Aristotle's Insistence on Humor Being Proper: A Syllogistic Corollary in His Ethics of Aretaic Happiness

Wei He Xu[*]

Abstract: I argue in this article that Aristotle's insistence on proper humor results from a series of embedded syllogisms in his ethics of aretaic or virtuous happiness. Thus, I attempt to: (a) establish the veracity of these syllogisms (particularly two pivotal ones) by reconstructing their major and minor premises; (b) probe the philosophical underpinnings of their key constructs, such as moral excellence and moral happiness; and (c) unpack these by concisely annotating their constituent concepts, so that we can better see and understand Aristotle's thoughts behind these constructs and how all these come together to form the premises in question. In short, I intend in this article to rebuild brick by brick Aristotle's syllogistic edifice for proper humor.[1]

Key words: Aristotle, proper humor, syllogism, moral excellence, moral happiness

1. Introduction

It must be acknowledged upfront that the use of "humor" in its modern sense in the title above and the essay below is anachronistic because this sense did not exist in Aristotle's time. Its closest equivalent in Aristotle is "the laughable" (*geloíos*) or the laughter (*gélio*) at the laughable as he sometimes implied. Explicit, however, is his insistence on the *propriety* of such laughter in several of his major works, namely, the *Rhetoric* (hereafter *Rh.*, III 18. 1419b5-9), the *Poetics* (hereafter *Po.*, 22. 1458b10-14),[2] the *Eudemian Ethics* (hereafter *EE*, III 7. 1234a5-14), as well as the *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *NE*). In this last, he devotes an entire section

[*] **Wei He Xu**, The Greenberg-Starr Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Middlebury College, Vermont, USA**;** wxu@middlebury.edu

[1] A former version of this article was read on a penal of philosophy of humor at the 26th International Society of Humor Studies Conference, held at Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands, in July 2014.

[2] This section (22) mainly discusses the diction of tragedy, touching on the definitions of riddle and metaphor. Although not explicitly mentioned, proper humor can be inferred from statements such as this: "The rule of moderation applies to all the constituents of the poetic vocabulary … metaphors, strange words, and the rest." "The rest" arguably includes jests, wisecracks, witticisms, etc., since "poetic vocabulary" should include that of tragedy as well as comedy, although this latter part of the *Poetics* is lost. For a modern reconstruction of it, see Janko 1984.

of Book IV (8. 1127b34-1128b9) to elaborating on an earlier mention of three dispositions and corresponding conducts in humor in Book II:

> With regard to pleasantness in the giving of amusement, the intermediate person is ready-witted and the disposition ready wit, the excess is buffoonery and the person characterized by it a buffoon, while the man who falls short is a sort of boor and his state is boorishness (7. 1108a23-25).[3]

Possessors of these dispositions and conducts, especially the buffoon, are then "fleshed out" in Section 8 of Book IV:

> [The intermediate person]…is the man who observes the mean, whether he be called tactful or ready-witted. The buffoon, on the other hand, is the slave of his sense of humor, and spares neither himself nor others if he can raise a laugh, and says things none of which a man of refinement would say, and to some of which he would not even listen. The boor, again, is useless for such social intercourse; for he contributes nothing and finds fault with everything. (1128a33-1128b3)

The characterization of the "ready-witted[ness]" of "the intermediate person" here recalls another one in *EE*: "Wittiness also is a mean, the witty man being a mean between the rustic and the buffoon" (III 7. 1234a5).

Two things should be clear from above: (a) contrasted with buffoonery, "ready wit" or "wittiness" here refers to a kind of humor;[4] (b) while the buffoon personifies overhumor and the boor/rustic underhumor, the wit embodies proper humor. Indeed, in Aristotle the intermediate, the moderate, or the mean epitomizes the golden standard of propriety, and being proper (in emotion and action) is the soul of, and the key to, moral excellence composed of individual virtues. Wittiness or proper humor is one such virtue.

I will demonstrate all these and more in detail below to make an overarching argument—that Aristotle's insistence on proper humor results from a series of embedded syllogisms in what I call his ethics of virtuous happiness. Of these syllogisms the most critical are the following two:

[3] All English translations of Aristotle cited in this essay are from Aristotle 1984, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, unless noted otherwise.
[4] Aristotle 1938, p. 352, *a*.n.

(1) Major premise: Proper emotions are a foremost necessary condition for moral excellence.

Minor premise: Proper humor is (first) a proper emotion.

Conclusion: It, therefore, partakes of the said necessary condition for moral excellence.

(2) Major premise: Moral excellence (at large) is a necessary condition for moral happiness.

Minor premise: Proper humor (emotion and conduct) is *a* moral excellence.

Conclusion: It, therefore, partakes of the said necessary condition for moral happiness.

From the two conclusions above it follows that a pursuit of moral excellence and happiness entails that the pursuer's humor be *also* proper. Hence an answer to *why* Aristotle insisted on humor being proper.

Just as the validity of a syllogistic conclusion depends on the veracity of its premises, the cogency of my argument pivots on establishing the veracity of the underlying syllogisms in question, especially their premises (and those from which these premises are syllogistic conclusions). Thus, what ensues is not a study of *humor proper* but a reconstruction of the ethicophilosophical origin of, and context for, Aristotle's advocacy of *proper humor*. One compelling way to reconstruct them seems to let Aristotle speak for himself as much as is appropriate. After all, we are *not* here to ascertain from modern perspectives whether he was right or wrong in what he said *but* to try to see, understand, and demonstrate how the inherent logic of his ethicophilosophy gives birth to the syllogisms in question. Otherwise, our knowledge of his insistence on proper humor might be merely accidental and superficial.[5]

2. The Minor Premises First

I start with the minor than the major premises of the two central syllogisms because they are far easier to demonstrate. A case in point is the minor premise of the second syllogism.

2.1. Proper humor (emotion and conduct) is a moral excellence

In *NE* II 6, Aristotle argues that excess or deficiency characterizes vice, and moderation moral excellence (1106b34). In Aristotle, moral excellence is an aggregate term subsuming many individual excellences; some of these he discusses in outline in the following section (7);

[5] Cf. *NE* VI 3. 1139b34-35; *Posterior Analytics* (hereafter *APo*.) I 2. 71b25-34, 72a34-36.

they include courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, proper pride, good temper, truthfulness, friendliness, and most importantly to us here, the intermediate person's ready-wittedness.[6] For Aristotle, far from being incompatible with moral excellence, humor, *if proper*, is a part of it. As to how he came to this view, we need to go further back to an important meaning of the Greek term *pathos* that underpins the two minor premises in focus, linking proper humor with moral excellence in the second and with proper emotion in the first.

2.2. Proper humor is (first) a proper emotion

2.2.1. Pathos as emotion

In *NE* II 5, Aristotle states: "By passions (*pathē*) I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain" (1105b21-23). Except for appetite and emulation,[7] the rest of *pathē* ("passions") clearly refers to *emotions* in modern parlance and psychology. The latter, for instance, defines emotion as "a subjective, conscious experience characterized primarily by psychophysiological expressions, biological reactions, and mental states"[8] and reserves *feeling* for the "conscious subjective experience of emotion"[9] that is "purely mental."[10] This restrictive usage of "feeling" actually resulted from the earlier broadening of its original sense of physical sensations caused by sensory organs.[11] This fact nevertheless suggests the existence of physical (e.g., appetitive) and psychological (e.g., emotive) feelings. In Aristotle, *pathos* sometimes denotes the physical (e.g., *NE* IX 8. 1168b19-20; *Rh.* I 11. 1370a27); sometimes both, as in the above quotation from him (cf. also *EE* II 2. 1220b13-14); but often *the psychological* as in this statement: "The emotions (*pathē*) are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgment, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are anger, pity, fear and the like,

[6] *NE* II 7. 1107a27-1108b10. For a more comprehensive list of these virtues, see Kristjansson 2007, p. 16.
[7] "Emulation" is defined as ability rather than an emotion in modern psychology. VandenBos 2006, p. 329. For a detailed discussion of emulation as an emotion in Aristotle, however, see Kristjansson 2007, pp. 25, 51, 99-111.
[8] "Difference between Feelings and Emotions." http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-feelings-and-emotions (accessed January 28, 2016). Cf. "Emotion." https://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/Emotion (accessed January 28, 2016) and VandenBos 2006, p. 325.
[9] "Difference between Feelings and Emotions." http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-feelings-and-emotions (accessed January 28, 2016).
[10] VandenBos 2006, pp. 371-372.
[11] "Difference between Feelings and Emotions." http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-feelings-and-emotions (accessed January 28, 2016). Cf. VandenBos 2006, p. 372.

with their opposites"[12] (we will discuss one such opposite shortly). From a modern perspective, "emotions" is not only a more accurate but a more *modern* rendition of the *pathē* here, since the term "emotion" was not "introduced into academic discussion to replace passion"[13] until 1739-40.[14] Afterward, as is attested by the quotations above, English translators of Aristotle used "passion," "emotion," and/or "feeling" for the psychological *pathos*.

