

Soldierly Virtue:

**An argument for the restructuring of Western military
ethics to align with Aristotelian Virtue Ethics**

John Doyle Baldari

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Because wars are fought by human beings and not merely machines, a strong virtue ethic is an essential prerequisite for those engaged in combat. From a philosophical perspective, war has historically been seen as separate and outside of the commonly accepted forms of morality. Yet there remains a general, though not well-thought out, sense that those human beings who fight wars should act ethically. Since warfighters are often called upon to contemplate and complete tasks during war that are not normally required of non-warfighters (civilians), and it is believed these warfighters should act ethically, it becomes necessary to ask: What does soldierly virtue look like?

In order to answer this question, I will examine essential elements of moral responsibility and military authority. Once complete, I will propose an Aristotelian-based virtue ethics system, one that is equally valuable to warfighter and civilian. To do this, I will examine the conversation in academia regarding virtue ethics and the foundations of virtue. I will provide both a cursory and deep reading of elements of Aristotle's conception of virtue, but ultimately I will provide a slightly more rigorous reading and reinterpretation of an Aristotelian-based virtue ethic, with a definitive final recommendation for this interpretation being best for everyone, in war or walking down the street.

Upon completing a study of this work, one will walk away with a next-generation interpretation of Aristotelian-based Virtue Ethics that denies *eudaimonia* as the central principle, relying instead on *phronesis* as its central theme. *Phronesis*, when properly developed in the warfighter will lead to moral responsibility, better decision-making, and a seamless re-integration into civilian life once has returned from the horrors of war.

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Chapter 1

Soldierly Virtue

Because wars are fought by human beings and not merely machines, a strong virtue ethic is an essential prerequisite for those engaged in combat. From a philosophical perspective, war has historically been seen as separate and outside of the commonly accepted forms of morality (Sun Tzu, 500BCE, Thucydides, 395BCE, Machiavelli, 1532, Clausewitz, 1832, Mavrodes, 1975). Yet there remains a general, though not always well-thought out, sense that those human beings who fight wars (hereafter called “warfighters”) should act ethically (McMahan, 2004, 693-733). Since soldiers (warfighters) are often called upon to contemplate and complete tasks during war that are not normally required of non-warfighters (civilians), and it is believed these warfighters should act ethically, it becomes necessary to ask: What does soldierly virtue look like?

In order to answer this question, I will examine essential elements of moral responsibility and military authority. Once complete, I will propose an Aristotelian-based virtue ethics system, one that is equally valuable to warfighter and civilian. To do this, I will examine the conversation in academia regarding virtue ethics and the foundations of virtue. I will provide both a cursory and deep reading of elements of Aristotle’s conception of virtue, but ultimately I will provide a slightly more rigorous reading and reinterpretation of an Aristotelian-based virtue ethic, with a definitive final recommendation for this interpretation being best for everyone, in war or walking down the street.

My understanding of virtue ethics is keenly dependent on an analysis of Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis*¹ and emphasises the necessity to minimize moral deference in order to underscore moral responsibility. Ultimately, my conception of virtue ethics claims that ethical character is 1) rational moral excellence 2) developed through tutored habituation and the concurrent development of *phronesis* and 3) leads one to become a virtuous *politikos*.²

¹ A few common translations include “practical wisdom” or “prudence”, but I will avoid using these philosophically weighted translations and instead define *phronesis* specifically as it applies to virtue, using the Romanized Greek word to avoid confusion.

² A few common translations might be “politician”, “societal leader”, or “one who participates in civil life”. I will be using the concept of *politikos* because Aristotle connects it to the virtuous exemplar. The *politikos* participates in civil life exhibiting *politike* using *politike technē*.

In order to assist my interlocutor's navigation of this work, I will provide a map of the arguments as they are presented here. Initially, I will provide a detailed critique of moral deference as the default moral methodology in military ethics. This critique will claim that the act of taking responsibility for one's actions is paramount to ethical action. I will follow that argument with an examination of military authority with some commentary on what aspects of military authority are valuable and what can be improved upon. This will lead to a conversation about Aristotelian ethics, beginning with a general look at the concept in brief, followed by a deep reading of the most important elements as laid out by Sarah Broadie. That examination is followed by a few common counter-arguments versus Aristotle's ethics, with the common responses. This is to establish a starting point for later arguments and place those arguments within the academic debate. The next chapter contains the core of my arguments regarding the centrality of *phronesis* in a virtue approach. I will introduce Aristotle's conception, followed by a careful examination of John McDowell's deeper analysis, and finishing with the core arguments for this work where I develop *phronesis* and define a slightly modified ethical system based on Aristotle's grand idea. Finally, I will critique the conception of Stoic virtue ethics as a possible soldierly virtue, ultimately showing the superiority of the Aristotelian approach to the Stoic. This chapter in particular will provide a quick overview of my argument followed by some carefully considered definitions and an introduction to the smattering of ancient Greek text I bring to bear within.

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Although there are several theories of first order ethics, Aristotle's work is pre-eminent in that he considered virtue to be the hallmark of excellence (*arête*). Aristotle argued that it was necessary for each citizen to reach his full ethical potential in order for there to be a smooth functioning of a good society (Irwin, 1999, xvi). But Aristotle did not differentiate between the civilian and the warfighter in his discussion of virtue because they were usually one and the same person during that time. To be a citizen in ancient Greece was to be a man who took up arms to defend his city-state whenever necessary. This understanding of citizens as warfighters also holds true for the Hellenic Stoic discussion of virtue. In classical stories, those who went off to fight and were successful were held as exemplars of virtue (at least in one aspect or another),

and the stories of their heroics were used to whet the appetites (or more precisely, form the desires) of the younger students of virtue. This was important because right desires were seen as necessary for the realization of the good life.

There was a shift away from this kind of thinking in the philosophy of the ancient Romans. The Roman era saw the prolific use of a well-defined profession of arms³ which changed the ethical landscape such that what was considered the good life for the professional soldier and for the civilian citizen now differed. This is evident in the prominence of the “rules of war”⁴ and the acceptance of the Roman *Just War* tradition with its methodology of adjudicating those rules.⁵ While Just War theory is still alive and well, there has been a significant shift in current thought toward focusing on the integration of the ethical landscape of both warfighters and civilians that supports a reconsideration of the Greek way of thinking.

