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About Virtue: What Aristotle Assumed, But We Need to Say

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About Virtue: What Aristotle Assumed, But We Need to Say

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Introduction

The predecessors of this paper are three papers delivered at meetings of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics and of the Academy for Professionalism in Health Care in which I tried to clarify what we are aiming at when we identify professionalism as an educational goal in our professional schools. Like other writers on professionalism, I see close analogies between practicing professionalism and practicing the virtues. This suggests that growing in professionalism has important similarities to learning to be virtuous and this in turn suggests that efforts to teach professionalism can benefit from understanding how virtue is learned. So I decided to return to Aristotle with this in mind.

Aristotle does not offer a systematic explanation of how virtue is learned, much less a detailed developmental model about the learning of virtue. But he says enough in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and elsewhere to suggest that he might well have had a more systematic picture of this process in mind.¹ From my reading of these texts and the work of a number of commentators, I have constructed a developmental model for the learning of virtue that is, I think, consistent with what Aristotle does say. In this paper I present this model and connect it the best that I can to the relevant Aristotelian texts. Yet, while I believe that the developmental model I am proposing is consistent with Aristotle's explicit comments and with the clear implications of his explicit comments, I am obviously creating here. Since I am definitely not a textual scholar, I must leave it to others to determine whether my additions to what Aristotle has said are things that Aristotle likely held, or if I have gone too far afield from what Aristotle has himself provided.

I am also pretty sure that the model I offer here is in fact informative about how virtue, and for my original purposes, also how professionalism is learned, and therefore how virtue and professionalism might be taught more effectively. I believe it likely that a number of you who are attending this conference share my hope that this work might contribute to the effectiveness of professionalism education. But developing the implications of this paper for professionalism education – even in the abstract, i.e. without then experimenting with them in practice – will surely require a lot of additional work. I am certainly willing, however, to consider the possible implications of this essay for professionalism education during the discussion.

Distinguishing Three Stages and Three Distinctive Ways of Choosing

According to Aristotle there is a great deal of learning that a person needs to do before becoming able to make appropriate choices and live in a way that embodies the fullness of virtue.ⁱⁱ Thus Aristotle says very clearly at several points that the *Nicomachean Ethics* has not been written for the young, but will only be useful to those with a proper upbringing (1095a2-4; 1179a20-1180a10).ⁱⁱⁱ Although Aristotle's comments on the process of learning virtue do not explicitly divide it into three phases or stages, I believe this is the best way to interpret what he does say and it is how I shall proceed here.^{iv} These three stages can be distinguished from one another because the activities that are characteristic of each stage and that, when successful, lead the learner towards the fullness of virtue are significantly different from one stage to the next. The principal aim of this essay is to explain these different activities and the progression towards virtue they make possible.

At a number of points in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle examines the important roles that pleasure and pain play in the process of learning virtue, and his comments indicate that pleasure and pain function as motivators in different ways in the three stages. But the focus of this essay will be on the different kinds of desires, deliberative processes, and other thought-processes that are characteristic of the three stages and of their culmination in the fullness of virtue, rather than trying to incorporate Aristotle's sophisticated account of the roles that pleasure and pain play in each stage as well.^v

It is well known that Aristotle's account of the virtues and therefore also his understanding of the learning process towards virtue is focused, not so much on individual actions as on the person's establishment of well-established habits of cognition, feeling, and emotion^{vi} – or more properly, *habitual dispositions*^{vii} – that differentiate the stages of the learning process and that enable a person, by gradual steps, to eventually make decisions in the manner that the person who has attained the virtue of Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*) is able to. For Aristotle considers only the person who has attained the virtue of Practical Wisdom, the *Phronimos*, to be capable of the fullness of virtue.^{viii}

It is important worth noting that Aristotle does not explicitly discuss, in his descriptions of the *Phronimos* or of *Phronesis*, the possibility that even those who have become capable and dependable practitioners of Practical Wisdom might nevertheless fall short from time to time. However Aristotle's discussion of friendship in Books Eight and Nine of the *Nicomachean Ethics* include suggestions that even the *Phronimos* can learn from and can benefit from collegial correction from his/her^{ix} friends (1159b6-8; 1165b18-20; 1170a12; 1172a8-10). The description of the process of learning virtue to be offered here, however, will treat the habitual disposition that Aristotle calls *Phronesis* as the complete goal of the process and the person Aristotle calls the *Phronimos* as perfectly possessed of this habitual disposition.

Aristotle is clear throughout his writings on virtue and conduct that such accounts unavoidably discuss these things in terms of patterns and generalities even though virtue and conduct are about things that "can be otherwise." That is why what he says cannot fully address all the differences between one particular situation and the next or one particular person and the next (1098a28-33; 1104a2-10; 1104b1-3). The importance of this point will become clearer in due course.

Stage One: Preparing to Learn Virtue: Choosing on the Basis of Simple Pleasure/Pain

The process of learning virtue begins – or rather can begin, because it is always possible for things to go awry – in childhood when, Aristotle explains, only pleasure and pain are able to motivate action.^x Young persons are therefore to be initially educated by associating pleasure (or pain) with the actions/responses that will cumulatively lead to (or hinder the formation of) the

formation of corresponding cognitive and emotional habitual dispositions (1104b10-14). Thus, if Stage One learning is successful, while Stage One learners do choose acts conforming to virtue and avoid actions that are vicious, they are not motivated to do so by any virtue-related characteristics of these acts, but only for the sake of obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain. In this respect, as will be seen, they differ significantly from learners who have arrived at Stage Two of the learning process.

The implications of the above expression “actions/responses” are important to underline here. Aristotle is clear that human living-fully/happiness^{xi} and virtue are matters of activity, not passivity, and this is his focus whenever discussing the learning and practice of virtue. Therefore at this first developmental stage, the learner’s actions/responses to pleasure/pain include striving to act in accord with what has been identified as consistent with virtue (and associated therefore with pleasure) and to avoid actions that are inconsistent with virtue (which are associated therefore with pain).

Repeated actions of these sorts will in time build habitual dispositions to act and refrain accordingly, as well as habitual dispositions to desire such acting and refraining in these ways and habitual dispositions to pay attention to the aspects of things that indicate such acting and refraining is appropriate.^{xii} These habitual dispositions are the prerequisites on which the next stage of the learning process depends. In addition, it seems reasonable to add,^{xiii} Stage One learners will likely have their first encounters with conflicting motivations when the outcomes of various available courses of action involve both pleasure and pain.