More significantly, Aristotle's definitions of *pathē* cited above mark two characteristics of emotions. First, they are always "accompanied" or "distinguished" by feelings of psychological pleasure (*hedone*) and/or pain (*lupe*),[15] which constitute the two core categories of all emotions.[16] Second, emotions can change people and affect their judgments.[17] As Aristotle observed, when people switch to a different "state of mind" or "frame of mind" from their current one that makes them feel a certain emotion, not only their emotions but also their judgments change, since judgments made in hate, sorrow, or anger often differ from those in love, joy, or mirth.[18] Here, Aristotle appears to identify emotions with the states or frames of mind that produce them. Although neither of the original Greek *diakeímenoi* and *échontes* denotes mind, their English rendition as "the state of mind" or "the frame of mind" is nevertheless accurate in spirit.[19] For Aristotle did seem to think that emotions are mental, "aris[ing] from … opinion[s] held by the mind."[20] In thinking so, he anticipated the modern view that stemming

[12] *Rh.* II 1. 1378a21-22. Cf. *Magna Moralia* (hereafter *MM*) I 8. 1186a28-35; Aristotle 1962, p. 481. For an extensive study of various meanings of *pathos*, see Oele 2007, pp. 95-148.
[13] "Emotion." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotion (accessed January 28, 2016).
[14] Dixon 2003, p. 104; cf. also pp.13, 65, 108-109.
[15] *EE* II 4. 1221b37; *NE* III 11. 1176b29. In *Rh.*, Aristotle seems to allude to the sensation or feeling of psychological pleasure or pain when he remarks that "pleasure (or pain) is the consciousness through the senses of a certain kind of emotion (*pathous*)" (I 11. 1370a27) or "pleasure consists in the sensation of a certain emotion" (Aristotle 1982, p. 117). Cf. Kristjansson 2007, p. 19.
[16] Sensations of pleasure and pain form the core of *physical* feelings as well.
[17] For a Shakespearian example of the power of emotion, listen to this testimony from Sir John Falstaff in *Merry Wives of Windsor*: "O powerful love! that in some respects makes a beast a man; in some other a man a beast." Shakespeare 1975, p. 68.
[18] *Rh.* I 2. 1356a15, II 1. 1378a25, 3. 1380b3. Cf. Aristotle 1982, p. 17; *On Dream* (hereafter *Insomn.*), 460b10; *NE* VII 3. 1147a14-16; *Politics* [hereafter *Pol.*] III 16. 1287a30.
[19] Another term Aristotle used for these is *íthos*, which is translated as "dispositions" or "conditions of mind" (*Physiognomonics*, 805a30). Cf. Aristotle 1936, p. 87.
[20] *Rh.* I 11. 1370a27. This is an inference from Aristotle's distinction of irrational and rational appetites—that, "originating in the body," the former "do not arise from any opinion held by the mind," while the latter do and are thus "associated with reason" and persuadable by it (*Rh.* I 11. 1370a19-27). The latter case should also be true of emotion because appetite and emotion are correlated (*Insomn.*, 460b10) as two of the three species (plus wish) of the genus of desire (*De Anima* [often as *On the Soul* in English, but hereafter *DA*] II 3. 414b2). Aristotle affirms the mental aspect of emotion, its association with, and its persuadability by, reason in *NE* II 13. 1102b12-1103a3.

from the brain, emotions are fundamentally mental states.[21] No surprise that he is regarded as "the forefather of the cognitive theories of emotions" in modern psychology.[22] Hence, "mentalness" is an implied third characteristic of emotion.

2.2.2. Laughter is a mirthful emotion of pleasure

Not so implicit in Aristotle is that laughter is such an emotive mental state because it, too, can "so change men as to affect their judgment," since Aristotle noted that "the frame of mind that makes people calm, [which] is plainly the opposite to that which makes them angry, as when they are amusing themselves or laughing …" (*Rh.* II 3. 1380b3-4). Thus, laughter is one of those opposite emotions Aristotle alluded to in his second definition of emotion above. Moreover, as anger is attended by pain,[23] laughter is accompanied by pleasure. This Aristotle made patently clear, stating that "amusement, every kind of relaxation, and laughter (*gelos*) are pleasant, [laughable] things (*geloia*)—men, words, or deeds—must also be pleasant" (*Rh.* I 11. 1371b33-34).[24] Then, its possession of all three characteristics of emotion makes laughter an emotion or, more precisely, a *mirthful* emotion of pleasure.[25]

2.2.3. Humor is a species of this mirthful emotion of pleasure

Since laughable words or deeds themselves are incapable of sensation or consciousness, Aristotle's assertion that "[laughable] things" are pleasant should logically mean that they make their *percipients* laugh and feel pleasant. The same reasoning extends to the pleasantness of what Aristotle called "the laughable" except for laughable "men" (e.g., comedians) since they can and may well feel the pleasure of being laughable. As mentioned at the outset of our discussion, the traditional notion of laughter at the risible most approximates the modern concept of humor. Therefore, had the latter concept been available to him, Aristotle, compelled by his definition of emotion, probably could not but conclude that humor is *a species* of the

[21] "Difference between Feelings and Emotions." http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-feelings-and-emotions (accessed January 28, 2016). Cf. Dixon 2003, pp. 104-105.
[22] Kristjansson 2007, pp. 3, 4, 18-19, 20, 49.
[23] Although saliently painful, anger (imagined or actual) can sometimes be pleasant simultaneously. Ibid.
[24] Aristotle 1982, p. 129. Cf. Aristotle 1999, p. 2184.
[25] Unfortunately, Greek or English has no separate words for laughter as an emotion and as its physical manifestation, respectively. Janko 1987, pp. 156-157, 167; 2001, p. 61. Ancient Greeks were not alone in treating laughter as an emotion; the Chinese did, too. Wei He Xu 2011, p. 50.

mirthful emotion of pleasure since humorous laughter is *a* species of laughter—the genus of all *mirthful* emotions of pleasure. And the same conclusion is syllogistically deducible from two of Aristotle's beliefs—that feeling amused is a relaxing and pleasant emotion (*Pol.* VIII 3. 1337b29-1338a9), and that laughter at the laughable≈humor is a mirthful way of feeling amused (*NE* X 6. 1177a2-4). Hence, as a *sub*species of the humorous species of laughter/the mirthful emotion of pleasure, *proper humor* is first a proper *emotion* (we will see below why it is so *first*).

2.3. Emotion and moral excellence

As also noted above, emotion links proper humor and moral excellence because emotion is, as Aristotle repeatedly reminded us, one of the two kinds of things (the other being action) with which moral excellence is forever concerned.[26] For Aristotle, as we will see next, proper emotions (including humor) form a foremost necessary condition for moral excellence which in turn is a disposition indispensable to moral happiness.

3. The Major Premises

To reconstruct them, we need to delve into the conceptual underpinnings of two key constructs: moral excellence and moral happiness; so that we can better see Aristotle's rationales behind the minor as well as major premises and how they came to be what they are. For instance, Aristotle thought that emotions of pleasure and pain affect one's thinking—the basis on which one makes judgments and chooses actions and ways to carry them out; implemented actions actualize one's virtues or vices and manifest one's character; proper emotions enable right (rational and moral) thinking, judgment, and choice of actions and ways to execute them; and *constant* conduct of this sort will culminate in attainment of moral excellence and moral happiness. Obviously, to demonstrate all these will take some time and lead us far away from humor until we touch on it again in conclusion. (So patience is advised).

Let us begin with the ultimate and work our way back to the foremost.

3.1. The Aristotelian happiness

[26] *NE* II 3.1104b14-15, III 1. 1109b30.

"Happiness" is perhaps the most popular of English translations of the Greek *eudaimonia* (literally, good demon, spirit, or god).[27] For Aristotle, it is the ultimate and supreme goal of human life: "an end and something in every way final" (*NE* I 10. 1101a18), "the end of human nature to be" (*NE* X 6. 1176a32), and "a first principle [for whose sake] we all do everything else" (*NE* I 12. 1102a2). As such, it epitomizes the most complete, most self-sufficient, most noble, most beautiful, and most pleasant: in short, the best and "most desirable of all things" in human life.[28] Of Aristotle's characterizations of the nature of happiness, the most essential are his definitions of it as "the work of the excellence of the soul" or "an activity of soul in accordance with complete excellence."[29] Thus, Aristotle's notion of felicity differs significantly both from others' in his time which "seem to place happiness in the feeling of pleasure" (*EE* I 5. 1216a19) and from ours nowadays which take happiness as "a subjective psychological state and indeed one that is often temporary and recurrent."[30] To better understand how Aristotle's differs from all the others, it might help to unpack his assertions on happiness above by concisely annotating some of their constituent concepts—the bricks, as it were, of his syllogistic edifice for proper humor.

3.2.The activity of the soul

Whereas modern "happiness" most commonly refers to "a positive state, a mood, or a feeling,"[31] the Aristotelian one denotes "living and faring well," in a word, *activity*.[32] Translated from *energeia* (likely coined by Aristotle), "activity" here means being at work (*ergon*, *ergono*, the root of *energeia*), being active (*energon*)[33] or, to quote Aristotle, "the acting (*poihsis*) or the being acted upon (*paschein*)."[34] He maintained that activity is not just opposed but superior to

[27] McMahon 2006, pp. 3-4. Recently, many prefer to render *eudaimonia* into English as "human flourishing," but others still think that "happiness" is a better translation. Cooper 1975, pp. 89-90, n1; Russell 2013, pp. 12-13.
[28] *NE* I 7. 1097b16. Cf. *NE* I 7-8. 1097a15-1099b9; *EE* I 1. 1214a9.
[29] *EE* II 1. 1219a26-28, 1219a33; *NE* I 13. 1102a5. Cf. *NE* I 7. 1098a14-17, 1100a4-5; *EE* II 1. 1219a31-35.
[30] Cooper 1975, pp. 89-90, 1n. Cf. McMahon 2006, p. 7.
[31] Russel 2013, p. 11. Cf. Deci and Ryan 2008, p. 1.
[32] *NE* I 4. 1095a17-20, 8. 1098b21, X 6. 1177a10; *EE* II 1. 1219b1-3.
[33] "Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy." http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-mot/ (accessed June 30, 2015); "Potentiality and actuality." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potentiality and actuality (accessed June 30, 2015). For an example of Aristotle's using *ergon* to mean "work" (as a noun), see *EE* II 1. 1219a1-12.
[34] *DA* III 2. 426a2. Cf. *DA* I 3. 407b17, II 5. 417a17-19. For discussions of the activity and passivity of movements in Aristotle, see Oele 2007, pp. 8-44 and 2012, pp. 1-27. Aristotle also often used "movement" as a synonym with activity, actuality, acting, being acted on, or action (*Topics* [hereafter *Top.*] IV 5. 125b17; *DA* II. 5 417a16; *Meta-*

state, disposition, or potentiality because the latter "may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well. And as in the Olympic games it is not the most beautiful and strongest that are crowned but those who compete…so those who act rightly win the noble and good things in life."[35] So much so that Aristotle even claimed that "activity is more desirable than excellence,"[36] albeit the latter is "the best state."[37] As we will further see, Aristotelian ethics value the *activity* and *use* of the good over mere knowledge and possession of them. It is in this *active* sense that "flourishing" was first used in modern moral philosophy and then recommended as a more accurate rendition of *eudaimonia* than "happiness" (Anscombe 1958, p. 15; Cooper 1975, p. 89, n1).