As I am assuming a reasonable understanding of Just War Theory⁶ concepts by those viewing this thesis, I will simply stipulate here that the conversation concerning Just War Theory ethics, as it applies to individuals during conflict, implies that a warfighter must hold one set of ethical beliefs while at war and another set of ethical beliefs while in a civilian environment. Furthermore, professional military ethics as it is taught in modern western militaries holds that one must first undergo a transition from early civilian education to the profession of arms, and then, post-war, transition back to pre-war civilian ethical life, which implies that the ethical life of the warfighter is in some way incompatible with, or explicitly different from, the ethical life of a civilian. This is worrying because it suggests (and has been shown⁷) that the transition from warfighter to civilian leads to severe mental strain (PTSD⁸) as the warfighter attempts to reconcile conflicting ethical values. These ethical shifts were not necessary in ancient Greece where the assumption (which I deem

³ This is opposed to the citizen-soldier model used by the Hellenes.

⁴ The most famous modern example would be the four treaties that make up the rules of war under the Geneva Conventions in 1949 and which are in a constant state of revision.

⁵ While there is something to be said for Indian philosophy introducing the idea that a war must be just, most modern Just War Theory begins with Cicero's *De Officiis*, Book 1, sections 1.11.33–1.13.41. The *jus ad bellum* concept is most often considered political philosophy and not really of interest here, but *jus in bello* is specifically right conduct while in combat and very much an individual ethical doctrine to guide warfighter actions. It is this distinct half of the tradition that is in contention here.

⁶ Even a very cursory understanding of Just War Theory is sufficient for my interlocutors. I do not require a deep understanding of the theory or the current debate concerning it. I have included an introductory excerpt in the appendix for those interested.

⁷ As supported by an article in Vanity Fair which is one of hundreds of articles written about American warfighters returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. (<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2015/05/ptsd-war-home-sebastian-junger>)

⁸ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

correct) was that good moral character, guided by *phronesis*, is a viable ethical system appropriate for the warfighter in exactly the same way as it is for the non-warfighter (civilian).

The Just War tradition is meant to limit how far a warfighter is allowed to breach common morality in pursuit of the mission he must accomplish in wartime, and therefore assumes that warfighters must breach common morality while fighting wars. Given this, Just War Theory is about setting limits on what might be considered one's "release from moral constraints" during wartime. This rules-based system lends itself well to the rational agent seeking ways in which to maximize boundaries, in other words, to bend and break the rules. There is no part of the system that can make the agent feel that the rules are right, since the situation is such that everything the warfighter has known to be right prior to entering a combat situation is in stark contrast to the governing rules of war. Also, Just War Theory serves no purpose for civilians so, without significant modification, it has no use outside of war.⁹

Virtue ethics, on the other hand, is a viable system for times of war but is not limited to war, it serves as well in times of peace. In virtue ethics there is a kind of end or goal, but it is not strictly a consequential ethical system. It seeks a relative mean and is competitive, but is not a relative ethical system. It seeks a kind of pleasure, but is not a hedonistic ethical system. Instead, it is a theory of self-excellence and maximization of ethical potential. It is an ethical theory focused on training desires and emotions that ends up working toward a common, long-term goal: *Eudaimonia*.¹⁰

Eudaimonia is one of the most difficult terms in ancient virtue ethics to fix in modern language. It is a kind of well-being, but well-being does not capture the fullness of the meaning. A study of the term could fill volumes (and in fact does), so I will simply summarize how, in this study of virtue ethics, I will be using the concept of *eudaimonia*: It is the living of life in such a way that virtue flourishes and the person has a deep appreciation of the Good.¹¹ It includes a vibrant sense

⁹ I am aware that some philosophers have attempted to use Just War Theory concepts for issues around policing, surveillance, and punishment, all of which generally apply to governmental or paramilitary powers. The concepts are cherry-picked from the theory *in toto*, so I regard this to be the "significant modification" caveat in play.

¹⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* argues that rethinking Aristotle's ideas, especially those concerning *eudaimonia*, can provide us with a standpoint from which we can evaluate moral judgements (MacIntyre, 1981).

¹¹ "Good" refers to the greater good or in Aristotelian terms, the noble. In other words the best course of action in pursuit of the common good or the good for all. It includes considering the well-being of one's self as well as the well-being of all other persons

of accomplishment, a maximization of personal potential, and the acquisition of internal goods (such as happiness and satisfaction). It is slightly relative in that it is competitive, meaning that while one can function well as a human agent, it is only by maximising that functioning that one becomes excellent. One usually achieves this kind of potential by competing against one's self or status quo state. In other words, the "me" I am now is in competition with the "me" I was yesterday to be better, and tomorrow, that "me" will once again try to be better than the day before.

Aristotle's *eudaimonia* can be interpreted as a kind of over-arching life-long satisfaction or joy derived not from external circumstances but rather from an inner state achieved by pursuing right-action by means of rational activity. In other words, being good makes one happy. Not the results of being good, but the act of being good itself. Right-action is singular, meaning that while there may be many permissible actions in any given set of circumstances, there is only one action that is fully right. In those cases when one might choose to act in a way that is not obviously moral to common modern sensibilities¹², such as certain wartime decisions that require the taking of life, those actions are ethically what, in war-time circumstances, will bring one into a state that begins with a motivational desire (i.e. sacrificing one's own civilian lifestyle to pursue the Good as a warfighter), that becomes a rational deliberation (i.e. between common moral sensibilities and performing a commonly impermissible action in favour of the Good) that then intentionally leads one to make a decision (i.e. to take whatever action is necessary toward the Good), and finally seeks a goal (to fulfil the obligations of a virtuous warfighter). While somewhat opaque at the moment, these concepts will become clearer as I continue.

War is chaos. If one cannot make decisions - hard decisions - that require detachment from commonly accepted societal norms in favour of a bigger picture (the Good) when necessary, the chaos of war can be overwhelming. General rules cannot take into account all the -particularities of circumstance-, which are, by definition, unique. This incongruity can lead to indecision. Indecision can lead

affected by an action. Strides taken in favour of the "Good" are frequently referred to as "right action". The term "Good" (distinguished by a capital "G") in this book means the greater good, the noble, and societal excellence through personal excellence.

¹² I make no rigorous study of this, but assume that human beings act cooperatively under non-extraordinary circumstances. I think such activity as basic civility, mutual respect, and not killing each other wantonly can be reasonably assumed without ruffling any feathers.

to doubt. In combat, to doubt, to hesitate, to forfeit the initiative, can lead to mission failure and one's death (and likely the unnecessary death of others).

Good moral character¹³ predisposes an individual to make the right decision, at the right time, for the right reasons, in any set of circumstances, including the chaos of war. In other words, an ethical person, one with moral integrity/consistency will be predisposed toward right-action, and will deliberate and initiate action in the service of the Good, under any given circumstances. A genuinely moral person will recognize the moral stimuli (also known as the "moral considerations" or "right-making features") in a set of unique circumstances¹⁴ and, upon deliberating on the choices available and motivated by some good, will invariably choose the most correct action of the options available (Dancy, 2001).¹⁵ To be properly morally-developed, a student of virtue must acquire a well-developed desire to be good because he or she has learned, or been taught, to want good things, namely the good life for oneself and others. Such a student will understand, at least at a rudimentary level, that the good life is attained by seeking rational excellence and complying with his or her functional mantle.¹⁶ Furthermore, under the tutelage of an exemplar, the student will have been habituated or trained (through repetition, guidance, and observance of role models) to adhere to a set of virtues; he or she will have a virtuous character and act virtuously. It will become second-nature for her or him to act in accordance with virtue rather than succumbing to vices.

