44</sup> which implies also the intertwining and interdependence that is established in VI.13, where virtue is not only in accordance but with logos (κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον vs. μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου; 1144b26-27).<sup>45</sup>

If these points of interconnectedness are real, we have come to see *that* the development of nonrational virtues depends on deliberation and thus on reasoning. But we want to also understand *why* this is the case so that we can ultimately come to understand why it is the case that, without correct deliberation, badness appears. In other words, we are searching for the reason why the nonrational virtues have to listen to reasoning and contextualize its desires so as to hit the *meson*. The fundamental reason, as I see it, is because the values the nonrational part of the soul can grasp are categorically different from those that can be grasped by the rational part. As we saw, the desires of the nonrational part of the soul (primarily ἐπιθυμία, but also θυμός) are concerned with perception of goodness and badness insofar as it is pleasant or painful (III.2, 1111b15-18; cf. *DA* 431a7-16). Compared to other more complex forms of desire and compared to reasoning, humans feel pleasure and pain immediately after being born (II.3, 1105a1-5), which is also why getting used to education is so important from the moment one is born (II.3, 1104b13). But what is so bad about listening to pleasures and pains? There are numerous passages in which Aristotle speaks of affections and, specifically, of appetites in a pejorative way that implies characteristics detrimental to proper moral development. For example, when he speaks of a natural disposition of virtue that is evidently inborn (implying our natural inclination towards pleasure II.9, 1109b9-11) and functions only along the scales of pleasure and pain, he says that without intelligence it is blind and harmful (VI.13, 1144b8-13, cf. II.9, 1109b8-9). Additionally, it is clear that pleasures and pains are to a great extent accidental and indeterminate (*Politics* III.10 1280a35; cf. VII.6 1149b14-18), which might lead to their insatiability:

T2: “*If, then, it [appetites or children] is not going to be obedient and subject to its ruler, it will get out of hand. For the desire of an irrational being for what is pleasant is insatiable and indiscriminate, and the activity of desire will strengthen the tendency he is born with. And if appetites are strong and excessive, they actually expel calculation. They should therefore be moderate and few in number, and in no kind of opposition to reason – this is what we mean by ‘obedient’ and ‘disciplined’*”

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<sup>43</sup> Müller (2019, p. 14).

<sup>44</sup> For the evidence that there is a habit of following reasoning Müller cites *Metaphysics* (II.3 994b32-995a14) and VII.9 1151b17-22, *EE* 1248a36-7. **Check**

<sup>45</sup> Similar conclusion is reached by Lawrence (2011, p. 244) who calls the nonrational part ‘essentially reason-leaning’ and labels it as ‘cognitive, rationally illuminated disposition of will’, *ibid.* (p. 274).

– and as the child ought to live in accordance with what his tutor prescribes, so ought the appetitive element in accordance with reason. So the appetitive element in a temperate person ought to be in harmony with reason; for the aim of both is what is noble, and the temperate person's appetite is for the right thing, in the right way, and at the right time, and this is what reason requires as well.”<sup>46</sup> III.12, 1119b7-18

This passage that deals with the virtue of temperance repeats the previously established claim that one should listen to reason, apparently by deliberating on what is fine to do at that moment in these circumstances. Thus, it also serves as a neat transition to a value that is introduced by reasoning, and which differs from the pleasant and the painful, namely καλόν (and with it its opposite αἰσχροός), for this is precisely the type of value that the nonrational part cannot conceive and follow without the help of reasoning. Given the blindness and indeterminacy of simple pleasures and pains, Aristotle singles out a different kind of value around which one can calibrate their actions. Compared to appetite, καλόν is associated with order (*Metaphysics* 14.3 1078a33-b3, *EE* 1.8, 1218a15-24) and appears to be the thing in which all virtues depicted in III-V aim at (III.7, 1115b10–13), being often closely associated with ὀρθός λόγος (III.8, 1117a8, IV.1 1120a23–7, IV.6 1126b28-9) as was also the case in T2. As Aristotle puts it, καλόν is something common to all the excellences (IV.2, 1122b6-7).<sup>47</sup> It is also evident that the fine and the pleasant build two distinct values that “*motivate everything everyone does*” (τὰ ἡδέα καὶ τὰ καλὰ (...) τούτων γὰρ χάριν πάντες πάντα πράττουσιν; III.1 1110b9-11). Therefore, we have here a contrast between a value that is blind, even dangerous, and a value that is consistently associated with the ὀρθός λόγος and the μέσον. The association of the καλόν with virtuous acting is evident, as is the association with determinacy and the mean as determined by reason (II.6, 1106b15-29). For obvious reasons, we can thus very briefly conclude that the goal of moral development is to take the absence of direction and indeterminacy of natural virtues and redirect it towards certain goal that implies something that is appropriate and good. The goal is thus to give this determinacy to our actions, which is in accordance with the fine, so that these can be done for something good going beyond pleasure and pain.

Thus, the value of the fine consists in providing an orientation for the deliberation so that it can achieve its proper ἔργον (ἀλήθεια πρακτική) when it attempts to arrive at a decision made for the sake of what we know the most to be good (III.3, 1112a6-8). To achieve that, one

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<sup>46</sup> εἰ οὖν μὴ ἔσται εὐπειθὲς καὶ ὑπὸ τὸ ἄρχον, ἐπὶ πολὺ ἤξει· ἄπληστος γὰρ ἢ τοῦ ἡδέος ὄρεξις καὶ πανταχόθεν τῷ ἀνοήτῳ, καὶ ἢ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἐνέργεια αὔξει τὸ συγγενές, κἂν μεγάλοι καὶ σφοδραὶ ὄσι, καὶ τὸν λογισμὸν ἐκκρούουσιν. διὸ δεῖ μετρίας εἶναι αὐτὰς καὶ ὀλίγας, καὶ τῷ λόγῳ μὴθὲν ἐναντιοῦσθαι – τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον εὐπειθὲς λέγομεν καὶ κεκολασμένον – ὥσπερ δὲ τὸν παῖδα δεῖ κατὰ τὸ πρόσταγμα τοῦ παιδαγωγοῦ ζῆν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν κατὰ τὸν λόγον. διὸ δεῖ τοῦ σώφρονος τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν συμφωνεῖν τῷ λόγῳ· σκοπὸς γὰρ ἀμφοῖν τὸ καλόν, καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖ ὁ σώφρων ὧν δεῖ καὶ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὅτε· οὕτω δὲ τάττει καὶ ὁ λόγος.