To Aristotle, activities include exercising both psychological and physical faculties.[38] Although physical actions, as we will see later, are indispensable to the Aristotelian happiness, the *foremost* activities are psychological because happiness originates not from activities of the body but the soul (*psyche*), "the essence of the whole living body" and "the cause of the living body as the original source of local movement."[39] Since "[b]y human excellence [Aristotle meant] not that of the body but that of the soul" (*NE* I 13. 1102a16), then by *excellent activity* he must have meant first of all that of the soul which, as we just saw, he regarded as the quintessence of virtuous happiness.

3.3. The desiderative and intellective parts of the human soul

For such happiness, the two most responsible parts of the human soul are desire (*orexis*)[40] and intellect (*nous*).[41] As the former embraces appetite (*epithumia*),[42] passion (*thumos*)

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physics [hereafter *Met.*] V 14. 1020b17-25, 17. 1022a7, 23. 1023a17, IX 3. 1047a31). Moreover, actuality is often interchangeable with activity (*DA* IX 8. 1050a22-23; *EE* II 1. 1218b36). Finally, Aristotle conceived movement as a species of activity/actuality: "The being-at-work (activity)-staying-the-same (actuality) of a potency as a potency is motion" (Sachs 1995, pp. 78-79).

[35] *NE* I 8. 1098b35-1099a5. Cf. *NE* I 13. 1102b3-10; *EE* II 1. 1219a29-34.

[36] *EE* III 1. 1228a12. Cf. *EE* VII 8. 1241a39.

[37] *EE* II 1. 1219a1-33. Cf. *NE* I 13. 1103a9-10.

[38] This is inferable from his belief that "movement is an activity" and that there are movements of *the soul* and *the body* (and other concrete things). *DA* I 3. 406a30-35. Cf. *DA* I 3. 407b17, II 5. 417a17-19; *NE* X 6. 1177b6-24, X 8. 1178b21-23; *EE* VII 10. 1242a18-19.

[39] *DA* II 4. 415b9-22. Cf. *Met.* IX 2. 1046b17; *EE* II 1. 1218b33-1219b33.

[40] Some English translators, such as J. A. Smith, render this term as "appetite" (Aristotle 1984, p. 659), and others "desire," such as Barbara Koziak who also thinks that Aristotle might coin the term (Koziak 2000, p. 93). I adopt

(emotion [*patho*]),[43] and wish (*boulesis*),[44] the latter embodies reason (*logos*)[45] which is peculiar to humans "and possibly another order like [wo/man] or superior to [him/her]" (such as gods).[46] These two faculties typify the human soul since they are essential for thinking, understanding, and judging theoretically, practically, and productively[47] and for initiating movements in space or actions accordingly.[48] Thinking and understanding originate from intellect (*DA* III 4. 429a10, 429a23-24), and movement in space and action desire (*DA* III 10. 433b28) (we will return to discuss this point in detail). However, the Aristotelian happiness does not result from activities of *any* soul but a *good* one (*EE* II 1. 1219a35), i.e., a "soul in accordance with complete excellence."

3.4. The meaning of completeness

Completeness here not only refers to that of "the excellence of the soul"[49] but also means that virtuous happiness results not from days or years but from "a complete life" of excellences. For "one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day, and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy" (*NE* I 7. 1098a18-19). To become so takes the best and noblest activities of the soul (and the body) *throughout* one's life (*NE* I 8. 1099a21-30). This is not just because "none of the attributes of happiness is *in*complete" (*NE* X 7. 1177b25) but, more importantly, because "many changes…and all manner of chances" will occur in one's life and "one who has experienced such chances and has ended wretchedly no one calls happy" (*NE* I 9. 1100a5-9). Contrarily, if one is "truly good and wise and foursquare beyond reproach," s/he will "always, or by preference to everything else…do and contemplate

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the latter translation for this article since "desire" can be physical or emotional, while "appetite" primarily refers to bodily needs as for food, drink, or sex.

[41] *EE* II 4. 1121b27-35. Cf. *DA* II 3. 414a29-414b35; *NE* VI 1. 1139a1-15; *Pol.* VII 14. 1333a16-19, 15. 1334b17-24.

[42] J. A. Smith renders this term as "desire" (Aristotle 1984, p. 659), and Koziak "appetite" (Koziak 2000, p. 93). Again, I adopt the latter since by *epthumia* Aristotle mostly referred to bodily cravings or appetites (*DA* II 3. 414b12; *Movement of Animals* [hereafter *MA*] 7. 701a30; *NE* III 10. 1118a9-15, 1118a24-1118b6).

[43] For a discussion of the term *thumos* meaning "the capacity that enables us to feel anger, pain, pity, as well as the rest of the emotions" in Aristotle, see Koziak 2000, pp. 81-97.

[44] *DA* II 3. 414b1-2. Cf. *DA* III 10. 433a25; *MA* 6. 700b21.

[45] *DA* III 3. 427b13. Cf. *NE* I 7. 1098a4-5, 13. 1102b29-1103a3.

[46] *DA* II 3. 414b17-19. Cf. *DA* II 3. 415a8-12; *NE* I 7. 1098a1-8.

[47] *Met.* VI 1. 1025b25. For Aristotle's thoughts on theoretical, practical, and productive intellect and knowledge, see *NE* VI 4.-7. 1140a1-1141b23.

[48] *DA* III 3. 427a17-19, 9. 432a15-16. Cf. *DA* I 4. 406b10-407b25, II 3. 414b17-19, 415a8-10.

[49] *EE* II 1. 1219a35-38. Cf. *NE* I 7. 1098a16-17.

what is excellent…bear the chances of life most nobly and altogether decorously"; suffer "with resignation many great misfortunes, not through insensibility to pain but through nobility and greatness of soul"; make "the best of circumstances"; and "die as befits [his/her] life." Such a person will never "become miserable" but "blessed and happy" (*NE* I 10. 1101a10-1101a21). This belief both echoes the Athenian sage Solon's emphasis on *a good death* necessary for true blessedness and happiness[50] and recalls the repentant cry of realization from Croesus, the superwealthy and hubristically self-deluded King of Lydia facing an imminent death on a flaming pyre: "No one who lives is happy!" (McMahon 2006, pp. 4-7). Aristotle even suggested that the completeness of one's happiness might be temporarily affected by "honors and dishonors and the good or bad fortunes" of one's descendants and friends.[51] All in all, he believed that true and perfect happiness could not but result from "the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete excellence."[52]

3.5. Human excellences

"Excellence" and "virtue" are the two commonest of English translations of the Greek *aretē* which denotes in its original sense "the best disposition … the state on account of which its possessor is said to be good" or "perfectly excellent."[53] In connection with happiness, Aristotle defined excellence as a state that enables the best performance of a uniquely human function—the activity of the soul (and the action of the body) in accordance with reason and morals (*NE* I 13. 1103a5-10, 7n) or, more specifically, rational and moral exercises of the soul's intellective and desiderative (appetitive, emotive, and wishing) faculties (and of bodily ones accordingly).[54] "The best and noblest" of such exercises throughout life will enable one to "live and fair well" (*NE* I 8. 1098b21-31), flourish, and attain happiness. To call the Aristotelian happiness aretaic or virtuous is to distinguish it from all the hedonistic kinds including those popularly conceived and pursued nowadays (Deci & Ryan 2008, pp. 1-3). According to Aristo-

[50] Cf. *NE* I 10. 1100a10-11; Aristotle 1999, pp. 46-47, *c*.n.
[51] *NE* 1 10. 1100a20, 1100a30, 11. 1101b6. Cf. Lane Cooper 1922, pp. 89-90, 1n.
[52] *EE* II 1. 1219a39. Cf. *EE* II 1. 1219a26-28, 1219a35-38; *NE* I 9. 1100a4-9, 1100b9-17.
[53] Plato 1997, p. 1679. For Aristotle's thoughts on excellence, see, e.g., *Top*. 116b1, 118a27, 121b38, 124b20, 131b1, 142b14, 144a9-19; *NE* II 13. 1103a10, VI 1. 1139a16.
[54] *NE* I 7. 1098a1-17. Cf. *DA* II 4. 415b9-22; *Met.* IX 2. 1046b17.

tle, there are two kinds of virtuous happiness from two kinds of excellence: the intellectual and the moral.[55]

3.6. The supremacy of intellect/reason

For him, the human soul is hierarchical among its parts wherein "the superior is that which has a rational principle" (*Pol.* VII 14. 1333a20-25). "Possessing [such a principle] and exercising thought" which is "found only where there is discourse of reason," intellect is bound to reign supreme in a virtuous soul.[56] For not only is intellect capable in theoretical reasonings of contemplating and knowing *truths* about things necessary, immutable, eternal, and universal that are demonstrable (deducible) from their "first principles" (*archê*)—their "primary causes," "primary definitions," or "immediate propositions (premises)" of the syllogisms from which truths about them are deduced;[57] but intellect is also capable of inductively comprehending and knowing "truth about the first principles" that are "non-demonstrable" (non-deducible) and yet "from which deduction proceeds."[58] Similarly, in "practical reasonings" as when deliberating or calculating "particular facts" or acts, not only does intellect "contemplate variable things" that "can be otherwise," "coming to be and passing away," i.e., "all things which have to be done";[59] it can also inductively "perceive" the non-deducible "ultimate particular," "last and contingent fact," i.e., the first principle of "the thing to be done."[60] As such, intellect is "the best thing in