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My account of virtue is equally suited to all agents, whether they be warfighters or civilians. It emphasizes the importance of *phronesis* and the necessity to minimise moral deference. This carries the implication that virtue for a warfighter should be (trivially) similar to virtue for a civilian such that events in

¹³ If one were seeking a legal definition of "good moral character", something like that used by the United States legislature could be used. It defines it as a law-abiding person with a record of honesty, fairness and respect for self and others. For Aristotle though, it is without regard for law, excepting only those laws that guide action toward the Good.

¹⁴ As this isn't an exercise in metaphysics, I'll simply stipulate that every single subjective instance of a human being's life is utterly unique, if for no other reason than it exists in a unique point in time and space and is coloured by the perspective of the agent at that exact time and space.

¹⁵ I will be looking at virtue in the context of tragic dilemmas in another paper, as well as offering a bit of discussion on morally arbitrary choices. It is in the cases of arbitrary choice and tragic dilemma that a virtuous warfighter is in a privileged position over a warfighter using a rule-based or deference-based system.

¹⁶ More on this in Ch. 4. This term has been chosen in reference to both Aristotle's function argument and the argument for *techné*. Briefly, it is the sum total of one's rationale excellence as dictated by one's tasks and responsibilities, including the duty to take moral responsibility for one's actions.

the world will activate the same disposition to act, and more specifically to act in the right way, even if the specific behaviour activated is different for different individuals. As such, the moral psychology¹⁷ (including an understanding of the Good) and normative expectation (that one should do the right thing) must have the same explanation and general development. In other words, I must be able to give an account of virtue that is blind to the specifics of one's task, profession, or circumstances.

I argue that when all other aspects of character are equal, it is an agent's understanding of his or her obligations, responsibilities, or duties,¹⁸ along with the circumstances of a particular event, that account for differences in action between wartime and peacetime, between warfighter and civilian. A correct account of virtue should be able to explain how the same motivations and dispositions can be activated and yield different behaviours given the uniqueness of one's circumstances (hereafter "particularity-of-circumstance"¹⁹). For instance, one might say that warfighters have a special particularity-of-circumstance based on their obligations and what is expected of them.²⁰ One aspect of that circumstance is that they must fight and win wars. At ground level, civilians generally do not have this particularity-of-circumstance (though they will have their own obligations that create a particularity-of-circumstance unique to each of them). Assuming proper moral development, and an adequate level of *phronesis*, warfighters will act virtuously in this circumstance (fighting and winning wars) given the same moral dispositions as the civilian who does not labour under that circumstance.

It is important to emphasize that a virtuous civilian and a virtuous

¹⁷ As I use this term here, I mean moral psychology such that "Moral psychology investigates human functioning in moral contexts, and asks how these results may impact debate in ethical theory" (Doris & Stich, 2014).

¹⁸ Throughout this work I interchange "obligation" (using it in its most common, non-Kantian sense as some action or set of actions expected or required of the actor) with "duty" (defined simply as something that ought to be done) and "responsibility" (defined as a willingness to accept the consequences of one's actions) dependent on the nuance required.

¹⁹ I take this term from my understanding of certain metaphysical concepts having to do with possible worlds, or more specifically the pragmatic rejection of this idea beyond the field of logic. I want this term to specifically sum up a set of facts about an agent. Begin with the fact that an agent occupies a particular and non-reproducible location in space-time. Another fact is that an agent has a certain perceptual experience that cannot be perfectly reproduced because of their location in space-time. The agent will have a history (narrative) of their identity and thoughts about what it means to live well. An agent will have an upbringing that includes training, enculturation, inculcation, and education. An agent will have certain loyalties. An agent will have some service they provide in order to propagate their existence (even if it is a denial of societal participation). And many other facts that make an agent radically unique from any other being in existence. For the purpose of this work, usually I will be holding a number of these unique features fixed and considering the difference along one or a handful of metrics, such as task.

²⁰ One could also argue positively that the excellence-attaining mean for a warfighter while in combat is different from the excellence-attaining mean for a civilian in the same place and time. The point being that there is still an excellence-attaining mean available and both should seek to bring it about.

warfighter will not *act* the same way all the time (in other words, they will each have a unique right-action required of them), even when the circumstances are very similar.²¹ But it should also be understood that it is perfectly acceptable to commit to the thesis that if a civilian and a warfighter have the same disposition, they will act identically in exactly the same circumstances.²² In a civilian setting during peacetime, this is wholly reasonable. It is, in fact, desirable for off-duty warfighters in civilian settings to behave virtuously (meaning “identically to the virtuous civilian”) as the circumstances require, since the circumstances are relatively the same for both the warfighter and the civilian. That said, during war, the warfighter and the civilian are not in the same circumstance, even if certain aspects of the situation seem similar. For instance, take two agents, one a civilian the other a warfighter, standing in the middle of a road facing a charging enemy combatant. Assuming that the enemy is a moral agent²³, the civilian need not fear harm and therefore should not take up arms against the enemy (though they might certainly seek shelter, assist another civilian, or otherwise act in a way that is virtuous). The warfighter, on the other hand, having no other difference from the civilian than being a warfighter, is morally obligated to take up arms against the foe for no other reason than that it is his or her task. The circumstances are different precisely because of this task. That said, if properly morally developed, the civilian and the warfighter will have similar dispositions, and will act most appropriately, as is required for the fulfilment of each of their tasks and the achievement of the Good. They will each wisely²⁴ and virtuously act as a unique individual, given all the many differences, perspectives, and qualities of each of them.

To illustrate further what I mean, take for example two agents who are of the same disposition and perspective. They are both medics and have both come

²¹ By very similar, I mean that everything else being equal, the only difference is that one is a warfighter in a wartime environment and the other is a civilian in a wartime environment.

²² Assume something like the D(isposition)+R(eason)+C(ircumstance)=A(ction) formation, while $D+R+C^*=A^*$, such that the disposition will be the same (let's say, the disposition to act generously). Given two circumstances, both of which include a beggar asking for alms, the agent has the disposition to be generous. In the first circumstance, it is an agent with the task of moving an object from one point to another, in which case it would be imprudent to drop what one was doing in order to give the beggar a coin, but in a circumstance (C*) where one does not have the task of moving an object from one point to another, it is prudent to give the beggar a coin. In both cases, the agent *wants* to give the beggar the coin, but in the first, the agent knows that doing so would require foregoing her task (perhaps she made a promise to move the object, or is under some other obligation). Ultimately, it is virtuous in the first instance to not give the beggar a coin, but vicious in the second not to. This will be explained further under the discussion regarding the doctrine of the mean.