Similar parallel is also drawn in the famous passage where Aristotle divides the human soul – insofar as it is relevant to human excellence – into two parts: one that is reason and one that can listen to reason. The former likened to child, the latter to a parent (I.13, 1102b26-35).

<sup>47</sup> δαπανήσει δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὁ μεγαλοπρεπὴς τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα· κοινὸν γὰρ τοῦτο ταῖς ἀρεταῖς



must go beyond the pain and pleasure that can conflict with προαίρεσις (III.2, 1111b15-18).<sup>48</sup> If one is supposed to evaluate what is good for someone in a particular situation, thus combining the practical and evaluative aspects of deliberation, it becomes evident that pleasure and pain will not do. Primarily because without them, one does not see outside of the blind and occurrent affections. Aristotle is clear about this by painting the concern for καλόν as something that brings with it a broadening of perspective, which eventually can lead to consistent virtuous behavior that is not motivated by the pleasant and the painful:

*T3 „The courageous person will be undaunted so far as is humanly possible; so, though he will fear even the things not beyond human endurance, he will stand his ground for the sake of what is noble (since this is the end of virtue) in the right way and as reason requires. [τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα· τοῦτο γὰρ τέλος τῆς ἀρετῆς.] (...) So the courageous person is the one who endures and fears – and likewise is confident about – the right things, for the right reason, in the right way, and at the right time; for the courageous person feels and acts in accordance with the merits of the case, and as reason requires. The end of every activity is being in accordance with its state. [τέλος δὲ πάσης ἐνεργείας ἐστὶ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν] To the courageous person, courage is noble; and so its end is also noble, since the character of everything is determined by its end. So it is for the sake of what is noble that the courageous person stands his ground and acts in accordance with courage. [καλοῦ δὴ ἕνεκα ὁ ἀνδρεῖος ὑπομένει καὶ πράττει τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀνδρείαν]”<sup>49</sup> III.7, 1115b10-24*

It is then understandable that it is not only in the case of the virtue of courage that Aristotle speaks of acting for the sake of fine as something where one puts pleasures and pains into background, withholding from evaluations that are done on the grounds of these (see II.3 1104a33-b2).<sup>50</sup> For the concern for καλόν that seems to come in tandem with the concern for practical truth can ensure two things. On the one hand, virtuous actions are performed according to ὀρθός λόγος so as to hit the μέσον, which means that through them one becomes situationally aware of what is doable, but on the other hand, this also means that they contain an evaluative aspect beyond the situational ends that are offered by simple pleasures and pains. The former aspect ensures that one does not act without the proper context of the situation, while the second ensures that one goes beyond the current situation to orient oneself towards what is good. As must be evident now, this is precisely what deliberation can offer, even in its basic form. In this

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<sup>48</sup> Importantly, it is not denied that pleasure and pain give us basic ideas of goodness and badness (*EE* II.10 1227b2–3), only that they do it in a way that is importantly different from the fine and the shameful. Hence, when Aristotle sometimes claims that the good and the pleasant differ, one should interpret him as saying that the genus of goodness is not exhausted by the notion of pleasure (*EE* VII.1 1235b21-23).

<sup>49</sup> ὁ δὲ ἀνδρεῖος ἀνέκκλητος ὡς ἄνθρωπος. φοβήσεται μὲν οὖν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ὡς δεῖ δὲ καὶ ὡς ὁ λόγος ὑπομένει τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα· τοῦτο γὰρ τέλος τῆς ἀρετῆς. (...) ὁ μὲν οὖν ἂν δεῖ καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα ὑπομένων καὶ φοβούμενος, καὶ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὅτε, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ θαρρῶν, ἀνδρεῖος· κατ' ἀξίαν γάρ, καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ λόγος, πάσχει καὶ πράττει ὁ ἀνδρεῖος. τέλος δὲ πάσης ἐνεργείας ἐστὶ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν. †καὶ τῷ ἀνδρεῖῳ δὲ ἡ ἀνδρεία καλόν.† τοιοῦτον δὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος· ὀρίζεται γὰρ ἕκαστον τῷ τέλει. καλοῦ δὴ ἕνεκα ὁ ἀνδρεῖος ὑπομένει καὶ πράττει τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀνδρείαν.

<sup>50</sup> It seems that one can go as far as equaling the ability of transcending the present moment with transcending pleasures and pains in general, see Smith (1996, p. 73).

way, reason can contribute to what is valued and how it is valued. If one thus correctly deliberates, one engages with the situation in a more complex and active way that gives more context and richness to the notion of goodness.<sup>51</sup> It is in this sense that reason can be critical of the ends offered by desires and scrutinize them.

I believe we now have an answer to the question of *why* deliberation remains necessary: under the right circumstances, it is accompanied and develops along with a value that can be relied on when trying to achieve that which is truly good. When deliberation takes the fine as its value, it can discover the practical truth and steer desires. If ethical *ἔξεις* are supposed to do what is right owing to a decision (V.5 1134a1-2), they must listen to reason, as it can provide direction and correctness. Furthermore, these dispositions can apparently be trained to go beyond pleasure and pain. They can ask for the standard of correctness that is the *ἀλήθεια πρακτική*, so that together with reason they can achieve that which is *καλόν* and thus also good. Therefore, the ‘scrutiny of ends’ consists of habituation being steered by deliberation that transcends nonrational values of pain and pleasure.<sup>52</sup> Reasoning plays here a corrective element that properly contextualizes and thinks through factors that influence the situation at hand and that must be taken into an account, if the end, which is in the earlier stage of moral development given by nonrational desires, is to be realized as the virtuous person would have done it, that is, through properly qualified activities (II.2 1103b22-3 and 29-31).