Stage Two: Doing What Is Noble

This much of what has been said about Stage One learners preparing to learn virtue probably coincides with most people’s understanding of the first steps in forming the conduct of the young. But Aristotle also holds that humans have a natural capacity to become able, as they mature, to identify and to strive to do what is *noble* and turn away from what is *base* so that, as the young person matures, what is noble and what is base can become significant additional motivators of action and response (along with the simplest kinds of pleasure and pain and also the distinctive kinds of pleasure and pain associated with being motivated by the noble and that base^{xiv}).

Thus Stage Two of the learning process begins. When the learner becomes able to identify and imitate actions that are noble because they are noble, and similarly to turn away from the base because of what it is, the learner will be choosing actions that, if she/he is properly guided by her/his teachers, conform to virtue (1179b7-11, 24-30). Like the Stage One learner, the Stage Two learner can develop habitual dispositions to perform actions that are virtuous and avoided actions that hinder or counter the virtues. But unlike the Stage One learner, the Stage Two learners does do *because of the kind of actions they are*, that is, because they are noble or base, respectively. By repeated experiences of acting on the basis of such non-instrumental appreciation of these kinds of actions – which the learner’s teachers will be explicitly identifying as the ones that are noble or base – the Stage Two learner will form corresponding habitual dispositions of cognitive and emotional action/response. This process of habituation will in turn reinforce the learner’s valuing of and awareness of the circumstances in which noble actions are available and base actions are avoidable.

It is the Stage Two learner’s choosing actions that conform to the virtues (and avoiding vicious actions) precisely because of a virtue-related characteristic of such actions, i.e. that they

are noble, that differentiates the Stage Two learner from learners at Stage One. But the Stage Two learner does not understand *why* they are noble; learning that is a characteristic of Stage Three.

In addition, it is reasonable to propose that the Stage Two learner will have more complex experiences of dealing with – and hence learning to deal with – conflicting motivations because the simplest forms of pleasure/pain as motivators will not always point in the same direction as the motivations (and more complex feelings) prompted by what is noble and what is base. It also seems reasonable to add that these experiences will support a growing sense on the part of the learner that her/his actions are the product of her/his own efforts to determine (i.e. by deliberation on possible actions) how she/he ought to act. One mark of this growing capacity for self-awareness that Aristotle does explicitly mention is the learner's sense of shame when the learner has acted in a way that is base rather than noble (1115a14; 1128b10-12, 15-21; 1179b12, 31-32).

When – and only in those learners for whom – this process is complete, the learner will have what Aristotle calls a “proper upbringing.” Aristotle makes it clear that, at the soonest, this person will be a young adult by the time Stage One and Stage Two learning (if it is successful) is completed. If successful in this way, the learner will have well-established cognitive and emotional habitual dispositions that enable him/her to correctly and dependably identify actions that are examples of the various virtues and vices, to respond to these examples appropriately with positive and negative feelings and emotions, to act fairly dependably in accord with what is virtuous, and to do these things with a growing sense of self-awareness as a decider and actor.

But even so, the person who has completed Stage Two is nowhere near to having attained the fullness of Aristotelean virtue. The successful Stage Two learner is focused on kinds of actions, knows what actions are noble and what actions are base, and values and regularly strives to be acting in conformity to what is noble and to avoid what is base. Thus she/he can be expected to fairly dependably make decisions about how he/she ought to act in particular situations that are correct decisions in the sense of being consistent with virtue. But while the successful Stage Two learner can regularly act in conformity with the virtues, he/she does not do so for the right reasons, neither with correct understanding nor on the basis of correct desire. That will take, first of all, additional cognitive learning about virtue and its relation to living-fully/happiness, and then the development of the corresponding desires.

Burnyeat explains this point, using the distinction that Aristotle provides (1095b2-13; 1098a33-b4), by saying that the Stage Two learner has come to be able to grasp and respond to “the *that it is*” – i.e. that these are the proper ways to act in these kinds of situations – but has not yet grasped “the *why it is*” – that is, has not yet grasped *why* what is noble is so.^{xv} For the reason what is noble is so is because it is virtuous and is the way to act and live in accord with living-fully/happiness. It is learning “the *why it is*” and learning to act with this as the basis of one's desire that differentiates Stage Three learners from Stage Two learners. These are the next steps in the process of becoming like the *Phronimos* who has attained a habitual disposition (*hexis*) of making correct, virtue-based decisions about how she/he ought to act in particular situations.

Stage Three: Learning the “Why It is” and Learning to Decide Virtuously

Aristotle reminds us often that virtue is a matter of habitual dispositions and that it therefore cannot be attained without repetition. Although Aristotle does not explicitly mention it, it seems relevant to add that the achievement of the habitual dispositions to be learned in Stage Two also requires regular self-assessment, self-criticism and self-correction, and self-commendation when appropriate; for these activities are necessary to forming, maintaining, and

correcting/improving our habits. It seems likely that rudimentary forms of these activities would already be in place in the successful Stage One learner, but they would certainly need to be present as well-established habits for the successful Stage Two learner to make any progress in Stage Three. Although neither Aristotle nor most commentators mention them, their presence as habitual dispositions will be assumed in the description of Stage Three learners offered here.

Aristotle is not explicit about there being a learning stage after a person's having completed a "proper upbringing," but the activities attributed to persons who act virtuously, and especially to the *Phronimos*, who has attained the virtue of Practical Wisdom, *Phronesis*, and thus the fullness of virtue, are far too complex to be learned quickly or all at once (1180a1-6, 15-18; 1095b4-12). For present purposes then, a third stage of learning will be described here during which a person achieves the cognitive learning of "the *why it is*," mentioned above, develops the corresponding right desire (1113b25-27, 30-34), and learns how to perform the activities that, taken together, Aristotle identifies as constituting the exercise of Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*) and issuing in a fully virtuous decision in a particular situation. For it is these things that, in order to become like the *Phronimos*, Stage Three learners need to learn and to repeat and practice until they become habitual dispositions.

Anyone who has read the *Nicomachean Ethics* knows that Aristotle associates well-chosen, virtuous actions with actions that embody a *mean* (a middle position) rather than extremes. But both in his definition of virtue in Book Two and in his discussion of the activities that issue in a virtuous decision by a *Phronimos* in Book Six, Aristotle makes it clear that aiming at the mean can only be a *guideline* to choosing rightly because choosing correctly in a particular situation always means choosing a particular action and the *mean* that Aristotle is talking about is not a mathematical mean and cannot dependably identify a particular action as correct. Thus the standard for correct decision-making is not some calculation of a *mean*, but rather what the person of Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*) determines regarding the particular situation at hand (1106b38-1107a3). It is therefore surely advisable for Stage Three learners to pay close attention to acting in accord with the mean and ordinarily avoiding the extremes. But, as Aristotle says explicitly at the beginning of Book Six, simply doing this will not assure them of acting virtuously.