²³ Not always a reasonable assumption, but not a completely foreign concept.

²⁴ A very particular kind of wisdom, *phronesis*, is meant here. This will be a central doctrine of the thesis throughout.

across a fellow soldier suddenly trapped under a fallen tree. If the first agent has the disposition to help their comrade and has the qualities of being a strong person, it seems in accord with virtue that the strong person would immediately lift the fallen tree off the injured soldier. On the other hand, someone slight of build, with the same disposition, might run to seek help as quickly as possible, knowing full well he lacks the quality of great strength. The actions are immediately different, but the disposition to help the fallen soldier is the same, and the different actions are meant to bring about the same desired outcome.

There is certainly a point to be made that there is a level at which circumstances are so similar that the same action might be required in all of those micro-circumstances beyond that level. While discussion of the question of what minutiae constitute different relevant circumstances might be valuable, it is not central to my work here. One simply need realise that one's obligations play an important part in defining circumstances and the required right-actions in said circumstances.

Finally, it is useful for my argument to examine some of the unique traditions that have become defining characteristics of military service. This will act to show that virtue can account for right-action without the additional baggage (and moral inconsistencies) that arise from current practices. Once this examination has been conducted a judgment can be rendered regarding whether a practice is conducive to virtue and assists the warfighter in the task of winning wars. If a practice is not conducive to virtue, then it follows that such practices can and should be altered or discontinued so that the remaining practices are virtuous and lead to virtuous warfighting. In this examination I will include a discussion of the elements of authority (e.g. the strict tradition that orders must be followed without question and that leaders have privileged access to what should be done²⁵), loyalty, moral testimony, and moral deferment. I will also challenge the belief that warfighting requires moral blindness, a sentiment that is commonly considered central to military discipline (or, at the very least, believed to make the military better).

In order to develop some of my arguments, a number of assumptions must be made. Initially, I would like to preempt any call for pacifism. For instance, if I

²⁵ While I am interested in "moral expertise", there will be very little discussion of that topic. The concept might be pertinent to the very highest echelons of military command, but do not help us move the conversation herein forward.

were to paint one type of ideal picture (there are most certainly other types of ideal pictures depending on one's moral commitments), there simply wouldn't be a difference between the morality of warfighters and civilians because there would be no justification for war (and therefore no warfighters). There is a substantial body of literature on pacifism, but I will not contribute to that dialectic in this work. Instead, I begin the game a few moves in under the assumption that there will continue to be wars and, in fact, wars can be the right-action in certain political circumstances.²⁶

Given my assumptions, there will be some idealisation in my initial arguments. Mostly this idealisation will be seen in reference to the concepts of moral development and "strict compliance."²⁷ As much as I would like to fully engage the pragmatic elements of both concepts, I think it best to set them aside for now (although I occasionally use them to illustrate a point); having a high theoretical target that is well-argued and well-established will give the pragmatic debate a standard to aim for, when the time comes. For now, I simply assume a non-pacifistic war-justified²⁸ world in which political will is occasionally enforced through violent action.

The demandingness²⁹ of virtue will be only a cursory topic here, mostly reserved for discussion at another time. Virtue requires much of an individual, more perhaps than many are willing to give. But this could be said to be true of all of the most-accepted moral theories in philosophy.³⁰

In this work I'm assuming that the reader has at least a passing familiarity with the concept of virtue and virtue traits. That said, I do not assume a deep philosophical grounding in virtue ethics or Aristotle's theory on the part of the reader, so will provide a short introductory section, highlighting the main elements

²⁶ Compare this to virtuous anger, only perhaps on a political scale. Sometimes anger is the appropriate response, and sometimes violence is the correct action from that disposition. While I won't argue for righteous anger, I think it sufficiently provides for an example of how virtue and violence can coexist.

²⁷ More specifically, I will assume that it is possible to bring someone to a state of good moral character with a concurrent development of *phronesis* without justification, and that such training and education will "stick". Additionally, I assume that if this path were followed, it would be followed by all warfighters and all armies, but this doesn't matter for the thesis, which is simply looking at what a soldierly virtue would look like with only passing interest in pragmatics or practicality. This will be ripe ground for future research. For more on the concept of "strict compliance", see Rawls on ideal theory in *Theory of Justice* (1971).

²⁸ War-justification can come in as many forms as there are wars. Political theorists have much to explain regarding how and why wars might be justified. I only need discuss how, when such a war has been justified, the warfighter should act.

²⁹ What I mean here is the concept that the requirements of an ethical theory demand more from an individual than would be reasonable to expect (i.e. giving away one's entire livelihood to a homeless shelter, making one in fact homeless). One has to consider such things as willingness, ability, access, and human nature when considering the requirements of an ethical theory. That said, there is no such thing as a superogatory action in virtue, but that is an argument for chapters 3 and 4.

³⁰ I worry this statement will arouse more ire than it should. I am aware there are error theories and ethical systems that are more or less demanding. Obviously the problem hasn't been solved or there would be no need for this thesis in the first place.

I will be discussing. This is meant to create a common starting point for war theorists and virtue theorists, both of whom might find some interest in what I am arguing.

It is important to emphasize here that I am assuming that the specific virtue list used by any account of virtue (including Aristotle's original list) is secondary to the developed "excellence of character" that is the focus of my work. I am not interested in arguing for or against any specific virtue or group of virtues other than *phronesis*, which I consider a special virtue and non-substitutable. Virtue lists are finite and if improperly considered can lead to contradictory individual virtues³¹ and dispositions. On the other hand, so long as any given virtue list is rigorously-considered and well-reasoned, it will sufficiently satisfy the requirements of the arguments made here. I am aware that it is conceivable that some virtue list or another may undermine elements of my argument,³² but I consider that unproblematic given the task at hand. That debate will simply have to wait for another time. Instead of debating whether this virtue or that is better or worse or admits of a mean in the right way, I think it is more important to understand the mechanisms that underlie virtue as a whole. The lists themselves are simply a background argument that can only be debated once an understanding of the fact that 1) circumstances are unique and 2) *phronesis* and its development are central, has been achieved. That said, it can be useful to use specific virtues as examples. When doing so, I will try to stick to virtue lists either directly related to the work described, or use the Aristotelian list when speaking in general terms.