If this is to be done, it is clear that – based on the fact that *ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ* is with or involves (*μέτα*) the right reason and the right reason is provided by the disposition of *φρόνησις* – there must be a stage in which these two develop in tandem (where, of course, the former was already in development prior to any activity of reasoning). The interpretation I proposed in the previous pages thus brings habituation and the development of deliberational disposition closer together, as two interdependent factors that must work in tandem, at least at the more advanced stages of moral development. In a way, I am trying to transfer the interdependence of *ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ* and *φρόνησις* to a stage at which these excellences are still being developed. It is here where the disposition of *βούλευσις* must be trained so as to allow for these to develop.<sup>53</sup> The claim A] therefore demands that at a certain stage of the development of nonrational dispositions, the

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<sup>51</sup> On this point many interpreters agree. Lawrence (2011, p. 273) speaks of ‘discriminating and imaginative sensitivity’, Vasiliou (1996, p. 794) of ‘imagination of practical reasoning’.

<sup>52</sup> One might resist this by quoting Aristotle’s saying that we do not deliberate about ends, merely about their means (1112b12). But I hope I showed this does not mean one cannot give up an end, or that the circumstances cannot even influence what kind of end is chosen in the end. After all, deliberation is not the capacity to search for means to an end no matter the circumstances, precisely the opposite. The role of deliberation is to search for what to do in a given circumstances considering the possible goodness of such and such realization of the given end. See Broadie (2019, p. 255) or Bowditch (2008, p. 319). **I shall talk about this more in the next section.**

<sup>53</sup> **[One** – compare with the other footnote, source – additional indication comes from a difficult text in *EE* (VIII.2 1248a33-35) where Aristotle talk about the fortunate that have, by nature, grasp of what should be done and how: “*They have the kind of starting point which is greater than insight and deliberation – the others have reason, but do not have this, nor do they have divine inspiration – but they cannot deliberate. They succeed despite being irrational.*” Not looking at the main thesis, it seems to be Aristotle’s view here that someone who is not fortunate has *logos* yet not the starting point (something as an arche of action that is supplied by moral virtue). This naturally implies that it is precisely his work in deliberation that leads him to the starting point and that the naturally good do not have to do in order to act in a good way.]

agent begins to scrutinize the ends provided by external education, through deliberations and assessments of how they are to be realized in particular situations so that they achieve that what is truly good.<sup>54</sup> If one is to succeed in developing ethical virtues, one must thus be open to listen to reason through participation in deliberation.<sup>55</sup> Thus, it is also through following reason, even if it is not yet the right reason, that one can truly perfect the seeds of virtue.<sup>56</sup>

I take claim A] as established. Certain stages of habituation can and should, if they are to achieve their goal, involve the development and practice of rational capacities that critically steer the development of nonrational dispositions. Important is that this is not a clash between absence of reasoning and presence of reasoning, but rather of the way we prioritize values and how reasoning assists in this pursuit. If we listen to reason, prioritize fine and subdue pleasures so that they listen to reason, this capacity of the human soul will be able to do its job by carefully approaching individual situations and inquiring into what is the doable good. The scrutiny of ends that Barney introduces thus begins not on some reflexively demanding and meta-ethical level, but in instances of rational deliberation that issue into φρόνησις and that ‘open the eye’ of blind nonrational desires, thus ensuring that one becomes an internal educator of the nonrational part. In other words, at this stage of moral development, it is crucial to start caring for yourself through reasoning and to eliminate the dependence of care on others. As I will try to show after the next subsection, this is where the bad person can fail, which solidifies and finally brings about his badness.

### B.3. The Forms of Rationality in Rudimentary Deliberative Instances

Having established claim A, I want to move on to claim B. To remind ourselves:

B] The activity of deliberation does not – at least at first – have as its prerequisite and product intellectual reflection and ordering of ends. The ‘scrutiny of ends’ at a rudimentary level does not involve a deeply thought out theory of moral life, such activity will be after its training, in which it will be at first sufficient to hit the practical truth in some of its instances. In this sense, correct deliberation must be differentiated from unqualified virtuous deliberation, which probably involves more demanding forms of practical reasoning.

In other words, what must be proven is that Aristotle sees it as possible that βούλευσις can have a limited scope and does not necessarily entail higher-order reflection on morally

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<sup>54</sup> Bowditch (2008, p. 327) and Vasiliou (1996, p. 792) both think along the similar lines, namely distinguishing stages of habituation and claiming that some of them must involve forming of deliberation as a disposition simultaneously with ἠθικὴ ἀρετή.

<sup>55</sup> Muller (2019, p. 39) offers the following illustration of such process: “*Following Aristotle’s dictum that we become virtuous by doing virtuous action (II.2, 1104a20-b4), the establishment of this standing concern or habitual need should follow familiar route: it is developed through engaging in deliberation about one’s non-rational desires and through acting on such deliberation. Presumably, at first it would be parents or teachers showing the young adult how to think about what to do, while later the child (or young person) would be motivated to deliberate on her own on the basis of various extrinsic features. Ultimately, she would acquire a taste and become attached to exercising her ability for such deliberation as such.*”

<sup>56</sup> [Reasoning, of course, does not ensure that we are correct, as we shall see in the following sections.]

relevant ends. There are relevant instances of deliberation that do not presuppose some broadly expanded scope of it.<sup>57</sup> We shall see that Aristotle makes a couple of distinctions that delimit different possibilities as far as the scope of deliberation is concerned.

- Deinotes?