Instead, both in Book Two and in the beginning section of Book Six, Aristotle says that the actual standard of correctness for decisions is a certain kind of the *logos*, a Greek word that means both the activity of reasoning/making-a-judgement by a human reasoner and that which the human reasoner grasps as being coherent/ordered/reasonable/true in whatever she/he is reasoning about. In the Book Two text where Aristotle is defining virtue (1106b38-1107a3), he explicitly specifies that the relevant standard of correct decision-making is the reasoning/judgement of the *Phronimos*, the person who has attained the virtue of Practical Wisdom and who therefore grasps in her/his reasoning the connection between the possible actions in the situation at hand and *living-fully/happiness*, i.e. that which Aristotle has argued in Book One is the true and complete fulfillment of human life. In Book Six where he discusses the component activities of the *Phronimos*'s correct decision-making, Aristotle clearly implies that, when these activities are combined properly they constitute the correct *logos*, i.e. reasoning that grasps the relationship of the actions that are possible in the situation at hand to what is the true and complete goal of human life and the standard of correct decision-making, i.e. living-fully/happiness. This *logos* is "the *why-it-is*," the cognitive learning that separates the Stage Three learner from those in earlier stages and the grounds right desire.

From the point of view of reason, then, what Stage Three learners need to learn above all in order to attain the virtue of Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*) is how to grasp the relationship of the actions that are possible in the situation at hand to living-fully/happiness and, on this basis, to judge desires to be correct in terms of this relationship. Aristotle's descriptions and suggestions about the individual virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* frequently isolate them from one another and this suggests that the way Stage Three learners make progress towards these goals is initially with regard to one virtue at one time and another virtue at another time (1145a33-36). In fact, given the necessary role of self-formative activities (self-criticism, self-correction, self-commendation), it would not be surprising that, at least in the beginning of Stage Three, a learner might deliberately focus on one virtue at a time.

The Stage Three learner's growing understanding of the relation of virtue to living-fully/happiness would, however, gradually make it clear that the virtues are interconnected and that living-fully/happiness consists in the fullness of virtuous activity.^{xvi} One of the contributors to this learning would be the fact that the requirements of the individual virtues will sometimes conflict with one another in a concrete situation for such experiences would make learning how to integrate the virtues and value them as integrated together a goal for the learner. In time the Stage Three learner would come by repetition and practice to understand how the virtues, in their differences, nevertheless fit together in the living-fully/happiness that is the full and complete end/goal of human life, and this cognitive advance, developed into an habitual disposition of the learners' cognitive powers, will prompt them to value the virtues accordingly and to develop a habitual disposition to do so.

But developing these habitual dispositions requires repeated action and this in turn requires decisions that embody the virtues being aimed at. This process might seem circular except that, with each step forward in the growth of the dispositions just mentioned, the learner will also be growing in self-awareness and, though missteps will also occur, in the ability to make decisions and choose actions that support the self-formative process of achieving ever more correct habitual dispositions. This growth in self-awareness will also include the learner's growing sense of self as the origin of his/her actions and as the one shaping his/her decisions, and in due course as the one who is principally shaping his/her habitual dispositions as well.

Unfortunately Aristotle does not describe the differences between how learners who grasp "the *why it is*" make decisions (initially in regard to individual virtues and eventually in regard to the virtues as interconnected) and how the wholly correct decisions of the *Phronimos* are made. It is reasonable to assume that the Stage Three learner, especially as he/she advances through this stage, will be by practice and self-correction become increasingly adept at the three activities that Aristotle mentions in Book Six as components of the wholly virtuous decisions of the *Phronimos* – deliberation; correct desire; and *nous* – each of which will be explained below. But how would they be able to learn these activities? How, in the early stages of Stage Three, would they learn to do them in relation to one or other of the individual virtues to begin with?

Aristotle clearly believed that persons with a "proper upbringing" could learn to make decisions that resemble the fully virtuous decisions of the *Phronimos* and that making them that way again and again would eventually yield a habitual disposition to do so. But he nowhere describes how they begin to do these things the first time, and the second time, etc.

The Structure of Virtue-Based Decisions

The proposal being made here, then, is that Aristotle must have taken for granted that there is a virtue-based decision procedure that humans are capable of (just as he held that humans are capable of grasping the nobleness of virtuous actions even when they do not understand *why*

they are noble). For only if this is the case could Stage Three learners, once they have grasped “the *why it is*” that identifies them as Stage Three learners, then go on to correctly make decisions that are based on the relation of virtuous actions to living-fully/happiness.

It is however almost a commonplace within the scholarly literature that virtue-theory, properly understood, cannot offer us a virtue-based decision-procedure, i.e. a method of reflecting that can lead to virtue-based judgments about how we ought to act in a particular concrete situation. In addition, Aristotle is thought to reinforce this view in his comments on the limits of what can be said when the subject matter is action and virtue (1094a8-10; 1098a28-b4; 1104a2-10; 1140a32-b2). An explanation will be offered below why these texts should not be understood to support the claim that there is no virtue-based decision procedure for determining how we ought to act in a particular situation. The proposal here, as indicated, is that such a virtue-based decision procedure exists and that it is reasonable to think Aristotle believed this as well. Here is my effort to describe how a virtue-based decision-procedure works to determine what ought to be done.

Have you ever been trying to figure out what you ought to do in some situation and the way you answered this question was to think about someone whom you admired in some relevant respect and then ask yourself if the action you are considering is what this person would do in a situation like this or not? When I describe this to my college students, they nod knowingly, so I think this is common experience.

So we need to ask what is going on when you ask yourself: “Is the action I am considering doing an action that this person would be choosing in a situation like this, or not?” I believe the best way to describe the thought process here is to say that you are asking yourself how you can *imitate* what you admire in this person and that this is how one determines how one ought to act. Indeed, it seems to me that as soon as your inquiry focused on the fact that you *admire* this person in some way, you were already connecting how you ought to act with *imitation* of the person insofar as and in the way that she or he is admirable.

Now it might seem that the question we are asking ourselves when we think in this way is “What action did he or she do in situations like this?” But I submit that this isn’t exactly the question we ask. One reason is that the situation we are dealing with will almost always be different from any in which we know how exactly he or she actually acted. But more importantly, I submit that, when we think this way, what we are focusing on is the *kind of person* the admired person is or was. Our goal in thinking of this admired person is not to narrowly imitate a certain action of his or hers; it is to imitate *the person*, it is to *be like him or her* in some relevant respect, it is to live *as he or she did*.