In order to avoid a digression into a debate about law and legal warfare, I will not argue a legal philosophy of war. That said, among my claims, I do argue that virtue is unlike law. Good character provides one with the disposition to make the best decisions possible in any given circumstance, but due to the particularity-of-circumstance, virtue does not lend itself well to proscriptive rules. Nor does it do well with external scrutiny or judgment by someone who is not

³¹ I can imagine a list that has both gentleness and firmness, both with excesses and deficiencies, on the same list. This seems obviously problematic and likely there is a mistake in the relevance of a particular virtue on a list. Also one can imagine virtue lists that target a kind of person, like a father or a clergyman. What is virtuous for one might be mistakenly assumed to be vicious for another. Regardless, the issue around virtue lists is a topic for elsewhere.

³² What I mean here is that a virtue list that includes pacifism as a virtue, such as some eastern philosophies do, would directly deny that there can be such an entity as a virtuous warfighter. Given our earlier assumption, this additional assumption might be necessary to bring to light.

virtuous (or is not at least intimately familiar with what a virtuous agent would do). This is important because, among other things, it shows that one cannot easily claim that another's actions were virtuous or not, and therefore one cannot append praise or blame to an action without qualification. Some other mechanism must do this work. Virtue will be shown to be a subjective (but not relative or selfish) ethical system that comprises the disposition to act in ways that the individual deems right for achieving the virtuous mean as it applies to them at the time. But virtues are not laws which one can attempt to either rigidly adhere to or break. For instance, it is not "what must I do to be courageous, assuming courageousness is x, y, and z," it is rather "what must I do?" This can lead to ambiguity, especially when one is trying to judge whether another has conducted her- or him- self rightly. That isn't to say there is no need for some structure to be in place that provides the mechanisms for assigning and apportioning praise and blame, only that virtue alone is insufficient for this assignment. Therefore, I am not proposing that virtue and the development of virtue replace the law or the rules of engagement. Only that it is important to understand that someone of good character must sometimes choose to break the law in order to act virtuously, and in so doing must be willing to accept the consequences³³ of such action which may turn out to be unpleasant for the agent (but still be the right-action and therefore, Good).

In addition to the assumptions I've indicated, I will also be using a number of terms in technical or highly specific ways. I am acutely aware of the common usage some of these terms have in everyday language. So, to avoid confusion, I intend to be extremely careful in detailing how I am interpreting and using these terms.

In addition to technical terms, throughout this work I will also use a number of ancient Greek terms whose definitions and translations are contested in the literature, or have at least been debated at length. When some of these terms first appear I will take the time to give terminological explanations if needed, and will introduce a bit of argument for the sake of fixing the term. But generally, in this introduction, especially in reference to the Greek terms, I will simply stipulate

³³ It's worth noting that consideration of the possible circumstances are part of the agent's considerations. This may lead to an agent choosing not to conduct some action solely because there is some foreseeable consequence that limits the action's choice-worthiness.

the meaning I will use (with a few supporting notes). However, you can rest assured that any term given a brief stipulated definition here will become part of later arguments where more detailed and exhaustive explanations and reasons will be given for my choices.

The term *warfighter*, as used here, is defined as an agent who is tasked with the obligation of fighting wars and is a member of the profession of arms.³⁴ I use *warfighter* as a term to replace “soldier,” since a soldier is often mistakenly assumed to be any military person. Even outside of military parlance, soldiers are distinguished from sailors, marines, and airmen. Within military jargon specifically, this distinction is of utmost importance. Simply put, a soldier is a warfighter whose primary purpose is to wield small arms against an enemy in relatively close proximity. It should go without saying that this is a very small part of the military in any country. In modern nuclear-armed civilisations, the virtue of the “soldier” has minimal impact when compared to the reach of military personnel who could vaporise a nation with the touch of a button. Thus, my work here attempts to go beyond “soldiering” in the limited sense and aims to be much more encompassing by addressing all warfighters, especially those who accept the responsibility of directly enabling an entity to wage war. That said, I will still use terms such as “soldiering” to fix concepts to the warfighter (as in the title of this work) and “soldiery” to describe national militaries (as opposed to non-state agents). Initially I had thought to exclude non-state agents from this work (since it isn’t uncommon to hear an anecdotal assumption that non-state militants could never be virtuous), but I argue that virtue is equally achievable for those in government service, mercenaries, and insurgent forces alike, or any others who take up arms against a defined enemy. That said, the majority of the moral questions used to test my arguments will focus on agents of the state.

Throughout this work I will use a nuanced definition of right-action, understood to refer to the most correct action in a given circumstance, motivated by the desire to be good, with the foreseeable outcome aiming for the Good, modified as is necessary by the particularity-of-circumstance. That is, right-action is more than just doing the correct thing, which might be done by accident or with vicious intent. Instead, right-action is the end of a chain of effort beginning with a

³⁴ This is not to assume that the warfighter is a simple profession with an end product. I will discuss this more at length later.

virtuous disposition or desire, which leads to a perception of a moral stimulus in the world, followed by a choice, the application of *orthos logos* (good reasoning) to the choice, a decision, and finally an action. It must be noted that right-action only applies to those decision-points in which a moral conflict is in play and in which an arbitrary or tragic dilemma is not. For instance, choosing whether to shoot one or the other of your twin sons based on a *Sophie's choice* scenario does not lend itself to right-action in the sense I am using it here. The decision in that case is arbitrary and does not admit of rational deliberation leading one to a suitable decision. That said, tragic or arbitrary dilemmas, while useful for testing ethics, are rare enough that they can never be the basis of an ethical system.

In my opinion, *orthos logos* really means more than “good reasoning” in that the phrase describes reasoning in line with universal truth or “pure reason” – authentic reasoning. In other words, the Greek term goes beyond commonly accepted definitions of good reasoning, implying a deeper faculty related to the soul rather than the intellect. Hereafter I will use the Greek term *psyche* whenever referring to the soul, to avoid confusion with any non-Aristotelian concepts of the soul. Given that *orthos logos* implies a relation to the *psyche*, the disposition for seeking the Good is understood to be in place before one perceives the moral stimuli in the world. This is “good character” and is the basis for all virtuous actions. Stimuli excite the need for a reaction, which often manifests as a choice between numerous possible actions (including doing nothing). Recognising all the moral stimuli correctly is a significant task that I will argue requires a kind of pattern recognition (this will be considered in great detail in later chapters). Choices are weighed and measured, though one should not assume that this is a painstaking or lengthy process. Once the process of deliberation is completed, it will issue forth as a decision. The decision then manifests an action and, assuming that the agent is virtuous (character which leads to *phronesis* which leads to *orthos logos*), this action will be the only action the agent would choose.³⁵ I realise I would come dangerously close to circularity if I said right-action was simply acting virtuously, since right-action is constitutive. Also, different views of virtue treat virtuous action as it is accounted for within a given tradition—Aristotelian, Stoic, or modern—quite differently. So I want to be

³⁵ We will revisit this when we talk about arbitrary decisions and tragic dilemmas, both of which can be troubling for any explanation of *right action*.

clear that in this work right-action is very specifically the action that follows from the chain of effort initiating from good character. Virtue is not necessarily action-guiding – although this claim is heavily contested (see Hursthouse, 1999 and Van Zyl, 2013). One does not choose the right-action for any other reason than that it was the obvious and only choice one could make in the situation (assuming the ideal agent). I should emphasise that right-action is not a product of virtue so much as it is a consequence of virtue. By being virtuous, one does the right thing when it is called for. The good one seeks is what is being sought, no more... and any actions toward that goal are like the movement of one's legs when one wants to walk to the other side of the room. There is only one way to achieve the goal.