The first contrast that he acknowledges is between ‘technical’ and ‘nontechnical’ deliberation. In this case, the difference he has in mind appears to be between the deliberation that occurs within the scope of some τέχνη (e.g., being a doctor) and a morally relevant deliberation:

*T4 “Everyone’s deliberation, technical or non-technical [καὶ μετὰ τέχνης καὶ ἄνευ τέχνης], investigates what contributes to the end – for example, whether one should wage war or not. True, at a previous stage there will be the reason why, or that for the sake of which, one is deliberating – for example, wealth or pleasure or whatever other such thing turns out to be that for the sake of which. What the deliberator deliberates about, once he has considered the matter starting from the end, is how to bring what conduces to it into his own hands, or what he himself can do to realize it.”<sup>58</sup> EE II.10 1227a11-18*

The scope of the ἄνευ τέχνης deliberation does not appear to involve some higher-order reflection, even if it is based on the pursuit of a rather general end. Contrast this with places in Aristotle’s ethics that talk of φρόνησις πρακτική that is additionally described with the adjective ἀρχιτεκτονική. It involves βούλευσις, since this type of knowledge is what distinguishes the ἀπλῶς εὐβουλος (VI.7 1141b12-23), but given its political relevance, it must also involve some more substantial forms of knowledge that give it the status of political science. Some infer from this that political science and perfectly practical thought include a grasp of the ends and goals that must be nondeliberative in some sense.<sup>59</sup> Be that as it may, more explicit evidence of the distinction between at least two types of deliberation in terms of their scope is found in another place in NE VI:

*T5 “We may grasp what practical wisdom is by considering the sort of people we describe as practically wise. It seems to be characteristic of the practically wise person to be able to deliberate nobly [τὸ δύνασθαι καλῶς βουλευσασθαι] about what is good and beneficial for himself, not in particular respects [οὐ κατὰ μέρος], such as what conduces to health or strength, but about what conduces to living well as a whole [πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως]. An indication of this is the fact that we call people practically wise in some particular respect [περὶ τι φρονίμους] whenever they calculate well to promote some good end that lies outside the ambit of a skill; so,*

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<sup>57</sup> Some would mention the so-called Grand End View interpretation of Aristotle’s ethics, in which it is usually presupposed that there is a sort of well-thought-out plan of one’s own life. [\[source\]](#)

<sup>58</sup> περὶ δὲ τῶν πρὸς τὸ τέλος φερόντων ἢ σκέψις καὶ μετὰ τέχνης καὶ ἄνευ τέχνης πᾶσιν ἐστίν, οἷον εἰ πολεμῶσιν ἢ μὴ πολεμῶσιν τοῦτο βουλευομένοις, ἐκ προτέρου δὲ μᾶλλον ἔσται τὸ δι’ ὅ, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα, οἷον πλοῦτος ἢ ἡδονὴ ἢ τι ἄλλο τοιοῦτον ὃ τυγχάνει οὐ ἔνεκα. βουλευέται γὰρ ὁ βουλευόμενος, εἰ ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλους ἔσκεπται, <ἢ> ὃ τι ἐκεῖ συντείνει ὅπως εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάγη, ἢ αὐτὸς δύναται πρὸς τὸ τέλος.

<sup>59</sup> Lorenz (2006, p.184 footnote 19).

*where living well as a whole is concerned, the person capable of deliberation will also be practically wise.*"<sup>60</sup> VI.5 1140a24-31

This passage has been the subject of controversy, particularly regarding the way one should understand the phrase of φρονήσις being about deliberation πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως.<sup>61</sup> I will not go into that debate and point out something different that is especially relevant to what I am trying to claim here. I believe that in T5 Aristotle differentiates between someone who is φρόνιμος ἀπλῶς and someone who can be called φρόνιμος in some particular respect. The former, of course, is the one who deliberates nobly (καλῶς βουλευσασθαι), about the good and the beneficial on all occasions, while the latter seems to be able to do so only in terms of more particular ends (such as health and strength). If we understand the text in terms of scope, namely in terms of deliberating nobly about anything or about some specific things, it seems that even qualified φρόνιμος is able to do more than just purely pragmatic or technical deliberation, at least in transcending the values of pleasures and pains with καλόν in mind. Therefore, in these cases, the qualified φρόνιμος can hit what is truly good. This agrees well with what appears to be the definition of the qualified φρόνιμος, namely that he is able to λογίζεσθαι towards some end, with the proviso that this is not just part of purely technical deliberation that is confined to the realm of τέχνη. This interpretation is further supported by the following chunk of text:

*T6 "Again, it is possible to have deliberated well either in an unqualified sense or towards some particular end. Good deliberation in the unqualified sense, then, is what succeeds in relation to the end in the unqualified sense, good deliberation in the particular sense in relation to some particular end."*<sup>62</sup> VI.9 1142b28-31

Going back to the distinction between neutral deliberation, correct deliberation and the virtuous deliberation [B.2], we can thus see that the person who can be called φρόνιμος περί τι can at times achieve to deliberate so that it leads to virtuous action. However, our picture is noticeably enriched by T4, T5, and T6, because the forms of βούλευσις were previously distinguished primarily in terms of their correctness. We had a neutral concept, its occasionally correct iterations, and then its virtuous form. On the other hand, T4, T5 and T6, allow us to distinguish the forms of βούλευσις in terms of their scope. One being technical, the other towards some particular end, and the last one being about the good in life as a whole. When we try to align these different ways of distinguishing forms of βούλευσις, we could also expect that the φρόνιμος who deliberates nobly only qualifiedly overlaps with someone who occasionally deliberates virtuously, while the person who deliberates nobly πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως belongs exclusively to the εὐβουλος who is φρόνιμος in a ἀπλῶς way.

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<sup>60</sup> Περὶ δὲ φρονήσεως οὕτως ἂν λάβοιμεν, θεωρήσαντες τίνας λέγομεν τοὺς φρονίμους. δοκεῖ δὴ φρονίμου εἶναι τὸ δύνασθαι καλῶς βουλευσασθαι περὶ τὰ αὐτῶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα, οὐ κατὰ μέρος, οἷον ποῖα πρὸς ὑγίειαν, πρὸς ἰσχύν, ἀλλὰ ποῖα πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως. σημεῖον δ' ὅτι καὶ τοὺς περὶ τι φρονίμους λέγομεν, ὅταν πρὸς τέλος τι σπουδαῖον εὖ λογίσωνται, ὧν μὴ ἐστὶ τέχνη. ὥστε καὶ ὅλως ἂν εἴη φρόνιμος ὁ βουλευτικός.