In other words, the response that I am calling “admiration” here has both cognitive and affective components. It affirms something important about the person – that how the person lives or lived, or at least some aspect of how they live or lived, is worth imitating – and it also calls forth feelings and valuings that prompt action; and the action that admiration, in the sense we are talking about here, prompts is *imitation*. Admittedly, the word “admiration” can be used correctly of a purely passive response to a person. But in the present context, where it grounds a decision to act (or refrain from acting) in a certain way, recognizing that we admire someone or that how they act and live is admirable, also says they are worthy of imitation.

I call the decision procedure I am describing here, “Person-to-Admired-Person Comparison.” I think it makes sense to say that what we are comparing is our *person* and the admired *person*, and when I say this I mean I am comparing, in some sense, *my whole person* with the *whole person* of the one I admire. I think this way of expressing it says something

important, even though it is our effort to determine what action we ought to do in a particular situation that prompts this way of thinking, and even though the person being imitated does not have to be admirable in every respect for this process to make sense as a way of determining what I ought to do. In fact, frequently, my admiration is actually only be of a certain aspect of this person, and so my imitating this person will in practice be limited as well. Yet it still seems more accurate to say that I am imitating *how he or she lived* and to say I am comparing *my whole person* to this *whole person*, even if only in a certain respect, than to say I am only imitating a certain kind of action on the admired person's part. (There is another kind of ethical thinking in which precisely what we do is replicate a certain action that we ourselves or someone else did in a similar situation. I call that kind of thinking "Case-to-Case-Comparison." Historically it was called "casuistry," but that word acquired a negative connotation several centuries ago. But in Case-to-Case-Comparison, it is only *an action* that I am imitating, not how the person lives or lived, and the judgment about how to act in the present situation is based on similarity to the previous situation and the moral adequacy of the previous action, not on admiration and imitation of how someone lives or lived.)

I need to add that, in addition to our imitation of what is admirable in other persons, many of us have formulated a conception of what I will call "my ideal self," that is, the self I hope I can become and that I aim at in many of my actions. I submit that, when I determine that I ought to act in certain way because to do otherwise would contradict or would stand in the way of my becoming "my ideal self," the same thought process that I call "Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison" is at work in my thinking. The difference here is that the "admired person" whom I aim to imitate is the "ideal myself" whom I strive to be. The relevance of this point for the present topic is that, during Stage Three of the learning process, it is reasonable to think that – perhaps by a kind of inductive process of self-reflection – the learner's increasing self-awareness might enable her/him to form a picture of an ideal self who practices the characteristic activities of that stage as perfectly as possible, and to then employ imitation of that "ideal self" – as well as imitation of the *Phronimos* – as a guide for deliberation about how to act and grow still more in virtue.

It is by means of Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison, then, that Stage Three learners can initially determine how to act in ways that are virtuous because of their relation to living-fully/happiness, by imitation of persons whose decisions and actions already have this characteristic.^{xvii} Then, by repeatedly determining in this way how to act and therefore acting in virtuous way and for the right reasons, they can, if all goes well, develop habitual dispositions to act in in this way and for these reasons.

In his treatment of friendship, as was mentioned above, Aristotle mentions that friends can assist one another in becoming virtuous and in continuing to act virtuously under difficult circumstances. Obviously this could happen in part by Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison, which is a feature of many of our own best friendships. But it is reasonable to think that Aristotle also has communication between friends in mind, communication about how one ought to act, about how other persons have acted, etc. In other words, the growth in self-awareness mentioned early – though Aristotle speaks of it mostly indirectly – is very likely to be expressed and reinforced in communication between friends (as it would have been in Stage Two learners in the interaction between learners and the persons teaching them what actions are noble and virtuous); and one might argue that this is one of the reasons that Aristotle is so clear that friendship is essential for the full actualization of human potential that is complete living-fully/happiness and the fullness of virtue. (The *Phronimos* may seem to be so perfect and fully

actualized that we imagine her/him to be an isolated individual. But in his remarks on friendship and its necessity for complete living-fully/happiness and in his view of humans as inherently social in all their fullest self-actualization, Aristotle makes it clear that those of us who most fully live the virtuous life are persons in close interaction with others and in the lives of their communities.)

Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*): the Fully Virtuous Decisions of the *Phronimos*

In Book Six of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle explains that the exercise of Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*) which yields fully virtuous decisions involves three kinds of activities: Deliberation; Correct Desire; and *nous*. From this it follows that these are activities that Stage Three learners will need to grow in and develop habitual dispositions in as they progress. To the question about how these three kinds of activities are learned, the proposal here is that the process of learning by Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison that was just described is the answer.

If the proposal offered above is accepted that Stage Three learners *initially* progress by making virtuous decisions about *individual* virtues (on the basis of their relationship to living-fully/happiness), then Stage Three learners will also need to eventually learn how the individual virtues are interconnected^{xviii} in the fullest realization of living-fully/happiness. Their growth in this respect seems closely connected to their growth in Correct Desire and in *nous*, which will be examined below. But besides suggesting that this aspect of the growth of Stage Three learners would also be achieved principally through Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison, a more complete examination of how Aristotle might have thought about this final developmental step would require a more detailed examination of the “unity of the virtues” theme than can be included here.

Here then, to complete the basic developmental picture that, this essay proposes, Aristotle assumed but we need to say, are descriptions of the three kinds of activities involved in the exercise of Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*) in order for the *Phronimos* to make a fully virtuous decision.

Deliberation

The most fully described of these activities is *deliberation* which is the intellectual activity by which we judge whether possible actions in the situation at hand can serve as means to whatever our end or goal is, namely the experience or activity we are aiming at whose choiceworthiness^{xix} prompts us to try to decide how we ought to act in the first place. Aristotle is very clear that deliberating cannot select our end (1112b11-19, 32-34). Ends are determined by affective powers, by acts in the realm of feeling, especially desire and emotion; but deliberation is a cognitive activity and is therefore radically dependent on feeling/desire/emotion for the determining of our end or goal. That is, deliberation can only tell us what actions are means to or can contribute to the achievement of that end because it has no role in relation to judging the adequacy of the end.^{xx}

It is important, from a developmental point of view, to note that Aristotle seems to be saying in the *Politics* (1260a13-14) that even children have some capacity for deliberation, but in an undeveloped form.^{xxi} Moreover, Stage Two learners’ noble actions done for the sake of the noble would arguably require connecting means to ends. So it is reasonable to conclude that Stage Three learners would already have considerable ability to deliberate about which possible actions in the situation at hand can serve as means to the achievement of their ends, i.e. the act in conformity with living-fully/happiness. If so, then the Stage Three learner and the Stage Two learner will not differ in terms of having the basic ability to deliberate, but only in the differences

in what they count as adequate ends and in consequent learned differences in other characteristics of their deliberations. In the same way, Aristotle does not suggest that there are differences between the *Phronimos* and Stage Three learners (or any other deliberators) in the nature of deliberation, but again in other characteristics of their deliberations.