Any revisions are relevant insofar as it places me within the conversation concerning modern interpretations of Aristotle and the dialectic about the normativity of virtue ethics. Also, my work takes into account an expanded conception of the Good that tries to steer current arguments clear of the rocks regarding ethical relativism and objectivist ethics. Any aspect of right-action not specifically mentioned yet will be covered in my detailed examination of Aristotle's philosophy.

If one sets aside the full scope of connotations, one can reduce the *orthos logos* of Aristotle to mean simply good reasoning or reasoning excellently. *Orthos logos* is often associated with the human function to be reasonable / rational / sapient. This human function may be considered the attainment of the maximisation of the potential of a human being (colloquially, to reach one's full potential); much like a craftsman maximises the potential of the materials used to craft an end product. So human beings maximise the potential of their character attributes in order to fulfil their function. One might say that if humans are rational, then it seems like a good idea that they should strive to be excellent rational agents. It can be tempting to try and escape terms such as right and wrong³⁶ by using the chain of effort for an action and saying that if the *orthos logos* is excellent; then the only action that is choice-worthy is the action that *orthos logos* issues forth. This is not identical to the state of virtue, which is a disposition that decides,³⁷ with reference to reason, what the mean is between two vices (NE,

³⁶ Anscombe has a few things to say about this in *Modern Moral Philosophy* (Anscombe, 1958)

³⁷ Irwin's translation of *prohairesis*, though it is contested. Other substitutions include "concerned with choice" or "involving choice" (Broadie, 1991, 78)

1107a1). One might instead say that the *orthos logos* combined with the state of virtue provide the proper backdrop for right-action, and are therefore constitutive of the concept. The standard Aristotelian definition of right-action in relation to the mean (NE, 1106b21) is still valuable, but not wholly sufficient. I say this to remove some of the circularity of accounts of right-action in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Peterson, 2011, 83-108). Obviously my arguments need considerably more detail to make them whole, but I think it is useful to have an abbreviated idea of my general meaning here.

The *Good* (or as it is sometimes called colloquially, “capital G” good) in this context will be left as an open question. However, tentatively, I will account for the Good as the reasonable excellence of the agent to create an environment that encourages the reasonable excellence of others, and in fact results in a common excellence. It is reasonable in that it is imbued with the exercise of reason or sapience; it is a form of excellence in that it seeks to maximise the moral potential³⁸ of an agent. I use the term agent to mean that reasonable excellence is subjective to the individual (but not relative). Due to one of the supreme ends of virtue,³⁹ it should be recognised that excellence includes a concern for the virtue of others. I will say more about “the Good” in my discussion of Aristotle, but only in as much as I will deny, in part, Aristotle’s definition. I do like the idea that Aristotle’s conception of the Good included the idea of nobility, not in the aristocratic sense, but in one’s bearing and action. Suffice it to say that the nature of the Good is an interesting question but one that is beyond the scope of this work, so must be addressed at a later date. However, the reason for highlighting the term is to dissuade the development of tangential arguments that target knowledge of the Good, as is common in metaethics and relative ethics. Any reasonable definition of the Good is sufficient; I need only argue that the excellence of the agent is the motivation for acting in accordance with virtue.

Virtue is not a means to an end. One can speak of virtue as if it has ends, such as finding *eudaimonia* or attaining the lofty status of *politikos*, but neither of these are ends. They are “fall out” products that come to be when someone is

³⁸ I struggle with a working definition for moral potential as such, but what I have in mind is *eudaimonic* in nature. The idea of a person being as good as they possibly can be, given all the circumstances of their existence. I believe I could write an entire work on this idea, but as a quick definition useful for my purposes, I think that this is sufficient.

³⁹ Aristotle seems to circulate between a number of “supreme ends” in an almost amusing way. I will discuss this more fully in Chapter 4.

virtuous. Some scholars may wish to argue that *eudaimonia* is a sought end textually, but I believe that to be a mistake.⁴⁰ In fact, seeking either of these ends is likely to doom one to failure. Instead, the student of virtue seeks virtue for its own sake. The student wants to be virtuous because why wouldn't she want to be virtuous? An analogy that captures this idea well is the analogy of the dancer. The dancer wants to be an excellent dancer, the best possible dancer she can be. She wants to maximize her ability as a dancer. To accomplish this, she practises dancing. Sometimes she needs a tutor, sometimes she works on her own, but she continues to practise. The act of practicing a dance has a number of benefits. The dancer becomes aware of her poise and position. She can feel what her body is doing and if it is doing something wrong. She can eventually remember all the dance moves she practises. Also, all that hard work has made her strong and fit. She has great posture and an air of dignified confidence free of arrogance. She has all these things, but that is not why she dances, she dances because she wants to dance. This analogy is extremely similar to the student of virtue learning and mastering virtue. There are many benefits to practicing virtue, and they are all desirable ends, but that isn't what one seeks when studying virtue in the correct way. What one seeks is to maximize one's moral potential: i.e. to achieve excellence. What one seeks is to be the best possible human being one can be.

Virtue does not necessarily equate to benevolence or compassion, which may well be virtues,⁴¹ but are not definitive of goodness itself. In other words, virtue is not so much about a concern for the well-being of others but rather a concern for the virtue of others. The virtuous exemplar, having attained a state of virtue and experienced the benefits there-of will naturally become interested in creating an environment where virtue flourishes. It is therefore possible that an imperfect agent may be of an unpleasant disposition, with few social graces, yet truly be interested in attaining the Good for all humanity. Whilst such an agent may not be well-regarded for their interpersonal skills, they may be well-respected for virtuous actions in favour of the Good. I have taken a little extra

⁴⁰ Many thanks to several interlocutors that brought this to my attention. I believe this interpretation to be incorrect, but I am willing to accept that I could be wrong about this. Fortunately for both me and my theory, it has little impact on my project here.