<sup>61</sup> Even here, the deliberation of life as a whole must be very close to the deliberations of the politician, regardless of whether it also includes other forms of non-deliberative knowledge (VIII.9 1160a25-30). Compare also with the previous description of the ἀπλῶς εὐβουλος (VI.7 1141b12-23).

<sup>62</sup> ἔτι ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπλῶς εὖ βεβουλευσασθαι καὶ πρὸς τι τέλος. ἢ μὲν δὴ ἀπλῶς ἢ πρὸς τὸ τέλος τὸ ἀπλῶς κατορθοῦσα, τίς δὲ ἢ πρὸς τι τέλος.

Similarly to some interpreters of Aristotle, we could thus draw a general line between less and more developed forms of deliberative rationality by contrasting φρόνησις and something like qualified practical intelligence.<sup>63</sup> Other scholars, as we will also see in a moment, presuppose this limited practical intelligence by emphasizing the fact that the initial mistakes or successes that may occur in moral development may occur at the level of simple choosing of bad or good means to ends that are universally held to be good and that these deliberative choices amount to ‘character-altering’ effects.<sup>64</sup> In this sense, it also makes sense to see these instances of practical intelligence as a start of a process of gradual internalization of certain beliefs about what is good.<sup>65</sup> I think the distinction is reasonable to make. Not only can we add a few general reasons why this seems necessary in Aristotle’s ethical framework, we can also spot a few passages where he seems to be acknowledging concrete examples of this limited deliberative rationality that aims at what is good or even noble.

First, as far as the whole controversy about Aristotle’s distinction between the τέλος and τὰ πρὸς τὰ τέλη goes (βουλευόμεθα δ’ οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη, III.3 1112b11-12; cf. III.3 1112b23-34, *EE* II.10 1226a7-17 and *EE* II.10 1226b9-12)<sup>66</sup> I assume that the most general and least controversial agreement in the secondary literature is the following one. There are certain ends, which we do not deliberate upon, such as the inborn human tendency toward happiness or ends that are for some reasons inherent to certain τέχναι,<sup>67</sup> but in ordinary instances of deliberations, these ends are further promoted by subordinate ends that can themselves become means. Furthermore, they can be means at least in two senses, either purely instrumental or constitutive.<sup>68</sup> In some cases, the deliberative instances will be fairly pragmatic or technical, something like the following example. I want to have tea, therefore I will go to the kitchen and put the kettle on. In other cases, the means themselves will define the goal and specify it. For example, if I have the general end of being courageous, the way I put this goal into practice will modify and specify the initial general goal. The means will further define what is the thing that is pursued as courageous. In comparison, putting the kettle on does not substantially change the goal of having a tea.

The constitutive nature of some means is, as I assume, fairly normal in ethical and morally relevant situations. But it is quite ordinary that deliberation serves, in all its forms, as

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<sup>63</sup> Finnigan (2015, p. 678).

<sup>64</sup> Cammack (2013, p. 243).

<sup>65</sup> Olfert argues for habituation of later stages as ‘habituation-as-belief-internalization’ (2017, p. 234)

<sup>66</sup> See also “*and the things for the sake of which we act, and the things we do for the sake of these, involve action* [καὶ γὰρ ὧν ἕνεκα πράττομεν καὶ ἃ τούτων ἕνεκα μετέχει πράξεως]” (*EE* 1.7 1217a35-36).

<sup>67</sup> “*The mistake scholars have made, then, is to conflate the end of medicine with the agent’s end in becoming a doctor. This is unfortunate, because it leads to the mistaken inference that the reason that doctors do not deliberate about their end is that they had already decided that they would become doctors. But the fact that doctors heal does not depend on the prior choice of any given agent to become a doctor. Healing is part of the nature of doctoring. As such it is not up for deliberation, by would-be doctors or by anyone else.*” Cammack (2013, p. 245). See also Wiggins (1976, pp. 35-36).

<sup>68</sup> “*It follows that Aristotelian deliberation can take two forms. It can be a process of specifying what our end consists in, or a process of specifying what means will produce the end instrumentally.*” Nielsen (2011, p. 404).

giving a ‘direction’ or ‘redirection’ through means of reasoning,<sup>69</sup> and this fact of ‘scrutinizing the ends’ can be illustrated by the fact that deliberation can give reasons to give up the end because one fails to come up with means through which the end could be pursued (III.3 1112b25). Thus, an aspect of deliberation involves the simple question: ‘given these circumstances and the end that I am pursuing, can I act so that the end is realized?’ The reasons for giving up might be pragmatic or dictated by the necessity of the situations (i.e., the agent finding out through deliberation that there is actually not much he can do), or by evaluative judgments (i.e., the goal of acting courageous is not actually realizable in these circumstances). It is hardly the case that even the latter case must entail some thought out theory on which one makes his deliberations. For example, given the history of one’s education on what is courageous, on the basis of experience and comparison of courageous action cases, one can give up the desire to be courageous *here and now*, because it is not realizable in any way that would promote good.

The second general feature of Aristotle’s conception of deliberation that can help us understand how it functions in its more rudimentary forms is the fact that it can involve a stage in which different ways of achieving the goal and alternatives to its realization are considered. Although there has been some disagreement on how this should be construed,<sup>70</sup> it is possible for deliberation to come up with different courses of actions that could contribute to the realization of the goal and compare these, subsequently choosing one of them.<sup>71</sup> Although I would be skeptical about the fact that this happens in all instances of deliberation, it is telling that Aristotle derived the term which he uses for choice, προαίρεσις, from the fact that it is a choice of one possibility over the other possibilities that were investigated by deliberation: “*For rational choice does involve reason and thought, and its name too seems to signify something that is chosen before other things.*”<sup>72</sup> (ὡς ὄν πρὸ ἐτέρων αἰρετόν; III.2 1112a15-17). Compare

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<sup>69</sup> Segvic (2009, p. 153).