[55] *NE* I 13. 1103a5-6, VI 12. 1144a3-5. Cf. *EE* II 1. 1220a5-12.
[56] *DA* III 3. 427b13; *NE* I 7. 1098a5. Cf. *EE* II 1. 1219b40-1220a1; *Pol*. I 5. 1254b2-10, VII 14. 1333a16-19.
[57] *APo*. I 1. 71a5-11, 32. 88a32-88b29; *Physics* (hereafter *Ph.*) I 1. 184a10-15; *MA* 7. 701a8-10; *NE* VI 1. 1139a6-8, 2. 1139a27-29, 3. 1139b14-35, 11. 1143a25-1143b6; *EE* II 4. 1221b30. For Aristotle's definition of knowledge, see *NE* VI 3. 1139b19-36; for demonstration meaning deduction, see *APo*. I 2. 71b17-18; cf. Aristotle 1999, p. 332, *c*.n.
[58] *Prior Analytics* (hereafter *APr.*) II. 23. 68b14-35; *APo.* I 2. 71b26; *NE* VI 3. 1139b29-30, 7. 1141a18, 8. 1142a25. As tradition has it, the comprehension in question is sometimes translated or referred to as "rational intuition," a special virtue and power of intellect (Aristotle 1999, pp. 340-341, *f*.n). However, this interpretation has been challenged (Osbeck and Held 2014, pp. 39-48).
[59] *Ph.* II 3. 194b17-20; *Generation of Animals* [hereafter *GA*] II 6. 742b30-35; *NE* VI 1. 1139a8-15, 2. 1139a31-1139b3-4, 5. 1140a25-1140b30, 7. 1141b15-17, 11. 1143a32-33, 1143b3; *MM* I 10. 1187b10-14.
[60] *NE* VI 8. 1142a23-30, 11. 1143a30-1143b6. For what Aristotle meant by "perception" in practical reasoning, see also *APo.* I 2. 71b35-72a5, II 19. 110a15-110b5; *NE* I 7. 1098b1-8; Aristotle 1999, p. 350, *f*.n and *g*.n, p. 351, *h*.n, and pp. 360-361, *e*.n; Aristotle 2011, p. 126, 44n. H. Rackham interprets "comprehension" in theoretical reasoning as "rational intuition," and "perception" in practical reasoning "practical intuition," Aristotle 1999, pp. 340-341, *f*.n, and p. 353.

[humans]" that makes them truly human by being "[their] natural ruler and guide" enabling them to think of "things noble and divine."[61]

On the other hand, as an inferior part of the soul, desire supposedly "listens to and obeys [reason]."[62] In reality and most people, however, desire only does so sometimes.[63] For it to do so more often or, better, constantly, one must undergo and internalize a rigorous character/moral education/habituation through training in, and repeated practice of, desire control in accord with reason; so that moral excellence may arise in him/her.[64]

Similarly, from teaching and experience of the best of theoretical and practical reasonings in contemplating, comprehending, or perceiving *truths* about first principles of invariable things or variable actions—arises intellectual excellence part of which can elevate humans closer to the divine.[65] Indeed, besides this hierarchy between intellective and desiderative parts of the soul, there is another between intellectual and moral excellences, even within intellectual excellences (and resulting happiness).

3.7. Intellectual excellence (1): theoretical or philosophical wisdom

Intellectual excellences manifest themselves in two kinds of wisdom, the theoretical (*sophia*) and the practical (*phronesis*).[66] The former is contemplative or speculative,[67] and the latter deliberative or calculative;[68] and the former is superior to the latter (*NE* VI 13. 1145a7, X 7. 1177b19) because, requiring minimal "external equipment" or bodily movement (which and senses often hinder mindful reflection), theoretical contemplation (of truth) involves mostly just intellect following "theoretical syllogisms" to their "propositional conclusion[s]."[69] It is thus the

[61] *NE* X 7 1177a13-15, 1178a1. Cf. *Met.* XII 9. 1074b16.
[62] *NE* I 13. 1102b30. Cf. *NE* I 7. 1098a4-5, 13. 1102b29-1103a3, VI 2. 1139a25; *EE* II 1. 1219b40-1220a1, 1220a8-12; *Pol*. VII 14. 1333a16-19.
[63] Cf. Koziak 2000, pp. 99-100.
[64] *NE* II 1. 1103b15-25. Cf. *Pol.* VII 15. 1334b20-24.
[65] *NE* II 1. 1103b15-16, X 7. 1177b30-35. Cf. *NE* VI 7. 1177a16, X 8. 1178b21- 23; *Met.* VI 1. 1026a19-22, XII 9. 1074b15-1075a10.
[66] *NE* I 13. 1103a4-7. These Greek terms used to be rendered in English as "wisdom" and "prudence," respectively. Aristotle 1999, p. 67.
[67] *NE* VI 2. 1139a27-2; *Pol.* VII 14. 1333a24-25. Cf. *Met.* VI 1. 1025b25, XII 9. 1075a1-4; Reeve 2012, p. 57.
[68] *NE* VI 1. 1139a12-14, 5. 1140a25-31. For Aristotle, there are five kinds of intellectual activity: "art, knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophical wisdom, comprehension" (*NE* VI 3. 1139b16-17). "All thoughts are either practical or productive or theoretical" (*Met.* VI 1. 1025b25; cf. *NE* VI 2. 1139a27-29). Opposed to the theoretical or the practical, the productive occurs in "art" (of making things) (*NE* VI 4. 1140a1-23).
[69] *APr*. II 23. 68b14-35; *MA* 7. 701a11; *NE* X 7. 1177a27-1177b1, 8. 1178a23-1178b7; Reeve 2012, p. 169.

most self-sufficient, continuous, unwearying, leisurely, pleasant, and eligible (for its own sake) of human activities.[70] Above all, it is most capable of attaining *sophia*, the combination of "knowledge of the highest objects" (e.g., the invariable, necessary, eternal, and universal, their first principles, and what follow from them) and comprehension of the truths about their principles.[71] Aristotle called *sophia* "the most finished of the forms of knowledge."[72] Moreover, capable of comprehending and knowing "the things that are highest by nature" (the divine), theoretical contemplation is "most akin" to "the activity of God," and contemplative intellect is "divine or only the most divine element in humans."[73] Thus, theology (the science of the divine, "the first science," or "the highest science") is superior to "the other theoretical sciences," viz. mathematics and natural science[74] which in turn are superior to the practical and productive sciences, because only the theoretical can lead to *sophia*. Aptly, Aristotle referred to them as "three theoretical philosophies" with theology as the "first philosophy" prior to the other two; it is *aptly*, because philosophy loves none but *sophia* and seeks none but truth.[75] Appropriately also, *sophia* is sometimes translated as "philosophical wisdom."[76] Whether called theoretical or philosophical, *sophia* represents the "supreme" form of human wisdom, "the highest (intellectual) excellence," and "complete (human) happiness."[77] And "the life according to (contemplative) intellect is best and pleasantest, since intellect more than anything else *is* [wo/man]. This life, therefore, is also the happiest" (*NE* X 7. 1178a7-8).

Alas, despite its quasi-divinity and supremacy, as pure thought (*dianoia*) philosophical or theoretical wisdom "moves nothing" or produces no action.[78] Hence "useless" (*NE* VI 7. 1141b7) to practical life which depends for its actualization on "external equipment" as well as intentional movements in space as in hunting for food or looking for water. None of these par-

[70] *NE* X 7. 1177b19-26. Cf. *Met*. XII 7. 1072b23.
[71] *NE* VI 7. 1141a17-19. Cf. *Met.* I 1. 981b25-982a1.
[72] *NE* VI 7. 1141a16. Aristotle sometimes characterized this knowledge as "scientific," see, e.g., *NE* VI 6. 1141a6.
[73] *NE* VI 7. 1141b3-6, X 7. 1177a16-18, 8. 1178b21-23. Cf. *Met.* XII 7. 1072b14-30, 9. 1074b15-1075a10; *NE* X 7. 1177b30; Aristople 1962, p. 150, *f*.n.
[74] Cf. Reeve 2012, p. 91-92 and 2013, p. 182.
[75] *Met.* II 1. 993a20-21, VI 1. 1026a10-33. Cf. Plato 1955, pp. 223-225.
[76] E.g., Aristotle 1999, p. 1742, 1801.
[77] *NE* VI 12. 1143b34, 13. 1145a7, X 7. 1177a12, 1177a17; cf. 1177a25, 1177b19-26.
[78] *NE* VI 2. 1139a36. Cf. *DA* III 9. 432b26-30, 10. 433a23-25.

ticular acts of quotidian life is *sophia*'s concern as it neither seeks "human goods" nor "contemplate[s] … the things that will make a person happy" in *practical* and *moral* terms.[79]

3.8. Intellectual excellence (2): practical wisdom (phronesis)

These are the concerns and "merits" of practical wisdom, the less divine but far more *human* attainment second best to philosophical wisdom.[80] "Practical wisdom," Aristotle argued, "must be a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods."[81] Indeed, a succinct definition pregnant with implications. Thus defined, for instance, *phronesis* shares some fundamentals in common with *sophia*, since both issue from the same rational part of the soul, engage "a true course of reasoning" in search and reach of truth, and thereby embody a species of intellectual excellence.[82] However, *sophia* represents the acme of contemplative intellect and *phronesis* deliberative; thus, the former is theoretical, and the latter practical.[83] These differences stem from yet a more critical one in ends: while the former contemplates to seek truth, the latter calculates to *choose* a true course of "good action" (*eupraxia*), i.e., "what ought to be done or not to be done" that will "conduce to the good life in general" and to the ultimate moral happiness[84] (since moral excellence is *also* concerned with choice of good action[85]). As a result, while *sophia* need be only concerned with truth (about the invariable), *phronesis* must be concerned with both truth (about the variable) and right desire (*NE* VI 2. 1139a30, 7. 1141b8-12).