Correct Desire, an End that Conforms to Reason

Clearly the decisions of the *Phronimos* will be based on fully correct desire (1139a22-26).^{xxii} The end of the *Phronimos* is invariably the fully correct end, the true and complete goal of human life, i.e. living-fully/happiness. We have seen that Stage Three begins when the learner becomes able to do virtuous acts not only because virtuous acts are noble, but precisely because they are constituents of this ultimate end of human action.

In order to be able to do this, we have seen that Stage Three learners must also have come to understand and accept as correct and true what Aristotle explains in Book One of the *Nicomachean Ethics* about living-fully/happiness as the true and complete goal of human life and also its relation to virtue, and to form a habitual disposition to desire to act in accord with the virtues for the sake of living-fully/happiness. In this respect, they are much more like the *Phronimos* than the Stage Two learner, for this shift to deliberating and deciding on the basis of correct desire (1113b25-27, 30-34) is the foundation of a truly virtuous life. But Stage Three learners, for most of their time in this stage, have not yet grasped (cognitively) the interconnectedness of the virtues and therefore their desiring will not be fully correct desire, in contrast with the *Phronimos* who has understood this and has achieved a habitual disposition to pursue the virtues, or rather virtue, only as a single end, i.e. with fully correct desire.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the final steps of learning what the fully correct end is and how to desire it and act for the sake of it will be prompted by situations in which the requirements of the several individual virtues conflict and some integrated understandings of the whole are attained in one such situation and another that, being brought together, finally resolve the differences.^{xxiii} But Aristotle does not explain whether this is how he understood the learning process that separates the advanced Stage Three learner from the *Phronimos* in regard to fully correct desire. He also does not tell us how achieving such integrated understandings and valuing of the whole of virtue are learned by otherwise advanced Stage Three learners, but again it seems reasonable to think that Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison could well be the answer.

That is, if we assume their ability to employ the virtue-based decision procedure described above, Stage Three learners could imitate the actions of more advanced Staged Three learners and, of course, of the *Phronimos* whereby their desires could become more and more correct and, by repetition, they could establish or perfect the corresponding habitual dispositions (1103b8-25; 1105a18-12). This is how we can understand Aristotle's conviction that the Stage Three learner's desires are able to grow and be corrected by habituation. (As has been mentioned several times, this process is not something that happens automatically. Aristotle's discussions of how non-supportive pleasures and pains can interfere, and form habitual patterns of their own, and similarly his discussions of "weakness of will," are pictures of people failing to move forward in learning virtue).

But it is also important to return to a point made earlier about the role of habituation in the learning process. For Aristotle is clear that intellectual operations are not capable of changing our desires directly since "selecting" the ends of our actions is, for Aristotle, the work of our desires/emotions. So for Aristotle, it is by habituation – by repeatedly acting desiring and acting accordingly – that desires, which in the child are devoid of reason and therefore unable to be

correct, can become more correct in Stage Two and, in the Stage Three learner, can initially grow correct enough that a Stage Three learner can establish a habitual disposition to desire correctly in decisions about individual virtues. And it is by habituation, based on choices of actions that imitate those who are more advanced and especially the actions of the *Phronimos* – that the advanced Stage Three learner grows more and more capable of habitually desiring the fullness of virtue and choosing particular actions that contribute maximally to the full achievement of living-fully/ happiness.^{xxiv}

The Role of *Nous* (“Insight”)

But deliberation and correct desire are not the only activities that Aristotle identifies in the *Phronimos*’s exercise of Practical Wisdom. In the discussion of what is involved in Practical Wisdom in Book Six, Aristotle specifically tells us that another activity goes into a decision made with Practical Wisdom; namely, *nous*, which I will translate as “insight.”^{xxv} Unfortunately, Aristotle makes only a few comments about what its role is in the exercise of Practical Wisdom. But it is certainly reasonable to propose that Aristotle thought a Stage Three learner would need to learn to do it in order to attain the virtue of Practical Wisdom, i.e. to become a *Phronimos*. So if the developmental picture being offered here is to be complete, it seems essential to propose an explanation of the role of *nous* in the *Phronimos*’s decisions about what ought to be done in a particular situation and then to propose an answer to the question, “How do advanced Stage Three learners learn to do their decision-making with correct insight (*nous*) ?

There are four themes in what Aristotle says about the role of *nous* that seem to point to something important about the Practical Wisdom of the *Phronimos*, but something that Aristotle does not explicitly explain. Putting these four themes in touch with one another yields a proposal about the role of *nous* in the decisions of the *Phronimos* that is worth explicating. *Theme #1*: The first of these themes is the fact that Aristotle’s definition of virtue explicitly states that the *logos* (reasoning/reason) that determines that a decision about how to act in a particular situation is a correct decision is precisely *the logos that a Phronimos would have* for that decision. This suggests that there is something very unique about the *Phronimos* in comparison with a well-advanced Stage Three learner who has become able to grasp the ultimate end of human life in living-fully/happiness and has established a habitual disposition to not only to desire it, but to employ deliberation effectively to identify how to fairly dependably reach it in decisions about particular situations.

What then is so distinctive of the activities of the *Phronimos* that Aristotle would have needed to include the qualifier, “as the *Phronimos* determines it” in his definition of virtue ? The proposal being offered here is that what distinguishes the decisions of the *Phronimos* from those of advanced Stage Three learners is the *Phronimos*’s exercise of *nous* upon what is provided by (even the most excellent achievements of) deliberation-based-on-correct-desire in determining the kinds of actions that contribute to true living-fully/happiness.

Theme #2: The second theme is Aristotle’s repeated reminder to us that reasoning about action is reasoning about concrete particular actions that take place in particular situations whose *particularity*, Aristotle reminds us in his definition of virtue, is not just spatio-temporal-social-etc., but is also particularity “relative to us” (1107a1; see also 1104a5-9; 1109b14-23, 1113a5-6).

In other words, when I make a decision about how to act in a particular situation, it is not only the concrete particularity of the situation that my decision must take account of, but also the concrete particularity of the I who is making that decision – with my distinctive history, with my current sense of who I am, with my strengths and capabilities, my weaknesses, my relationships, etc., and also with my concrete possibilities and limitations for the future.^{xxvi} These aspects of

particularity cannot be addressed by an activity that functions solely in what is general and “for the most part,” and so they cannot be the direct work of deliberation as Aristotle describes it.^{xxvii}

The proposal being offered here is that it is by the exercise of *nous* that makes a decision by the *Phronimos* correct and fully virtuous precisely in its particularity.