<sup>70</sup> For one thing, Nielsen tries to, very persuasively, argue against the necessity of deliberation presupposing something like a PAP (Principle of Alternative Possibilities). But her main point, if I read her correctly, is not that deliberation cannot consist in coming up with different alternatives, but it is not necessary that it does so (although one could read her as being inclined to the view where most of the time, deliberation actually does not even need to come up with alternative courses of actions Nielsen (2011, p. 387) which, given what Aristotle says, is in itself a much harder claim to establish). She claims that the *zetetic* aspect of Aristotle’s deliberation makes it evident that one does not have to already have alternatives at hand when starting to deliberate. After all, the process of deliberation is about coming up with ways to act and, as we saw, it can even end up in a place where no feasible way of putting the end in practice appears. With this, Nielsen wants to primarily dispute the claim that contemporary compatibilist or incompatibilist deliberative models presuppose: that to start to deliberate is to presuppose one or more feasible pathways that can lead to the goal Nielsen (2011, p. 400).

<sup>71</sup> This is the view of Lorenz (2006, p. 127) while looking at *DA* 3.11 434a7-10. Price (2016, p. 438) also talks of deliberation “*looking sideways (as it were) towards alternatives that were not preferred*” and “*weighing up*” costs and benefits of alternatives, see Price (2016, p. 452). Stronger formulation – to which I do not think we need to subscribe – is offered by Cammack: “*Deliberation thus presupposes that an agent faces a choice between at least two options, both of which must be possible for him or it to perform.*” (2013, 234). Similarly, Alesse (2018, p. 94). It is clear that this is where Nielsen (2011) would disagree.

<sup>72</sup> ἢ γὰρ προαίρεσις μετὰ λόγου καὶ διανοίας. ὑποσημαίνειν δ' ἔοικε καὶ τοῦνομα ὡς ὄν πρὸ ἐτέρων αἰρετόν.

also the analogous passage in *EE*: “*Decision is choice, not unqualifiedly so, but of one thing in preference to another (...)*”<sup>73</sup> (ἑτέρου πρὸ ἑτέρου; *EE* II.10 1226b6-8).

At this stage, it is sufficient for my purposes to simply say that in some instances deliberation *can* come up with localized instances of comparing alternative courses of actions, or at least courses of actions that differ in their instrumental and constitutive means. Aristotle himself has a concrete example that seems to describe this process when he talks about the so-called mixed actions:

*T7: As for things done through fear of greater evils or for the sake of something noble [ὄσα δὲ διὰ φόβον μειζόνων κακῶν πράττεται ἢ διὰ καλόν τι] – if a tyrant, for example, had one's parents and children in his power and ordered one to do something shameful, on the condition that one's doing it would save them, while one's not doing it would result in their death – there is some dispute about whether they are involuntary or voluntary.*<sup>74</sup> III.1 1110a4-8

Put simply, these actions where one can compare the results in terms of evils can lead someone to choose one alternative over another (e.g., stealing for the sake of protecting your family). Aristotle repeats the principle of comparing acts in terms of their goodness and badness in other contexts: “*In the case of evil, the reverse is the case, since the lesser evil is counted as a good in comparison with the greater evil [ἐν ἀγαθοῦ γὰρ λόγῳ γίνεται τὸ ἕλαττον κακὸν πρὸς τὸ μείζον κακόν]; the lesser evil is more worthy of choice than the greater, what is worthy of choice is a good and what is more worthy of choice is a greater good.*” (V.3 1131b20-24). And he does not fail to apply it in additional cases, for example, in the case where the virtuous and courageous person becomes pained by the thought of death in war. He is pained because he knows that he is losing something good, but still “*chooses what is noble in war at the cost of these goods.*” (ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ καλὸν ἀντ' ἐκείνων αἰρεῖται; III.9 1117b9-16).

On a general level, these cases exemplify that the variety of situations will put us before choices where alternative ways of acting offer themselves to us and, as Aristotle says, it will not be easy “*to explain what sort of things ought to be chosen in return for what.*” (III.1 1110b7-8). Again, it is not necessary that this is a process that must always include some reflexive thinking about life a whole and an evaluative ordering of ends, for the conflict between these alternatives can be grounded in the pursuit of more localized ends.<sup>75</sup> It remains sufficient for my argument to claim that there are instances of deliberation that are limited in scope, but at

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<sup>73</sup> ἢ γὰρ προαίρεσις αἴρεσις μὲν ἐστίν, οὐχ ἀπλῶς δέ, ἀλλ' ἑτέρου πρὸ ἑτέρου.

<sup>74</sup> ὄσα δὲ διὰ φόβον μειζόνων κακῶν πράττεται ἢ διὰ καλόν τι, οἷον εἰ τύραννος προστάττοι αἰσχροὺς τι πράττειν κύριος ὧν γονέων καὶ τέκνων, καὶ πράξαντος μὲν σφίζονται μὴ πράξαντος δ' ἀποθνήσκουσιν, ἀμφισβήτησιν ἔχει πότερον ἀκούσια ἐστὶν ἢ ἐκούσια. τοιοῦτον δὲ τι συμβαίνει καὶ περὶ τὰς ἐν τοῖς χειμῶσιν ἐκβολάς· ἀπλῶς μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἀποβάλλεται ἐκόν, ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ δ' αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἅπαντες οἱ νοῦν ἔχοντες, μικταὶ μὲν οὖν εἰσὶν αἱ τοιαῦται πράξεις, εὐκασι δὲ μᾶλλον ἐκούσιος· αἰρεταὶ γὰρ εἰσι τότε ὅτε πράττονται, τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς πράξεως κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐστίν.

<sup>75</sup> Again, the weighing of alternatives does not seem to be a necessary characteristic of deliberation, as Nielsen rightly points out: “*But at times we realize that there is only one course of action that will promote the right end, and in such cases, considering alternative courses of action would be a sign of a flawed character. A virtuous agent would never ask, “But should I do this or rather the opposite?” when she has determined that there is only one possible way to act appropriately under the circumstances.*” Nielsen (2011, p. 402).



the same time involve critical and reflective evaluation of the means and the ends. Presumably, one can train himself in these instances to become better at deliberation, to adopt something some people would call a ‘sound procedure’ or ‘methodos’ in tackling practical affairs.<sup>76</sup> Given my previous remarks about the development of practical deliberation along with the ἠθικὴ ἀρετή, it is reasonable to infer that this training begins with these individual and scope-limited instances of deliberation.