⁴¹ Or may not be. There may very well be systems of virtue that do not rank these among their list of virtues. I admit, I cannot imagine that list being very compelling, but it is exactly these kinds of digressions that I seek to avoid by leaving the question of the content of a virtue list open.

space here to discuss the matters of ends because I will often refer to these ideas without adding any further detail based on the assumption that the reader understands that virtue is for virtue is for virtue, and that is all.

Moral intuition refers to one's aggregated, unexamined, moral beliefs and societal human ethical conditioning⁴² prior to the development of *phronesis*. It is the faculty by which one recognizes and processes moral or ethical stimuli.⁴³ Generally it is non-deliberative, but just because one has deliberated does not mean one isn't relying on ethical or moral intuition. It is, for the pre-virtuous, the capacity one has to discern right-action, though not necessarily accurately. Morality has been inculcated in the agent since childhood, often with very little effort going into examining those beliefs either by the teacher or the student. If my experience is of any value here, it has been my perception that the vast majority of people I have met do not examine their own ethical or moral beliefs as evidenced by the wide-eyed awakening I am greeted with when I engage a student or friend with the dialectic. This unexamined ethical position is further complicated by subtle instinctual habits (psychological egoism) such as the drive to survive and the desire to conduct and receive mutual aid which often conflicts with moral beliefs that have no understanding to act as a foundation. That is not to say that moral intuition is bad, it is simply undeveloped. Moral intuition as I will use it is an undeveloped feeling that when provided the proper development, is a constitutive part of *phronesis*.

I have appropriated the term *phronesis*, sometimes translated as practical wisdom or prudence, from Aristotle for this work and will use it to describe the phenomenon of deliberately applying virtue to a moral or ethical problem, which includes acting on the problem appropriately. Understanding *phronesis* is central to my work, so this introduction is meant only to whet the reader's appetite. *Phronesis* is the subject of a full chapter. The development of *phronesis* is the development of one's ability to "pattern perceive" the right-action in a situation given all the information available, including one's particularity-of-circumstance (McMahan, 2013; McDowell, 1997; McNaughton, 1988; Wiggins, 1975). This

⁴² The first part of this view seems to be most commonly attributed to Pinker, though I am using the thoughts of Daniel Little for a quick and dirty "chapter 1" version of the idea (Little, 2007). In later chapters, I will focus on McMahan's characterization, which is a bit more robust and complete.

⁴³ Moral intuition is a true philosophical minefield that I would have preferred not to tread, but there is a particular thread that seems to entwine itself in nearly every account I encounter. Therefore we will be seeing it again in chapter 5.

developed post-sensory perception is meant to bring one in line with how Aristotle describes the virtuous. So the character virtues are the dispositions, desires, and motivations to be Good, while *phronesis* (which is both constitutive and separate from the character virtues) is the ability to balance those dispositions and set the virtues to the mean.

By virtue I mean virtue of character; for this is about feelings and actions, and these admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition. [...] But having these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper virtue. Similarly, actions also admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition (NE, 1106b21).

A human being of good character, properly motivated by virtue and suitably habituated, will act in such a way that they will know that they have done the right thing with confidence. I will devote a significant amount of this work to examining *phronesis* and supporting this substantial claim.

The reader will find that I often refer to a mythical entity known as the virtuous exemplar. The exemplar is a term meant to replace Aristotle's "virtuous man," a being with perfect character and intellect who has mastered the most ideal aspects of Aristotle's view. It is my view that no human being with anything like the current modern mind-set and from any society currently existing on Earth could achieve such a lofty position. What can be accomplished though is the characterisation of a theoretical being that acts as a kind of thought experiment. Virtuous action is often defined as the action in a particular circumstance as it would have been done by an exemplar. When considering an action, especially when the decision is difficult, it can be useful to use the exemplar thought experiment to help highlight what needs to be done. It can also be useful for judging the behaviours of others, though hardly fool-proof. While the exemplar thought experiment is useful, one must realise that even with a strong knowledge of virtue ethics, one is still in the fishbowl, so to speak. Having never experienced the exemplar in any form outside of one's imagination, it can be difficult to wrap one's mind around how alien this being might be. There is a robust body of literature on the exemplar (Hursthouse, 1999; Svensson, 2010; Van Zyl, 2013) and points of failure within the thought experiment. Since I am not overly

concerned in this work with moral development, I'm not in a position to address these at this time.

Politikos is here defined as one who participates in civil life (*politike*) in an active and meaningful way. I don't want this to be confusing, so allow me to set a mean, so to speak. A politician or leader does not need virtue to rule efficiently. A citizen can be very close to virtue but generally avoid civil life. In order to be on the path to virtue proper, one must participate in civil life in such a way as to create an environment in which others may successfully practise virtue and flourish. One might say that the *politikos* is interested in the *eudaimonia* of everyone (within their sphere of influence), including themselves. So, when I use the term *politikos*, I mean one on the path to virtue who participates in civil life in order to help bring about civil *eudaimonia*. *Politikos* takes on a stronger meaning for me later in the thesis when I consider the concept of authority, especially in the military context. Anyone who takes on the responsibility of leading others invokes the *politikos*. I will use the arguments defining the *politikos* as guides for fixing what it means to be a good military leader, given that war is fundamentally political in nature. A good military strategist or line leader should be concerned for the *eudaimonia* of their subordinates as much as the traditional Aristotelian *politikos* was for the citizens.

In summary of the Greek terms, I have introduced *orthos logos*, *phronesis*, *eudaimonia*, and *politikos*, in order to make it clear that I am using these terms in very specific and stipulated ways. They immediately capture attention, requiring one to consider the argument free of the confusion of some common misconceptions when translated into English. While each term is indeed an interpretation, those interpretations will be given their full due as appropriate throughout the work. It's worth noting that there will be imbedded selections from scholarly works that have translated these terms in one way or another. In those cases, I will quote the translation as it appears in the quoted text.

In order to make the case that soldierly virtue and civilian virtue are the same, I must prove that virtue can manage the types of special situations warfighters find themselves dealing with. This will be done through the analysis of *phronesis* and how that trait manifests itself as a development of intuition. Before I can truly discuss soldierly virtue, I must first argue against modern military moral deference and the status quo regarding military ethics. This is then followed by a

short discussion regarding authority which will help fix the discussion in the military realm. I then argue that virtue not only manages and provides guidance on these problems, but provides solutions that are less counter-intuitive and more likely to be right-action. Finally, I conclude by looking forward to some applications of this argument and future research.

Chapter 2

Why Moral Deference Fails

In this chapter I discuss the problem of moral deference in the context of modern military life. Virtue in general, and *phronesis* in particular, requires the deliberative power of the agent to be active in order for right-action to result. In other words, a military with a morally blind soldiery following orders from a vastly removed strategic command is doomed to repeat the ethical errors of the past. If the goal is a virtuous soldiery, then the freedom to make moral decisions must be granted to all, from the lowliest private to the commander-in-chief. From this perspective I will argue that there is no place for moral deference in military life, and, more than that, moral deference in military life is, as I understand it, vicious.