This is because "desire and reasoning with a view to an end" are the combined origin of choice (*proairesis*). Therefore, Aristotle called choice "deliberative desire," "intellectual desire," "desiderative thought," or "efficient…cause (of action)"—a synecdoche, as we may call it, for the human agent, the chooser and actor of a certain character (more on this below). After all, in Aristotle *action* "denotes purposeful conduct of which only rational (and moral) beings are

[79] *NE* VI 12. 1143b19. Cf. Reeve 2012, p. 56.
[80] *NE* VI 7. 1141b8-12, 12. 1143b20, X 8. 1178a9-10. Cf. Aristotle 1999, p. 67, *b*.n.
[81] *NE* VI 5. 1140b20. Cf. *NE* VI 5. 1140b4-5; Russell 2013, pp.13, 28, 90-91.
[82] *NE* I 13. 1103a5-6, VI 1. 1139a4-15, 2. 1139b11-13, 4. 1140a1-23.
[83] *NE* VI 1. 1139a12-14, 2. 1139a26-30, 5. 1140a25-30.
[84] *MA* 7. 701a11; *Met.* II 1. 993a20-24; *NE* VI 2. 1139a27-29, 5. 1140a25-30, 1140b7, 7. 1141b21, 8. 1142a24, 10. 1143a8-9. Cf. Aristotle 2011, p. 5, 18n, p. 15, 52n; Reeve 2012, p. 140.
[85] *NE* VI 2. 1139a22. We will see shortly that practical wisdom and moral excellence are the two sides of the same coin.

capable."[86] As we will see, desire (particularly emotion) is the starting-point of action, and *right* desire (particularly proper emotion) is that of *good* action. For now, let us continue to focus on choice, especially how to make a good one. For this end, Aristotle's prescription is that "both the reasoning must be true and the desire right, if choice is to be good, and [desire] must pursue just what [reasoning] asserts" (*NE* VI 2. 1139a24-25). True reasoning here means "that which tends to attain what is good" and "what one ought to do…by the right means" (*NE* VI 9. 1142b22-23), and right desire means that which aims at good action (*NE* VI 2. 1139b4-5), "practical wisdom's unconditional end" (Reeve 2012, p. 140). It is, therefore, imperative in an excellent deliberation to ensure that one's desire is right and reasoning true by rationally examining and rectifying the former and by correctly following "practical syllogisms" in assessing available options, making a rational and moral judgment, choosing the best course of action and the right means, then issuing a decree to act. As we will also see later, this is what the practically wise *habitually* do when facing a situation and calculating their action best befitting it.

However, a *decree* for action is not the decreed *action* per se, just as a prescription for health is not the prescribed health proper.[87] Similarly, practical wisdom is "a state of capacity to act," not the act itself; not until the decree is being *acted* on and materialized, producing tangible results. That is to say, practical wisdom cannot complete or realize itself but in concrete actions. After all, "a decree is a thing to be carried out in the form of an individual act" (*NE* VI 7. 1141b27-28) and "a [wo/man] has practical wisdom not by knowing but by acting" (*NE* VII 10.1152a8-9). This is why the practically wise not only always impel their minds to deliberate available courses of action rationally, truthfully, and morally but also mobilize their bodies to act on and thereby actualize their minds' choices faithfully.

3.9. Good/right actions: practical wisdom and moral excellence (1), a necessary condition for moral happiness

Such actualized actions are of course *eupraxeis*, the "excellent *praxis* of the deliberately chosen sort" (Reeve 2012, p. 140). True, concrete actions are necessary for practical happiness,

[86] Aristotle 1999, p. 30, *a*.n., p. 328, *b*.n. Cf. *NE* III 2. 1111b12, VI 2. 1139a19-20.
[87] *NE* II 4. 1105b9-18. Cf. *DA* III 9. 433a4-5; Aristotle 1999, p. 8, *b*.n.

but only *right* ones can make it *moral*, "the highest of all goods achievable by action" (*NE* I 4. 1095a16). As noted above, these latter actions are at once voluntary, rational, and moral. This is because they are taken not "under compulsion or owing to ignorance" but "in our own power";[88] because, as a result of deliberation, they "[involve] reason and thought" (*NE* III 2. 1112a16); and because they are chosen for their goodness (*NE* VI 5. 1140b7). In ethics or moral philosophy as here, goodness or badness means what is good or bad, right or wrong *morally*.[89] Hence, "by (freely and deliberately) choosing what is good or bad we are [wo/men] of a certain character (*esmen*)" (*NE* III 2. 1112a2) and such a choice is inherently moral because it "cannot exist either without thought and intellect or without a moral state; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character (*êthos*)" (*NE* VI 2. 1139a33-34).

Meaning "are, be, have our being,"[90] the *esmen* above refers to what kind of moral beings we are or what kind of moral states we are in. Faithful is *esmen* here being interpreted as *êthos*[91] ("character, moral nature") since Aristotle equated *êthos* with "a moral state." Indeed, *êthos*, too, is an intrinsically moral term from which derives *êthicós* ("of or for morals, moral, expressing character") and *êthicê* (ethics). Yet, *êthos* comes from *ethos* ("habit, custom, manner; disposition, temper") and *ethô* ("to set as one's own").[92] In humans, "habit" primarily denotes an acquired pattern of "almost involuntary" behavior (not only in doing but in feeling or thinking),[93] thus connoting behavioral consistency and constancy. As habits form through repeated doings, character (one's moral being or state) evolves from repeated chosen practice (*NE* III 6. 1114b25-30), "the aggregate of [one's] past emotional and intellectual decisions (and resultant actions)" (Janko 2001, p. 62).

This explains why Aristotle insisted that since in his ethics "we are inquiring not in order to know what excellence is, but in order to become good…we must examine the nature of

[88] *NE* III 1. 1109b35, 2. 1111b30. Cf. *NE* VI 12. 1144a12-20.
[89] "Ethics." http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics (accessed January 9, 2017); cf. "Ethics." https://en. wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics (accessed January 9, 2017).
[90] "2070. esmen." http://biblehub.com/greek/2070.htm (accessed January 2, 2017).
[91] Cf. Aristotle 1999, p. 133, which also translates *esmen* as "character."
[92] Cf. *NE* II 1. 1103a18; *EE* II 2. 1220b1; Aristotle 1984, p. 1742, 7n., 8n.; Aristotle 1999, p. 70, *a*.n.; "Ethos." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethos (accessed July 27, 2016); "Ethics." https://en. wiktionary.org/wiki/ethics (accessed January 19, 2017); "ηθική," "ηθικός," "ἦ θος," "ἔ θος," "ἔ θω." https://en.wiktionary.org (accessed January 20, 2017).
[93] *Webster's* 1972, p. 626; "Habit." http://www.dictionary.com/browse/habit?s=t (accessed January 20, 2017).

actions, namely how we ought to do them; for these determine also the nature of the states that are produced."[94] These states refer to our *moral* habits or characters because it is only "by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good" (*NE* II 4. 1105b9-10). Hence, constant moral *praxis* fosters character-cultivating habit, which in essence is a moral state or disposition (*hexis*).[95]

Once possessing such a disposition, one cannot help but impel oneself to strive and follow right desire, exercise right reason, conduct right deliberations, make right choices, and carry out the chosen actions by right means.[96] Then, the resulting *eupraxeis* cannot but reflect not only one's practical wisdom but also moral excellence, the excellence of one's character just as practical wisdom is the excellence of one's deliberative intellect.[97] For "with regard to the (moral) excellences in general we have stated … that they are means (moderations) and that they are states, and that they tend by their own nature to the doing of the acts by which they are produced, and that they are in our power and voluntary, and act as right reason prescribes" (*NE* III 5. 1114b26-30).

Therefore, practical wisdom and moral excellence are integral to each other like two sides of the same coin, linked by good choice of action. For "the principles of practical wisdom are in accordance with moral excellence, and rightness in the moral excellence is in accordance with practical wisdom." [98] Indeed, it is moral excellence that transforms human "cleverness" (a natural ability of doing what is necessary to attain an aim) into practical wisdom by impelling "this (clever) eye of the soul" to choose a *noble* goal (VI 12. 1144a30); without moral excellence, this cleverness can quickly degenerate to "villainy" when the aim chosen is bad (*NE* VI 12. 1144a24-37). On the other hand, practical wisdom transmutes "natural (human) excellence" (an inborn "disposition to moral qualities") into *true* moral excellence by giving the former an "(eye)sight" (practical intellect) for what must be done to realize a noble aim; without this sight, the former will remain practically blind, which can be harmful as may lead a

[94] *NE* II 2. 1103b27-35. Cf. *NE* I 3. 1094a5; X 9. 1179a35-1179b4; *MM* II 10. 1208a35; *EE* II 1. 1219b8-11.
[95] *Met*. V 20. 1022b10-14. Cf. Aristotle 1961, vols. I-IX, p. 270, *b*.n.
[96] *NE* II 2. 1103b31-32, 4. 1105a29-35.
[97] *NE* VI 13. 1144b30-32, 1145a1, X 8.1178a9-22.
[98] *NE* X 8. 1178a15-19. Cf. *NE* VI 13. 1144b24-29.

person astray and "stumble badly" in action.[99] Thus, in choosing right actions, moral excellence cannot but involve practical wisdom which always "implies the *presence* of right reason."[100] This explains why Aristotle insisted that "the choice will not be right without practical wisdom any more than without (moral) excellence; for the one determines (the rightness of) the end and the other makes us do the (right) things that lead to the end." [101]

So "it is impossible to be practically wise without being (morally) good."[102] After all, "[p]ractical wisdom is the quality of the mind concerned with things just and noble and good for [wo/man], [and] these are the things which it is the mark of a *good* [wo/man] to do" (*NE* VI 12. 1143b21-23). It bears repeating that people become moral only by *doing* moral acts, "exactly as, if they do what grammatical or musical they are proficient in grammar and music" (*NE* II 4. 1105a18-21). Hence, practical wisdom/moral excellence constitutes a necessary condition for moral happiness because, without this "reasoned and true state of capacity to *act* with regard to human goods" (my emphasis), there can be no moral excellence or moral happiness—the best and noblest of all *activities* in life.