I want to also add a speculative addendum to these comparative approaches to different courses of actions and their choice-worthiness, a speculation that comes from a different part of Aristotelian corpus, namely the *Topics*. One could think that practical deliberation can grow its roots towards φρόνησις through some of those examples of dialectical argumentation mentioned in this treatise. We must tread carefully here because dialectical argumentation about ethical matters and what is choice-worthy hardly identifies with the process of practical deliberation. In fact, the dialectical arguments in *Topics* are most properly used to force an opponent to discard his thesis and accept the conclusion for which you yourself argue.<sup>77</sup> It is in this sense, the introductory chapter of *Topics* asserts that “*the goal of this study is to find a method with which we shall be able to construct deductions from acceptable premisses [συλλογίζεσθαι ἐξ ἐνδόξων] concerning any problem that is proposed and-when submitting to argument ourselves-will not say anything inconsistent.*”<sup>78</sup> (*Top.* I.1 100a18-21). The material we find here is thus mainly aimed for use in a dialectical exchange between two parties.

Nevertheless, there are broader uses of dialectical argumentation, which are the following: (intellectual) exercise, encounter, and the philosophical sciences. (ἔστι δὴ πρὸς τρία, πρὸς γυμνασίαν, πρὸς τὰς ἐντεύξεις, πρὸς τὰς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμας; *Top.* I.2 101a26-28). When we look at the third book of *Topics* specifically, we then get a great number of arguments and premises, which are apparently used to discern and critically assess what is good and what is bad. Examples include arguments that examine whether something promotes happiness as such (*Top.* III.1 116b34-35), arguments that assess desirability of certain things through assessing short- and long-term consequences of actions and desires (*Top.* III.2 117a4-9), arguments that compare the amount of good things chosen (*Top.* III.2 117a15-17), or even arguments that assess the desirability of certain things relative to the age of the person for whom things are supposed to be chosen (*Top.* III.2? 117a25-27). The model in these proposed strategies is always the same: the question is what is a more desirable or better of two things (*Topics* III.1 116a3-4).<sup>79</sup>

Again, the primary use of these is to train oneself to argue about anything and win an argument against an opponent.<sup>80</sup> But in general, these can be classified as strategies which apparently try to provide answers to dialectical problems (such as, should one rather obey one’s

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<sup>76</sup> Sort of a sound *methodos* about practical things, about tackling them, see Segvic (2009, 171).

<sup>77</sup> Smith (1993, p. 342).

<sup>78</sup> All the translations from *Topics* are by Robin Smith (1997): *Aristotle: Topics Books I and VIII*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>79</sup> Πότερον δ' αἰρετώτερον ἢ βέλτιον δεῖν ἢ πλεόνων, ἐκ τῶνδε σκεπτέον.

<sup>80</sup> Which, for example, is illustrated by the passage in which Aristotle shows that if someone asserts that pleasure is good, one must argue against his position, i.e. by saying that it universally holds that no pleasure is good (*Top.* III.6 120a6-11).

parents or laws, in those cases where they disagree; *Top.* I.14 105b22-23). And as such, dialectical problems can be part of an investigation that can not only contribute to “*truth and knowledge*” but also to “*choice and avoidance*” (πρόβλημα δ' ἐστὶ διαλεκτικὸν θεώρημα τὸ συντεῖνον ἢ πρὸς αἵρεσιν καὶ φυγὴν ἢ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν καὶ γνῶσιν; *Top.* 1.11 104b1-2). This goes well with Aristotle classifying dialectical premises and problems as being of three kinds: concerning ethical matters, natural science, and logic (αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἠθικαὶ προτάσεις εἰσὶν, αἱ δὲ φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ λογικαί; *Top.* 1.14 105b20-21), the former most probably contributing to choice and avoidance, and the latter two to truth and knowledge.

The important question now becomes the following. If an examination of a problem can help with choice and avoidance, is this also what the material in *Topics* III could help us with? For one thing, these problems and premises would have to be taken from their dialectical contexts, in which one aims only at opinion, and be used to get at the **truth** (*Top.* 1.14 105b30).<sup>81</sup> But even then, how might this work? Well, we saw that at the beginning of the *Topics*, Aristotle considered the possibility that these dialectical problems and arguments might also be used for intellectual exercise (γυμνασία). Apart from the fact that these arguments should make us better at arguing against a dialectical opponent, they may, in their ethical versions, contribute to us being trained in discerning and assessing what is good and what is bad.

Although this is just speculative, one could imagine the relevance of *Topics* III for moral development in the following way. By accumulating questions that concern the matter of choice or avoidance, one also accumulates the possible answers to these. By enlarging this arsenal of dialectical problems and premises relevant to ethical things, one can acquire the ability to use these in *pro et con* argumentations. But why would not one also be able to put these to use in situations where choices and decisions need to be made? Practice in these ethically relevant dialectical problems and premises might generally make one better acquainted with possibilities of what can be chosen and avoided, and on what grounds.<sup>82</sup> What remains for someone who accumulates these, is ‘only’ the task of choosing the correct side of the argumentation. In general, these arguments thus help one to discern desirability of ends and means, be it in a context where one needs to argue for certain conclusions or a context in which one tries to figure out what should be done. They do not and should not be compared with some particular instances of βούλευσις in their technical sense, but it is clear that they are generally expressive of what people might think about these issues, which in turn could increase the probability of them choosing these things. Needless to say, *Topics* III does not seem to imply that these arguments and premises require reflective practical thinking. Hence, we have another possible evidence of Aristotle considering rudimentary forms of deliberations, which could have its sources in examinations of dialectical problems.