Theme #3: The third theme is the theme of *self-awareness* mentioned above a number of times. Though not explicitly mentioned by Aristotle and only implied at a few points in his definition of virtue and in his discussions of shame, growth in self-awareness has been presumed to be an essential component of growth in virtue throughout this essay. Therefore it is also assumed to be playing a role in the most completely virtuous decisions humans are capable of, i.e. the decisions of the *Phronimos*. For the particularity of the self that was mentioned in connection with the second theme is graspable by a decision-maker only by means of self-awareness (including the collegial contributions of friends, one’s interactions with fellow citizens in the *polis*, etc., as noted above). If self-awareness has a role to play in completely virtuous decisions, as surely it must, it is reasonable to look to *nous* as the component activity that brings its particularity to decision-making.

Theme #4: The fourth theme concerns the contrast between Aristotle’s comments to the effect that it is *perception* that grasps what is concrete in particular situations, not any of our specifically intellectual powers, and his brief comments about *nous* in Book Six. For there, while he says that *nous* is a cognitive activity, he also says that *nous*, like perception, reaches *particulars* (1143b2-6). In fact Aristotle says – in what Garver describes as one of “the most frustratingly brief and crucial claims in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,”^{xxviii} that *nous*’s contribution is to affirm particulars in two ways, affirming both *the particular act* that is the object of a decision and also the *end* for which the chosen act is to be a means (1143a35-36). While Aristotle’s mention of the particularity of the *act being decided upon* is not surprising, why would he also speak of the particularity of the *end* since, for the *Phronimos*, the end is one thing only, the ultimate end for human action, living-fully/happiness ?

A possible explanation is that, as Aristotle himself stresses, he can offer us only general descriptions of the *Phronimos*’s decision-making and its component activities, including its ultimate end. But in the actual situation, the person whose action the *Phronimos* is deciding about is the *Phronimos* her-/himself as a *concrete particular temporal person* and the action to be undertaken is an action of this *particular concrete person in this particular concrete here-and-now situation*. In a similar way, while the general notion of living-fully/happiness needs to be learned (philosophically) and needs to be what is desired for correct desire to become a habitual disposition, yet living-fully/happiness as an abstraction is not available as a realistic end for any particular decider. What is actually available is, so to speak, *a concrete particular instantiation* of (and possibly only *a concrete particular approximation* of) Aristotelian living-fully/happiness. Therefore, deciding correctly “relative to us,” as Aristotle states it in the definition of virtue, means deciding specifically in relation to these particulars. This will only be possible for the decider if there is an activity that the decider can employ to grasp these particulars and shape the chosen action in accord with them. The proposal being offered here is that this is precisely the role of insight (*nous*).

Therefore it makes sense, very important sense, that in addition to correct desire (achieved through years of careful, self-aware decisions aimed at living-fully/happiness, initially via individual virtues and over time via an increasing grasp of the interconnectedness of the virtues and the integrity of virtue in a whole life) and in addition to skilled deliberation about means, the *Phronimos* must also have the ability in each decision to *identify and affirm which*

action (of the type identified by deliberation as the right type) is the best means to concretely achieve the most complete instantiation of living-fully/happiness that is realistically available. This grasping and affirming of the concrete particulars involved in all actual decision-making, I am proposing, is the role of *nous* in the *Phronimos*'s exercise of Practical Wisdom in order to make a decision about how to act in a particular situation.^{xxix}

This is why a correct decision is precisely, as Aristotle says, *the logos that a Phronimos would have* for that decision, for in addition to fully correct desire and excellent deliberation, only *Phronimos* also has an habitual disposition to exercise *nous* to identify and affirm the particular action that is the truly best means for this person to choose *in this particular situation*. In addition, such a choice is also the exercise of the highest form of self-awareness in choosing one's own acts on the basis of one's own judgments about what ought to be done.

McCabe expresses this well when he writes (speaking of the medieval virtue, *prudentia*, which corresponds very closely to Aristotle's *Phronesis*): "...an essential part of *prudentia* is in answering the question, 'Am I the sort of person who does this...?'"^{xxx} For the *Phronimos* is not only aiming to match the particular action to (the closest available approximation of) the ultimate end of human action, but is also to match her/his *whole life and self* to (the closest possible approximation) of the completely fulfilled human being.

What Aristotle Cannot Offer

It was noted earlier that Aristotle says clearly that he cannot offer us decision-procedure for determining how we ought to act in particular concrete situations. The proposal here is that Aristotle assumes that humans can and do determine what they ought to do by means of a virtue-based decision procedure, and I have offered a description of one such, Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison. What then do Aristotle's claims that he cannot offer us a decision-procedure mean? The key to understanding what he is saying, I submit, is in the phrase I have used a number of times already, namely "in particular concrete situations."

It would be one thing for Aristotle to say he knows of no way that careful judgments based on the virtues can serve as determinants of what ought and ought not to be done. But the proposal here is that Aristotle must have believed there is such a virtue-based decision procedure (even if the decision procedure he would have described would have been different from the one proposed above). It is another and very different thing for him to say he knows of no decision-procedure for determining how a person ought to act *in particular concrete situations*. For decision-procedures cannot, without the addition of an act of insight (*nous*) into the particular, yield a judgment about how a person ought to act *in particular concrete situations*, and Aristotle clearly suggests that insight (*nous*) is not systematic. *Nous*, "insight," is in fact, Aristotle tells us, our ability to make affirmations about things for which no further justification, no further *logos*, can be offered (1142a26).^{xxxi}

Conclusion

Aristotle is clear (1103b28-30; 1179a33-b4) that the *Nicomachean Ethics* has been written with a practical rather than a theoretical end in view. His goal has been to assist learners in growing in virtue and thereby in living-fully/happiness, i.e. in achieving the ultimate goal of human life; and he may also have imagined that the book would assist persons teaching others to become virtuous. So it is reasonable to assume that Aristotle had in mind a picture of how this growth would proceed, a developmental model, as I have called it. It is very possible, of course, that the developmental model offered here is not in fact what Aristotle assumed. But since his writings do not provide us with more than clues about his model, if we want to make use of his insights into the nature of virtue and living-fully/happiness and into how humans can grow in

virtue and in living-fully, then what we need to do is take the clues he provides and fill in the gaps the best we can. That is what this paper has tried to do. The next step would be to build a pedagogy for learners and teachers of virtue, and possibly a pedagogy for learners and teachers of professionalism as well, on the basis of this developmental model, or a better one if a better one is available. But that is a task that must wait for another time.