3.9.Moral excellence (2) and Emotions

However, good actions are only one of the twin concerns of moral excellence; the other is right desire or in particular, as suggested above, proper emotions.[103] The two are necessary for moral excellence with desire as the starting-point of action. As Aristotle observed, in actions caused by humans themselves rather than by external forces (e.g., chance, compulsion, or nature), thought alone can never move any*body* to act, unless accompanied by another force from the soul: *desire*, the "single faculty" that alone can mobilize the body to act.[104] That is why "thought is never found producing movement without [desire]" since "that which is moved is moved insofar as it desires." So "inasmuch as an animal is capable of [desire] it is capable of

[99] *NE* VI 13. 1144b1-17. Cf. Aristotle 1999, p. 370, *a*.n.
[100] *NE* VI 13. 1144b26-28. We will see in detail later what "right reason" exactly means in relation to practical wisdom.
[101] *NE* VI 13.1145a4-6. Cf. *NE* VI 12. 1144a6-7.
[102] *NE* VI 12. 1144a36. Cf. *NE* VI 12. 1144b30-31.
[103] *NE* II 3.1104b14. Cf. *NE* II 6. 1107a4, III 1. 1109b30.
[104] *DA* II 4. 415b9-23, III 9. 432b26-29, 10. 433a21; *NE* VII 3. 1147a35; *Met.* IX 2. 1046b17; *Rh.* I 10. 1368b34-1369a5.

self-movement"; "the instrument which [desire] employs to produce movement is bodily."[105] In short, in voluntary movements living creatures only move when they desire to.

Regarding desire's genesis at its most animalistic/natural, appetitive/physical, and pre-intellectual level, Aristotle stated:

> If any order of living things has the sensory, it must also have the [desiderative]; for [desire] is the genus of which [appetite], passion (*thumos*), and wish (*boulesis*) are the species; now all animals have one sense at least, viz. touch, and whatever has a sense has the capacity for pleasure and pain and therefore has pleasant and painful objects present to it, and wherever these are present, there is [appetite], for [appetite] is just [desire] of what is pleasant.[106]

Here, desire refers to an animalistic capacity for feeling (appetitive/physical) pain and pleasure. For Aristotle, pain is essentially a feeling of deficiency in the normal state of a living creature, such as hunger or thirst (*MM* II 7. 1205a2). Correspondingly, pleasure is "a conscious restoration to a normal state," a sense of satisfaction from this restoration with replenishment as from food or drink (perceived by touch and/or the other senses).[107] Thus, "the pleasure of drink (or food) has a contrary in the pain of thirst (or hunger)" (*Top*. I 15. 106a37). Although the pleasure of the normal state prior to the pain of deficiency may be a "better" or even the "best" kind (*MM* II 7. 1205a1-2, 1205b21-27), it is arguable that in this pre-pain state we usually do not feel so strong a pleasure as that of replenishment after the pain of deficiency (no pain, no gain, and no greater pleasure, so to speak). Hence, in all animals deficiencies engender desires (for pleasure); of which the most basic is the appetite for the pleasure of replenishment and return to the normal state of natural equilibriums.[108] It is simultaneously a subliminal desire for no bodily pain as caused by hunger, thirst, or injury from the external world (e.g., a predator). To reiterate,

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[105] *DA* III 10. 433a21-433b28. Cf. *DA* III 10. 433b28-30; *NE* VI 2. 1139a21, 1139a31, VII 3. 1147a33-35.
[106] *DA* II 3. 414b1-5. Cf. *DA* II 2. 413b23-24, 414b15, III 11. 433b31-434a3; *MA* 6. 700b21; *Rh.* I 10. 1369b16, 11. 1370a16. We will see shortly that *thumos* here refers to emotions at large.
[107] *MM* II 7. 1204b36-1205a1. Cf. *MM* II 7. 1205b1-13; *DA* II 3. 414a29-415a14; *Rh.* I 11. 1369b33-1370b6; Plato 1955, p. 620. Indeed, the normal or natural state of equilibrium can also be upset from the opposite direction by excess of food or drink which causes pain and a need of restoration of normalcy.
[108] *DA* II 3. 414b10. Interestingly, Plato suggested that "emptiness" causes and is a desire just as thirst is (Plato 1955, p. 621). "Desire" connotes want not only in Greek or English but also in Chinese since the character 欲 *yu* (desire) contains radicals 谷 (vale, valley, gorge, ravine, emptiness, or vessel) and 欠 which in this combination connotes lack, perhaps thirst.

any animal with some sense has sensations of pain and pleasure and thus desires; of which the most primitive is the appetite for food (*DA* III 11. 434a2-3).

Urged by a bodily deficiency and resultant appetite, an animal naturally looks out for replenishment—the means of restoration and the objects of pleasure such as food or water that can be found in Nature. So, a sensitive creature always "has pleasant and painful objects present to it" (*DA* II 3. 414a4). The painful refers to that which can cause injurious or fatal deficiencies in an animal, such as poisonous food or a predator. When perceiving a predator, an animal may instinctively freeze, hide, flee, or fight as a last resort. When perceiving prey, the object of pleasure, a *hungry* animal, compelled by appetite, moves forward toward it. Thus, "no animal moves except by compulsion unless it has an impulse towards or away from an object" and "this object may be either the real or the apparent good (or bad)."[109] We may call the forward movement offensive and the away one defensive. "Always in something which is avoiding or pursuing an object," these movements represent two archetypes of physical (re)actions in animals: avoidance of a predator and pursuit of prey.[110]

They follow what can be called instinctively practical syllogisms, e.g., feeling hunger, perceiving food (that satisfies hunger), therefore, going for it; contrarily, perceiving a predator, remembering and foreseeing the pain (it inflicts), therefore, fleeing.[111] Thus, "to perceive then is like bare asserting or thinking; but when the object is pleasant or painful, the soul makes a sort of affirmation or negation, and pursues or avoids the object. To feel pleasure or pain is to act with the sensitive mean towards what is good or bad as such" at an *appetitive* and, as Aristotle implied, an *amoral* level.[112]

This is how "living creatures are impelled to move and act, and desire is the last cause of movement, and desire arises through perception or imagination and thought (as in the defensive scenario). Moreover, things that desire to act make and act sometimes from appetite or impulse (*thumos*) and sometimes from wish" (*MA* 7. 701a 35-701b1). As Barbra Koziak argues, *thumos* here refers to "the capacity that enables us to feel anger, pain, pity, as well as the

[109] *DA* III 9. 432b17, 10. 433a27. Cf. *Top*. VI 8. 147a3.
[110] *DA* III 9. 432b27-28. "Avoidance" here is used in a loose sense to include freezing in front of, fighting against, hiding and/or fleeing from, a predator.
[111] *MA* 7. 701a 7-34. Cf. *NE* VI 2. 1139a2, VII 3. 1147a24-1147b5; Aristotle 1999, pp. 360-361, *e*.n.; Reeve 2012, pp. 130-194.
[112] *DA* III 7. 431a8-10. Cf. *DA* III 9. 433a2-3; *MA* 8. 702a1; *Rh.* I 10. 1369b16.

rest of the emotions" (Koziak 2000, pp. 93-95). Thus, *thumos* can metonymically denote emotions in general as it does for other Aristotelian scholars who have either translated it into English as "passion" or used it as a synonym for emotions.[113] For Aristotle, as we remember, the genus of desire comprises three species: appetite (physical), emotion (psychological), and wish (both psychological and intellectual).[114]

And Aristotle implied that the first two are bio-evolutionarily more primitive causes of human actions (*EE* II 1. 1219b40-1220a1) because the irrational part of the soul to which they belong is "prior in order of generation" to the rational part (*Pol.* VII 15.1334b17-24). Yet, it is arguable that human actions are *more often than not* spurred by emotion than by appetite, for if we agree that humans are not just appetitive but far more emotive beings than any other species on earth,[115] we then have to admit that humans, therefore, suffer far more often than the latter from imbalances caused by emotional excesses or deficiencies, thus incurring far more needs for restoring their normal emotional equilibrium and far more often "impelled (by these needs) to move and act," e.g., to seek objects of emotional pleasure such as people we love, or to avoid those of emotional pain such as our enemies. As food or drink is an object of appetitive desire (pleasure), "a certain state of social relations" is that of emotive desire (pleasure) (Koziak 2000, p. 96). Indeed, humans are not called social and emotional animals for nothing. After all, in relation to humans Aristotle defined pleasure and pain as "the consciousness through the senses of a certain kind of emotion (*pathos*)" (*Rh.* I 11. 1370a27). Here, he seems to imply that human pleasure or pain is more often of an emotive than an appetitive nature and that desire in humans more often than not refers to their emotions.[116] And this becomes more explicit in his conception of character in relation to emotion:

> —consider, then, character to be this, viz. a quality in accordance with governing reason belonging to the irrational part of the soul which is yet able to obey the reason. Now we

[113] For instance, J. A. Smith's English translation of Aristotle's *On the Soul* (*De Anima*) in Aristotle 1984, vol. 1, p. 659, and Oele 2007, p. 160.
[114] According to Aristotle, appetite and emotion are closer to one another than to wish, which is both desiderative and intellectual since, as a "[desire] for a good," wish can be "found in the calculative part [of the soul]," but "[appetite] and passion (can be found only) in the irrational." In other words, wish is "rational desire," and appetite and emotion "irrational desire[s]," albeit they are capable of listening to reason. *Top*. IV 5. 126a12, 8. 146b2; *DA* II 3. 414b2, III 9. 432b6, 10. 433a24, 433b4, 11. 434a2; *Rh.* I 10. 1369a1-4.
[115] It appears that although they also have emotions, animals more often than not act with appetite as does the "incontinent man" (*NE* III 2. 1111b11-18).
[116] *DA* III 9. 432b30; *Met.* XII 7 1072b3.