The last piece of evidence with which I am going to wrap up this section and my attempts to substantiate claim B is a bit different from the previous ones. It does not consider instances of deliberation in its technical and narrow sense but assumes a sort of 'meta-deliberative'

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<sup>81</sup> **[does this include practical truth?]**

<sup>82</sup> I owe this point of emphasis to Laura Castelli. Additionally, it raises the following question: will such practice lead one to more reliable choice of truth? Will one become better equipped to see what is fine? **I will attend this question in the next section.**

perspective and describes general advice that can be helpful in aiming at the mean and choosing particular courses of action:

*T8 “So the person who is aiming at the mean must first steer away from the extreme that is in greater opposition to it, as Calypso advised: ‘Beyond this spray and swell keep your ship.’ For one of the extremes is a greater missing of the mark, the other less so; and since hitting the mean is extremely hard, we must take the next best course, as they say, and choose the lesser of two evils. This will be done best in the way we are suggesting. But we must also consider the things towards which we as individuals are particularly prone. For we each have different natural tendencies, and we can find out what they are by the pain and pleasure that occur in us. And we should drag ourselves in the opposite direction, because we shall arrive at the mean by holding far off from where we would miss the mark, just as people do when straightening warped pieces of wood. In everything, we should be on our guard especially against the pleasant – pleasure, that is – because we are not impartial judges of it. So we should adopt the same attitude to it as the elders did towards Helen, and utter their words in everything we do; for by dismissing pleasure in this way, we shall miss the mark to a lesser degree. To sum up, then, it is by doing these things that we shall best be able to hit the mean.”<sup>83</sup> II.9 1109a30-1109b13*

These three advices can be roughly summarized in the following way. First, we should choose the extreme that is closer to the mean. Second, one should inspect one’s own natural tendencies and counter them accordingly. Third, it is especially important to be on the guard against pleasure. Regardless of what one might think of these recommendations,<sup>84</sup> it is evident that Aristotle believes that it is important to approach one’s own moral development through a reflection that helps to deliberate so as to hit the mean in a better way. On top of that, it is evident that these are advices for someone who is still trying to become virtuous, since the text fundamentally presupposes that the person here cannot yet hit the mean.

One part of this procedure is to know what is good and to want the right things. So, it helps to develop a tendency to at least roughly guide ourselves towards these goals with the help of our cognitive capacities – even if these do not seem to entirely overlap with deliberative efforts and might seem to also include some other forms of reasoning. Knowledge of good is important for our lives and so Aristotle’s advice is to become more like archers that carefully

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<sup>83</sup> διὸ δεῖ τὸν στοχαζόμενον τοῦ μέσου πρῶτον μὲν ἀποχωρεῖν τοῦ μᾶλλον ἐναντίου, καθάπερ καὶ ἡ Καλυψὼ παραινεῖ τοῦτου μὲν καπνοῦ καὶ κύματος ἐκτὸς ἔεργενῆα. τῶν γὰρ ἄκρων τὸ μὲν ἔστιν ἀμαρτωλότερον τὸ δ’ ἦττον· ἐπεὶ οὖν τοῦ μέσου τυχεῖν ἄκρως χαλεπὸν, κατὰ τὸν δεῦτερον, φασί, πλοῦν τὰ ἐλάχιστα ληπτέον τῶν κακῶν· τοῦτο δ’ ἔσται μάλιστα τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ὃν λέγομεν. σκοπεῖν δὲ δεῖ πρὸς ἃ καὶ αὐτοὶ εὐκατάφοροί ἐσμεν· ἄλλοι γὰρ πρὸς ἄλλα πεφύκαμεν· τοῦτο δ’ ἔσται γινώμιον ἐκ τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ τῆς λύπης τῆς γινομένης περὶ ἡμᾶς. εἰς τοῦναντίον δ’ ἑαυτοὺς ἀφέλκειν δεῖ· πολλὸν γὰρ ἀπάγοντες τοῦ ἀμαρτάνειν εἰς τὸ μέσον ἤξομεν, ὅπερ οἱ τὰ διεστραμμένα τῶν ξύλων ὀρθοῦντες ποιοῦσιν. ἐν παντὶ δὲ μάλιστα φυλακτέον τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ τὴν ἡδονήν· οὐ γὰρ ἀδέκαστοι κρίνομεν αὐτήν. ὅπερ οὖν οἱ δημογέροντες ἔπαθον πρὸς τὴν Ἑλένην, τοῦτο δεῖ παθεῖν καὶ ἡμᾶς πρὸς τὴν ἡδονήν, καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τὴν ἐκείνων ἐπιλέγειν φωνήν· οὕτω γὰρ αὐτὴν ἀποπεμπόμενοι ἦττον ἀμαρτησόμεθα. ταῦτ’ οὖν ποιοῦντες, ὡς ἐν κεφαλαίῳ εἶπεῖν, μάλιστα δυνασόμεθα τοῦ μέσου τυγχάνειν.

<sup>84</sup> Curzer (1996, p. 146) condemns these advices as “poor”. He gives different reasons for this claim, but his major problem with them is that they evidently lead one to act viciously.

aim at a certain target. In fact, Aristotle saw the whole NE as an attempt to approximate at least roughly what this target is (I.2 1094a30-35), so that it can be more easily become good. The archer simile is also used in the context of hitting the mean: *“In all the states of character we have mentioned (...) there is a sort of target, and it is with his eye on this that the person with reason tightens or loosens his string [ὁ τὸν λόγον ἔχων ἐπιτείνει καὶ ἀνίησιν]. There is also a sort of standard for the mean states, which, as we say, lie between excess and deficiency and are in accordance with correct reason. [κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον]”* (VI.1 1138b21-25).

Let me take stock. The picture that thus emerged over the course of Section B is the following. Aristotle admits degrees of deliberative effort and their respective states at least in two ways. In one sense, we can assess their ability to hit the correct target, distinguishing, for example, between the capacity of correct deliberation and virtuous deliberation. On the other hand, we can also consider the scope of our deliberative efforts and capacities. We then arrive at a form of βούλευσις that is concerned with particular goals and a βούλευσις that concerns the entirety of human life, including its political contexts. These two together substantiate claims A and B, while also showing that the practice in correct and scope-limited deliberation presumably leads to the acquisition of the more demanding form of practical deliberation, φρόνησις, and also the acquirement of ἠθικὴ ἀρετή.

### **C. The bad person’s failure at deliberating**

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