NOTES

ⁱ Gerard Hughes offers a summary of Aristotle's views on what Hughes calls "Moral Training" in his *Aristotle on Ethics* (Routledge, 2001), pp. 70-81. Eugene Garver's *Confronting Aristotle's Ethics* (University of Chicago Press, 2006) adds important detail by examining the relevant texts in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and other writings. The developmental model offered here had benefitted greatly from M. F. Burnyeat's detailed examination of the relevant texts, especially regarding the first two stages of the process; see "Aristotle On Learning to Be Good," in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (University of California Press, 1980), pp.69-92. See also Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue* (Oxford, 1989), Chapter Five.

ⁱⁱ The noun "virtue," and the adjective "virtuous" when it modifies a *person*, can be understood in two ways: as referring to what I shall call "the fullness of virtue," i.e. the habitual disposition(s) that characterize the *phronimos*, the person of Practical Wisdom (*phronesis*) who has completed the learning process being described here; or as referring to one of "the virtues," i.e. the several distinguishable habitual dispositions, e.g. courage, temperance, etc., that can be found in the lives both of the *phronimos* and of persons in the third stage of learning to be virtuous. When the adjective "virtuous" is modifying an *action*, it can also be understood in two ways: as indicating that the person chooses the action precisely *because it is a virtuous action* (by Stage Three learners or by a *phronimos*); or as indicating that the action *resembles* such actions (i.e. in the manner in which Stage Two learners choose such actions or in the different way in which Stage One learners choose them). Throughout this essay, these distinctions will either be made explicit or they be communicated by the context in which these words are used. See Anne Baril, "Virtue and Well-being," p.255 #15 and the references cited with that essay, in Gary Fletcher, editor, *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being* (Routledge, 2016).

ⁱⁱⁱ References to Aristotle's texts will be provided in the standard form, i.e. by referring to the page/column/ line of Immanuel Bekker's edition of the Greek text (Berlin, 1831); all references are to the *Nicomachean Ethics* unless indicated otherwise.

^{iv} Burnyeat focuses his work on what I will call Stage One and Stage Two in order to explain what Aristotle counts as a "proper upbringing." But Burnyeat's discussion of the first two stages implies that the person who has completed Stage Two still has a great deal of learning to do before acquiring the habitual dispositions of the *phronimos* and thus the fullness of virtue.

^v The role of feelings and emotions in Aristotle's account of the development of virtue is examined in detail in Nancy Sherman, *op.cit.*, Chapter Two and *passim*. See also Burnyeat, *op.cit.*, *passim*. See also Anne Ozar, "The Value of a Phenomenology of the Emotions for Cultivating One's Own Character," *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, vol. 10 (2010).

^{vi} See Hughes, *op.cit.*, p.58 & footnote #7: "Unlike other types of feeling, emotions are essentially cognitive states, which is to say, a state involving some kind of belief. I feel fear, for instance, because I experience something as like to cause, pain, or harm, or to be in some other way threatening. So fear differs from hunger, or tiredness, for example, in that it involves an assessment of how the world is...an emotion is an immediately affective-cognitive response to a situation... [but] the belief is not an explicit, separate element which then causes the feeling..."

^{vii} The Greek word *hexis* has been translated in a number of ways and no brief phrase captures the idea completely. One essential aspect is that Aristotle is talking about relatively stable habitual patterns in how a person lives and, in the present context, these are habitual patterns that, at their most mature, incorporate awareness, feeling, valuation, judgement, and action, as well as the ability to act consistently with minimal self-conscious attention (which ability is characteristic of habits generally). Thus for some authors, especially at its most mature development, a *hexis* is best described as "a way of living" or (a sizeable element of) a "way of life." It will be taken for granted through this essay that such a habituated state is characteristics of the practice of virtue and of its predecessor learning states. Following Hughes, *op.cit.*, whenever the concept Aristotle would use is "*hexis*," the phrase "habitual disposition" will be used to express it.

^{viii} Aristotle discusses both moral and intellectual virtues and both would be included in "the fullness of virtue." But this essay will focus solely on the development of moral virtue and all references to virtues or virtue in the paper should be understood in this way.

^{ix} Obviously Aristotle did not say "him/her." Only the men of his time were considered to have any possibility of becoming fully virtuous or fully possessed of any of the virtues, and in fact only men from the families of Athenian citizens because they alone were socially capable. For Aristotle and his time, though women could become as virtuous as their nature would allow them, women lacked the relevant human capacities for complete virtue.

^x It seems clear that the pleasures and pains that motivate persons in Stage One (both Stage One learners growing towards Stage Two and any other persons who fail to or are not able to move to Stage Two and thus remain at Stage One) are pleasures and pains of the simplest kind, i.e. in contrast to the more complex pleasures and pains that Aristotle discusses whose realization depends on the learning that takes place in Stages Two and Three. See the references mentioned in #5 above.

^{xi} The Greek word *eudaimonia* is ordinarily translated “happiness,” but for a number of reasons this English word can be misleading. In Aristotle this word certainly does not mean “feeling happy,” but rather is the word Aristotle uses to designate the kind of activity that is the comprehensive, complete, and self-sufficient fulfillment of human potential. It is sometimes expressed as “flourishing,” but in this essay, what Aristotle means here will be expressed as “living-fully/happiness,” emphasizing that Aristotle also always conceives of this condition as an ongoing activity (1097b17-1098a15).

^{xii} On the mutual interconnections of cognitive and affective learning, see Anne Ozar, *op.cit.*, especially p.309. See also Burnyeat, *op.cit.*, *passim*, and Sherman, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

^{xiii} The author has not as yet found this point mentioned in connection with Stage One learners either in Aristotle or in the commentators, but it seems likely that the kinds of deliberation and self-awareness, especially awareness of oneself as comparing alternatives and of oneself as therefore the initiator of one’s actions, that seem to be characteristic of Stage Two and especially Stage Three learners would have some kind of predecessor, however elementary, in the experience of Stage One learners.

^{xiv} See Burnyeat, *op.cit.*

^{xv} See Burnyeat, *op.cit.*, pp.72-79. Burnyeat explains that, for learners in Stage Two [my phrase, not Burnyeat’s], “these motivating evaluative responses are unreasoned – they develop before reason and are not at that stage grounded in a general view of the place of the virtues in the good life – and because they are unreasoned, other kinds of training must be developed to direct them on to the right kinds of object: chiefly, guided practice and habituation...” (p.79).

^{xvi} Aristotle’s way of speaking about virtue and the virtues strongly suggests that he saw the specific virtues (courage, temperance, etc.) as fundamentally interconnected in their relationship to living-fully/happiness and had this integral unity in mind when he speaks of virtue in the singular, i.e. what in this paper is called “the fullness of virtue”; see 1107a1, 1138b18-34; 1145a1; 1178a16-19. But the question how these texts should be understood and whether “interconnected” should be replaced with “unified” is widely discussed and debated in the literature under the heading of “the unity of the virtues.”