> have to state in respect of what part of the soul we have character of this or that kind. It will be in respect of the faculties of passion, in virtue of which men are spoken of as subject to passion, and in respect of the habits, in virtue of which men are described, in reference to those passions, either as feeling them in some way or as not feeling them (*EE* II 2. 1220b5-10).

In this light, we may modify two of his claims above to foreground emotion as a major and commoner cause of human action: "(emotive) desire is (more often) the last cause of [action]";[117] "(for humans) to feel (the emotion of) pleasure or pain is (more often, if not mostly) to act with the sensitive mean towards what is good or bad as such (emotionally)" (*DA* III 7. 431a8-10).

3.10. The indispensability of emotions of pleasure and pain to moral excellence

In the human world, the emotionally good or bad often have *moral* significances and/or consequences, since humans are not merely emotional and social but (often enough) rational and moral beings and most of them may agree with Aristotle that they ought to strive to become excellent both intellectually and morally.[118] As suggested above, without emotion there would be no moral virtue or vice to speak of, since they stem from activities or actions spurred by desires either for emotional pleasure or for avoiding emotional pain. Hence this syllogism from Aristotle: "the (moral) excellences are concerned with actions and passions, and every passion and every action are accompanied by pleasure and pain, for this reason also excellence will be concerned with pleasures and pains."[119] The same conclusion is inducible from two of his observations: first, "it is on account of pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of pain that we abstain from noble ones" (*NE* II 3. 1104b10); second, "in most things the error seems to be due to pleasure; for it appears a good when it is not. We, therefore, choose the pleasant as a good, and avoid pain as an evil" (*NE* III 4. 1113a35-1113b1). Hence, "the character must be bad or good by its pursuit or avoidance of certain pleasures and pains … men are bad through pleasures and pains, either by the pursuit and

[117] *MA* 7. 701a 30-701b1. Cf. *Met.* XII 7 1072b3.
[118] *NE* X 7. 1177b30-35. Here, Aristotle suggests that while becoming completely rational is the highest and divine goal for humanity, becoming completely virtuous is the second highest and human goal in life.
[119] *NE* II 3.1104b14-15. Cf. *NE* X 8. 1178a14-16.

avoidance of improper pleasures or pains or by their pursuit (or avoidance) in an improper way."[120] As one Aristotelian scholar aptly puts it, "*pathos* as affection provides here the occasion for virtue (or vice) to express and realize itself" and "virtue (and vice) and *pathos* belong very much to the same ground and home" (Oele 2007, p. 185, 188). At the center of this ground are pleasure and pain, the core of all emotions.

We can strengthen the case about the indispensability of emotion to moral excellence by mentioning Aristotle's two other arguments. First, the emotion of pleasure is inseparable from activity since it not only "accompanies all objects of choice" but completes "every activity" and thus happiness—the most choice activity in life.[121] Second, amusement (including humor) as a relaxing and pleasant emotion is required for a continual pursuit of moral excellence and happiness, providing necessary psychological (not moral) rest from the "toil" entailed by endeavors for moral excellence and happiness.[122]

Thus, as the usual originator of *human* activity (physical or psychological), emotion or, more precisely, emotive desire for pleasure and no pain forms the *first* necessary condition for moral excellence. So much so that "it is not the case, as others think, reason is the principle and guide to excellence, but rather the feelings (*pathē*). For there must first be produced in us (as indeed the case) an irrational impulse of the feeling to the right, and then later on reason must put the question to the vote and decide it. One may see this from the case of children and those who live without reason" (*MM* II 7. 1206b18-22). Apparently, a later Aristotelian author epitomizing Aristotelian ethics wrote these remarks, but based on what we have seen above and what we will see below, they are very much consistent with what is known from Aristotle himself.[123] In the *Politics*, for instance, he states that emotion precedes reason in a child's growth, for "as the body is prior in order of generation to the soul, so the irrational is prior to the rational. The proof is that [emotion] and [wish] and [appetite] are implanted in children from their very birth, but reason and understanding are developed as they grow older" (VII 15. 1334b20-24). This

[120] *EE* II 4. 1221b34-1222a5. Cf. *NE* II 3. 1105a2-12, VI 5. 1140b11-19, X 1. 1172a19-25.
[121] *NE* II 3. 1104b35, X 4. 1175a11-21; *Pol.* VIII 3. 1338a5.
[122] *NE* X 6. 1176a30-1177a10; *Pol.* VIII 3. 1337b23-1338b8, 5. 1339a12-1340b19, 7. 1341b20-35; *Rh.* I 11. 1370a16-17.
[123] Aristotle 1962, pp. 427-443; "*Magna Moralia*." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Moralia (accessed September 30, 2016).

statement, as well as the remarks in question, also agree with Aristotle's lining up of the origin of choice as "desire and reasoning with a view to an end" (*NE* VI 2. 1139a31).

3.12. The necessity of reason for moral excellence

However, if we are born with "an irrational impulse of the feeling to the right," we also come with one to the wrong, since "[desire] … may be either right or wrong" (*DA* III 9. 433a26). Then, actions prompted by these impulses can be either right or wrong. That is to say, emotions (including the "impulse of the feeling to the right") do not necessarily lead to *right* actions. For, unintellectual,[124] irrational, non-deliberative, and amoral by nature, emotions are incapable of knowing whether the actions they originate are proper or not, since feelings feel but do not think; they urge (pursuit or avoidance of an object) but do not judge (whether doing so is practical or moral).[125]

This must wait to be determined by intellect/reason, as in "the case of children" in whom "there spring up, first, impulses of the feelings towards right, and reason supervening later and giving its vote … is the cause of right action" (*MM* II 7. 1206b22-24). This example suggests that notwithstanding the originator of action, emotions do not always bring about *actual* actions because reason may block them. This echoes both what Aristotle said about the dynamics of desire, thought, and action in *DA* (III 9. 433a8-9) and what he said about choice "as a result of deliberation," "last in the order of analysis" but "first in the order of becoming (action)," and thus action's "efficient … cause."[126] As we know, for him, desire and reason are the combined origins of choice, and to make a good choice, "[desire] must pursue just what [reasoning] asserts" (*NE* VI 2. 1139a21-25). Therefore, intellect, the capacity to reason, forms the *second* necessary condition for right action:[127] in determining the rightness and practicability of an action, intellect superimposes reason both on irrational and amoral emotive (and appetitive) desires and on the actions they motivate, approving some, overruling others, decreeing some to be carried out and others not.

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[124] Proponents of emotional intelligence may disagree with this, since they argue that emotion is a form of intelligence. "Emotional Intelligence." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_intelli-gence (accessed April 7, 2016).
[125] *DA* III 11. 434a11-14; *NE* II 5. 1156a7-9, V 8. 1135b9-25, VII 3. 1147b4-5.
[126] *NE* III 3. 1112b12-24, 1113a5, VI 2. 1139a31.
[127] In Aristotle, intellect, thought, and reason are often synonymous.

Therefore, acting merely "in accordance with desire" signifies "moral weakness."[128] For moral excellence entails that we abstain from pleasure or brave pain as reason dictates (*NE* II 3. 1105a8-9). We ought to and can do so not only because "thought (reason) is always right" (*DA* III 9. 433a26) but because human desire (appetitive, emotive, and wishful) is capable of heeding thought/reason and obeying their guidance.[129] When desire does so, the chosen action will be right, and properly carrying it out, especially the *habit* of doing so, will "grow" the chooser's moral character (*EE* II 2. 1220a1).

3.13. Proper emotions are "both intermediate and best."

Although capable of heeding reason, emotions do not always obey it or worse, since sometimes even "if they have received from reason the principle that leads to (what is) right, the feelings do not necessarily follow and consent thereto, but often oppose it."[130] This occurs most often when pleasures are involved, such as those "slavish and brutish" tactile ones from food or sex[131] or those almost intractable emotional ones from revenge or romantic love. Refraining from the latter kind for long is especially hard for humans who come with so stronger a tendency to indulge or overindulge them which makes disobedience to reason often nearly inevitable, irresistible, or insurmountable.[132]

The same is true of *excessive* emotions since "this is just the condition of men under the influence of passions; for outbursts of anger and sexual appetites and some other such passions…actually alter our bodily condition, and in some men even produce fits of madness" (*NE* VII 3. 1147a14-16). Consequently, excessive emotions can "so change men as to affect their judgment," because "the man who has been ruined by (excessive) pleasure or pain forthwith fails to see any such principle (about what is to be done as determined by reason)—to see that for the sake of this or because of this he ought to choose and do whatever he chooses and does; for vice (e.g., excessive emotion) is destructive of the principle."[133] In other words, emotions can be so extreme as to overwhelm reason's decree for a chosen action or render it

[128] *DA* III 9. 432b26-433a6. Cf. *NE* III 2. 1111b11-18, VII. 8, 1151a21-24.
[129] *DA* III 9. 433a26; *NE* I 7. 1098a3-5, 13.1102b12-1103a3; *Pol*. VII 14. 1333a16-18.
[130] *MM* II 7. 1206b25-28. Cf. *DA* III 3. 429a8.
[131] *NE* III 10. 1118a1-1118b5. Cf. *NE* VII 3. 1147a32-1147b4; *Rh*. I 11. 1370a23.
[132] *NE* II 8. 1109a15-16. Cf. *NE* III 4. 1113a35-1113b1, 11. 1118b15-18, 1119a6-7.
[133] *NE* VI. 5 1140b11-19. Cf. *DA* III 3. 429a5-8.

contrary to reason's calculation. On the other hand, emotions can also be so lacking as not to generate sufficient psychological impetus to mobilizing the body for action despite reason's call for it. Hence, neither too much nor too little emotion is good. Indeed, emotional improprieties also include expressing emotion "in an improper way."[134]

It turns out that neither reason nor "impulses of the feelings towards right" but "a right disposition of the feelings seems to be the (first) principle that leads to (moral) excellence."[135] In other words, moral virtue or vice results from "a particular way" in which one is *disposed* or *habituated* to choose how to conduct oneself in society, e.g., how to feel and express emotions, how to deliberate what to do, and how to do what is chosen in a proper way (*NE* II 5. 1106a4-5).