^{xvii} It is possible that Person-to-Admired-Person-Comparison might also be available to Stage Two learners either at the outset of Stage Two or as Stage Two learners mature. On the other

hand, Stage Two learners could not truly admire or imitate *persons* whose reasons for virtuous actions are the virtues' connections with living-fully/happiness – rather than solely admiring and imitating such persons' *actions* (see Burnyeat, *op.cit.*, p.71) – unless they were imitating those persons' reasons for acting as well, and that is beyond the ability of persons in Stage Two. However, Burnyeat's careful examination of Stage Two learning does not resolve this possibility one way or the other, and it is beyond the scope of this essay to try to do so.

^{xviii} See #15 above.

^{xix} Irwin proposes this word as the most apt (and also most literal) translation of *hairetos*, and notes that its scope includes what is good, what is noble (which Irwin translates as “fine”), what is pleasant, and what is expedient. In other words, what is *choiceworthy* includes anything that can be a candidate for being chosen. It is then from among candidates that are choiceworthy that the exercise of the components of decision-making – deliberation, correct desire, and *nous* – select what will be done. See Terrence Irwin, *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett, 1985), p.390.

^{xx} There is much scholarly debate about the nature of Aristotelean deliberation. The interpretation on which this essay depends is principally that offered in John Cooper's *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Harvard University Press, 1975). Deliberation, on this interpretation, is always about determining what can contribute to the achievement of an already-identified-as-choiceworthy end or goal (which is not necessarily the ultimate end of human action, i.e. living-fully/happiness, and is not necessary a correct end, i.e. an intermediate end that would be a means to the ultimate end). This end is identified as choiceworthy by *desire*, not by a cognitive process; however if this end is itself intermediate to another end, deliberation could be employed to determine if it truly contributes to that end or not. Equally important, the result of deliberation is always the identification of “an action of some definite, specific type” (Cooper, p.23) as what ought to be done to achieve the identified end, but not anything more particular than this. That is, deliberation cannot determine that a particular concrete action (of the relevant type) undertaken at a particular time, place, etc., is what ought to be done. “These further steps by which the decision is implemented do not form part of the deliberation itself, but are instead the content of some acts of [sensitive and cognitive] perception,” without which the person could not actually carry out any action at all, and “by which one brings the conclusion of deliberation to bear on the actual conditions in which one finds oneself” (Cooper, p.23 and p.27). See also Nancy Sherman's discussion of deliberation, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-90., and G. Anagnostopoulos, *Aristotle on the Goals and Exactness of Ethics* (University of CA Press, 1994), pp. 231-236, 269-274. Anagnostopoulos argues that the fact that Aristotle's discussions of deliberation refer to “practical syllogisms” (syllogisms about actions) whose premises are expressed as universal propositions must not “mislead us into taking [their conclusions about what ought to be done] as universally true”; in this regard, Aristotle is very clear at many points that propositions about what ought to be done are true, at best, only for the most part. This is why an additional activity that involves and/or resembles perception in that it grasps particulars, i.e. *nous*, is also needed.

^{xxi} See Sherman, *op.cit.*, p.161.

^{xxii} The Stage Two learner replaces being motivated by pleasure and pain by being motivated by what is noble and what is base; but Aristotle says that desiring to do what is noble and avoid

what is base itself involves a distinct (and new to the newly Second Stage learner) kind of pleasure (and presumably pain as well). In an analogous way, acting for the sake of the ultimate good for humans likely involves for Aristotle a distinct (and new to the newly Third Stage learner) kind of pleasure (and presumably pain). In addition, various translators speak of the motivators here in the language of “rational wishes,” “correct emotions,” “correct longing,” etc., and identify significant distinctions between sub-categories of desire in Aristotle’s texts. But for simplicity of explanation, this essay will proceed to describe these experiences simply in terms of desires.

^{xxiii} See Sherman, *op.cit.*, pp.30-31, 104-106.

^{xxiv} For Aristotle, “...it is one’s character which determines what one enjoys doing and prefers to do and character is a function *both* of (developed) desires and (trained) instincts, and of rational judgments...Hence the practically intelligent man’s knowledge of the ultimate end...must be practical and non-theoretical, ...not founded on any discursive process of deliberative selection, it must be a kind of intuitive knowledge” (Cooper, pp.61-62). Cooper does not explicitly associate “intuition” with *nous*.

^{xxv} This translation is my own; I have not found it in any of the translations by much more knowledgeable scholars. Irwin, *op.cit.*, translates it “understanding” and Cooper, *op.cit.*, as “intellect” or “mind,” both of whom stress its association with perception of particulars. Bartlett and Collins translate it as “intellect” in *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics: A New Translation* (University of Chicago Press, 2011). See also Liddell & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, New Edition (Oxford, 1968), p.1180-81. I propose “insight” here because it seems to me to capture the work of *nous* in grasping what is particular, which Aristotle does tell us about it: “...intellect (*nous*) in matters of action grasps ...the ultimate particular thing that admits of being otherwise...Of these, then, one must have a perception, and this perception is *nous*” (1143a36-b6), from Bartlett and Collins’s translation, *op.cit.*, p.130. Translating *nous* as “insight” also fits best with the proposed construction of this activity’s role in decision-making that is offered here. But there is much scholarly debate about the role of *nous* as a component of the exercise of Practical Wisdom in decision-making, including scholars who would directly challenge the proposal offered here.

^{xxvi} See Sherman, *op.cit.*, p. 57; see also 1168b29-1169a3 and Cooper on *nous* as being, for Aristotle, “the True Self,” , *op.cit.*, pp.164-171.

^{xxvii} See Sherman, *op.cit.*, p.58 ff.

^{xxviii} Eugene Garver, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

^{xxix} This construction of the role of *nous* and of the reason for its having this role in the decisions of the *Phronimos* has grown from insights not only of the commentators on the *Nicomachean Ethics* who have been cited, but also from the work of two commentators on the medieval virtue of *Prudentia* (which, for medieval Aristotelians, performs a function in decision-making nearly

identical to Aristotle's *Phronesis* and which therefore has nothing to do with the contemporary self-interested meaning of "prudential" action): Yves Simon, *Practical Knowledge* edited by Robert Mulvaney (Fordham University Press, 1991) and Herbert McCabe, *On Aquinas* edited by Brian Davies (Continuum, 2008).

^{xxx} McCabe, *op.cit.*, p.104.

^{xxxi} See Irwin, *op.cit.*, p. 429.