Then, what is the *rightness* of this "disposition of the feelings"? This we can find out in what Aristotle said about *proper* (emotional) pleasure and pain. "[I]n general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of excellence" (*NE* II 6. 1106b19-23). At an earlier point, Aristotle remarked that proper emotions are those expressed neither "violently" nor "too weakly" but "moderately" (*NE* II 5. 1105b25-29). Clearly, emotional moderation here alludes to the golden mean, the touchstone of propriety in Aristotle's ethics, since "vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while excellence both finds and chooses that which is intermediate" (*NE* II 6. 1107a4). To instantiate various "means in…passions and concerned with passions," Aristotle cited friendliness as the mean in pleasantness between quarrelsomeness/surliness and obsequiousness/flattery; modesty in shame between shamelessness and bashfulness; righteous indignation in pain and pleasure at a neighbor's fortune or misfortune between spite and envy; and wit in humor between boorishness and buffoonery.[136]

In all of these, reason is held as the best judge that can guide one to find and choose the intermediates in emotions and actions, for "the intermediate is determined by the dictates of reason...In all the states we have mentioned, as in all other matters, there is a mark to which the [wo/man] who possesses reason looks, and heightens, or relaxes [her/his] activity accordingly,

[134] *EE* II 4. 1222a1. Cf. *NE* II 8. 1109a15-16.
[135] *MM* II 7. 1206b29. Cf. *Pol.* VII 15. 1334b20-26.
[136] *NE* II 7. 1108a23-1108b10. Cf. *EE* II 3. 1220b35-1221a12.

and there is a standard which determines the mean states which we say are intermediate between excess and defect, being in accordance with right reason."[137] By determining the intermediates of emotions, actions, and "all other matters" right reason ensures the "correctness of deliberation that is excellence in deliberation, viz. that which tends to attain what is good (and proper)" (*NE* VI 9. 1142b20-22). In other words, reason is *right* because it leads one to the moderate and the good. Therefore, "that we must act according to right reason is a common principle" (*NE* II 2.1103b31).

Conceivably, most amenable to "right reason," proper emotions make it much easier to follow this principle, not only because they are more heedful and obedient to reason, but because the emotive equilibrium they produce creates a better psychological condition for the intellect to reason. It seems a common human experience that clear thinking usually takes place in a calm mind but is hindered by appetitive or emotive turmoil (as is by apathy).[138]

All these explain why Aristotle called the mean the most "characteristic of excellence." For further illustration, he drew an analogy with artworks because their "goodness" is destroyed by excess or defect but preserved by the mean; he went on to say: "if … excellence is more exact and better than any art, as nature also is, then it must have the quality of aiming at the intermediate. I mean moral excellence; for it is this that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate."[139] He later reiterated this conviction: "moral excellence is a mean…between two vices, the one involving excess, the other deficiency…it is such because its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and actions" (*NE* II 9. 1109a20-23).

As we have shown above, the moral excellence of one's character is inseparable from the intellectual excellence of one's practical intellect since the former is "a state concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the [wo/man] of practical wisdom would determine it" (*NE* II 6. 1107a1). "This is why we call temperance (desiderative moderation) by this name (practical wisdom); we imply that it preserves one's practical wisdom" (*NE* VI 5. 1140b11).[140] Hence, choosing and acting on emotion-

[137] *NE* VI 1. 1138b18-25. Cf. *EE* II 3. 1220b27-28; Aristotle 1999, p. 324-325, *b*.n; Aristotle 2011, p. 28, 4n.
[138] Cf. Plato 1955, p. 234; Janko 2001, pp. 61-62.
[139] *NE* II 6. 1106b6-17. Cf. *NE* II 6. 1107a4.
[140] Cf. Aristotle 1999, p. 338, *a*.n.; Aristotle 2011, p. 121, 28n and pp. 121-122, 31n.

al propriety reflects one's practical wisdom as well as moral excellence; wherewith "truth [is] in agreement with right desire" (*NE* VI 2. 1139a30). In such a harmony, one's feeling will be proper, reasoning correct, end right, and action good.[141]

3.14. Proper emotions are a foremost necessary condition for moral excellence and happiness.

In light of the above, we may also appropriately call the "right disposition of the feelings" an emotive temperance,[142] a state in which one is *habitually* more heedful to reason and always tries first to seek the mean relative to one in different situations so as to feel and express emotions moderately, think clearly, choose rightly, and act properly.[143] It thus forms a *foremost* necessary condition for practical wisdom/moral excellence (*NE* II 4. 1105a26-1105b4), especially for their consistency and constancy, which in turn forms the necessary and sufficient condition for moral happiness.

Apparently, this is why Aristotle gave the highest priority to cultivating the emotive habit of temperance in a "right education," the discipline of character building, so to speak.[144] He advocates:

> we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is the right education. (*NE* II 3. 1104b11-13)

What we ought to do includes, first of all, feeling and expressing emotions moderately. And this can only result from appropriate emotional discipline because

> argument and teaching…are not powerful with all men…For he who lives as passion directs will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does; and how can we persuade one in such a state to change his ways? And in general passion seems to yield not to argument but to force. The character, then, must somehow be there already with a kinship to excellence, loving what is noble and hating what is base (and doing so in a proper way). (*NE* X 9. 1179b24-30)

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[141] Bloom 1987, p. 71.
[142] "Temperance" in Aristotle mostly has much narrower a sense reserved for appetitive moderation. See, e.g., *NE* III 10. 1117b23-1119b19.
[143] *NE* II 6. 1106a22, VI 12. 1144a12-20. Aristotle also advised that when the mean could not be found, one should aim at and choose what is the closest to it, the next best thing, even though it might be a little excessive or deficient (*NE* II 9. 1109b24-25).
[144] *NE* X 9. 1179a31-1181b21.

As the proverb goes, you can lead a horse to water but cannot make it drink. There must be *first* in one "the character/habit," e.g., the emotive temperance and the thirst for reason, so that s/he will be always willing to drink the proverbial water and do it properly.

4. Conclusion

It should be clear by now that Aristotle thought that right desire (especially emotion) and right reason are necessary for good action; that the three of them are essential for attaining practical wisdom/moral excellence; and that their consistency and constancy will suffice to bring their possessors moral happiness attainable only through a lifetime of excellences (*NE* I 10. 1101a15-21). True, it is much easier for one to be proper in emotion and/or action sometimes than all the time; but often it is already challenging enough for one to be so even for a short while, not only because it is hard for most of us to abstain from (physical or psychological) pleasure or endure pain for long, but also because it is difficult for most of us to find the intermediates of pleasure or pain in every circumstance since they are all *relative* to each person in each situation.[145] This may explain the generality and vagueness of Aristotle's advice that in finding the means one follow wo/men of practical wisdom.[146]

If the above reconstructed major and minor premises of the two syllogisms in focus hold and if my demonstration/deduction is correct, then, their conclusions should be sound. If so, we have established these (and other) mostly implicit syllogisms in Aristotle, especially, once again, these two:

(1) Proper emotions are a foremost necessary condition for moral excellence.
Proper humor is (first) a proper emotion.
It, therefore, partakes of the said necessary condition for moral excellence.

(2) Moral excellence (at large) is a necessary condition for moral happiness.
Proper humor (emotion and conduct) is a moral excellence.
It, therefore, partakes of the said necessary condition for moral happiness.

As such, they bear an answer to why Aristotle insisted on humor being proper: because *such* humor is necessary for attaining moral excellence at large and moral happiness ultimately.

[145] *NE* II 6. 1106a25-1106b5, 1106b30-35, 9. 1109a20-29, 1109b14-25.
[146] For a discussion of this difficulty, see Frankena 1965, pp. 31-34.

Granted, if one wanted and could have nothing to do with humor, it would be well and good, for, in theory, a humorless person (who was born so or succeeded in doing away with his/her sense of humor) could attain moral excellence and happiness. Apparently, Aristotle did not think such a person could exist in reality, since he believed that mirth (including humor), like other emotions, is part of human nature and hence ineradicable. So everyone must have a sense of humor, more or less. Hence, if they *also* want to be virtuous and happy, then, they must be *proper* with their humor. Moreover, because moral excellence at large consists of individual excellences, then without any of the latter the former would be incomplete. As the whole depends on *all* its parts, attainment of temperance in humor, a partial control over emotion and action, perforce advances attainment of moral excellence at large, the *full* control over desire and conduct. As Aristotle said of the correlation between the moral excellence of each person and that of all people, "in the excellence of each the excellence of all is involved" (*Pol.* VII 13. 1332a38).

An inevitable question is: how can one have temperance in humor and, by extension, desiderative temperance at large that is necessary for moral excellence and happiness? Inevitable, because Aristotle held that moral virtue (and, for that matter, vice) is not innate but acquired postnatally (*NE* II 1. 1103a15-25). Clues to his answer to the question can also be gleaned from his ethicophilosophy, especially on character/moral education, but they entail a separate study.

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