A map of the argument takes this form. I begin with a definition of what I mean when I discuss moral deference. This will include definitions and concept particularities, such as the difference between moral and non-moral deference. I will then discuss briefly how we acquire moral beliefs and why moral deference fails to satisfy adequate acquisition of the right kind or via the right methods. I then discuss the concept of first and third person moral deference: i.e. the acquiring of beliefs about right and wrong from moral testimony about ours or another's actions. Once these starting points have been established, I will argue for the appropriateness (or more specifically, the inappropriateness) of moral deference within virtue ethics. I will take the time to examine moral testimony and moral advice more deeply in this part of the argument. I will then introduce the core of my argument regarding moral deference, the duty to take moral responsibility for one's own actions. I finish with the risks of moral deference and a way forward.

Section I. Defining Moral Deference

The concept of moral deference is somewhat vague and ambiguous, primarily because of inconsistencies in its usage in common language, how philosophers use it, and its use in legal theory. And it has not been explained very cogently or comprehensively in the relevant theoretical literature. Therefore, for my purposes, it is critically important to first clarify the concept and show how it is currently used before discussing the validity of extending the concept to the

problem of ethical soldiering. Along the way, I will examine that what has been construed have considered the classic case of moral deference is not really moral deference at all.

There are three elements that can help in making the necessary distinctions between the types of moral deference that are plausible and merit discussion and those that are implausible and do not merit discussion. The three distinctions are: 1) how it occurs; 2) the structure of the content; and 3) the subject of the deference's content.

Generally speaking, deference refers to the practice of assuming as one's own a certain judgment based on another's authority. It is perfectly reasonable to defer to well-regarded experts in fact-based fields such as science (true by demonstration) or mathematics (true by definition). One can accept, for example, that the Great Wall of China is, in fact, 5,500 miles long, based solely on scientific testimony, and need not travel to China to test the truth value of this claim. But if one does question the validity of such a fact, it is well within the realm of possibilities to seek confirmation of the empirical data from other sources, or simply to travel to the Great Wall in person and measure it out. However, one does not, for the most part, look for direct justification of such knowledge because the indirect justification, expert testimony, is enough (Enoch, 2014, 5).⁴⁴

Moral deference, on the other hand, is quite different from fact-based deference. For one thing it requires that there be moral experts to whom one might defer. Moral expertise is something one sees in the virtuous exemplar, but this is an ideal, and as such it makes it difficult to believe there are moral experts⁴⁵ in the real world. Still, it is useful, for argument's sake, to imagine that there are those who have moral expertise, at least on some level. According to Driver, a moral expert is someone considered to have a greater claim to moral knowledge than is usual (Driver, 2006, 625). There are two main views defining the characteristics of a moral expert. The first view supports the idea that moral experts are agents who have philosophical and specific moral training such that they are familiar with moral concepts and have the time to think about moral issues (Singer, 1972, 115). The second view considers moral experts to be those

⁴⁴ Direct justification derives from transparent reasons, what makes a proposition true. Indirect justification is based on opaque evidence: "evidence for the truth of a proposition that does not disclose that in virtue of which the proposition is true, or its truth-makers" (Enoch, 2014, 12-13).

⁴⁵ What is not as difficult to imagine are those with somewhat *more* moral expertise as some others, comparatively.

who possess a greater moral sensitivity due to experiences that have rendered them more perceptive, more able to see the nuances of certain moral issues. Jones and Schroeter refer to the first view as the intellectualist model and the second as the practical wisdom model (Jones & Schroeter, 2012, 218). Along with Driver, Jones adheres to the practical wisdom perspective (Jones, 1999, 64). However, even if one agrees that there are moral experts, moral deference entails an ambiguity because of the difficulty of demonstrating or defining the truth of any given moral judgement, that is, the truth in any one particularity-of-circumstance.

Simply defined, then, moral deference, is the practice of appropriating a moral judgment from an external source (another agent, a text, a law, an order, etc.), possibly (but not necessarily) from someone or something one believes is an authority or expert of some kind, with deference based solely on some form of testimony, and without any deliberative subjective rational justification. But one is often suspicious of those who practise moral deference. One finds those who are overtly deferent untrustworthy. One might wonder if someone who is morally deferent is praiseworthy. Can such an agent be held responsible for his or her actions performed while deferring? Why are others suspicious of someone who morally defers? Is there something wrong with a moral judgment based solely on testimony? Can someone be virtuous and morally deferent at the same time?

Consider the case of the superspy with a license to kill. This is an agent (in both senses of the word) who enacts the will of the government, but does so by the clandestine murder of that government's enemies. One might say that this person is to be praised for his ability to commit these acts well, and the government might feel very comfortable having this agent under their control. But how can the ordinary citizen, especially one critical of the government, trust this agent to do the right thing when the time comes? Is it possible to say that such an agent is virtuous? Surely not. Moreover, such an agent seems rather slavish, which means it would take someone with a very special kind of disposition to choose such a life.

I intend to answer the questions I've raised above by analysing first the problem with moral deference in general, and then, by extension, the problem with moral deference in military life. I will demonstrate why the current western military structure should abandon the traditional requirement of unquestioned

obedience, defended under the umbrella of moral deference, and focus instead on the issue of moral responsibility. Throughout my analysis I clarify the reasons why moral deference is not necessarily praiseworthy. And while I believe my analysis makes a strong and convincing argument, I also believe it has an intuitive appeal.

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Some forms of moral deference should be rejected outright because they violate what Aristotle sees as an obligation that one has to oneself as a rational agent, namely the responsibility to reason, to perform one's function as a human being (Aristotle, *NE*, 1098a5). That is, one is obligated to do one's own moral reasoning, to deliberate well, and make decisions for ourselves.⁴⁶ The obligation to function well is fundamental to Aristotle's concept of virtue and therefore fundamental to the good life. It is, of course, possible for those who are born as human beings to reject reason, to simply take up space, spending their days eating, drinking, sleeping, and seeking sensual pleasures like any non-human animal. But, for Aristotle, if one hopes to wear the mantle of "human being", then one must reason. And if one wants to wear the mantle of "excellent human being" one must reason well. This is the function argument (more on this later). As such, I will call this the functional mantle, meaning that in order for one to claim to be human, one must be a reasoning agent, and furthermore, for one to claim to be a virtuous human being, one must reason well. Further, one's functional mantle includes one's duty to moral responsibility and the tasks one has taken up. In other words, your ability to claim excellence includes excelling at your profession, societal position, and place as a leader.

Morality imposes on one the responsibility to reason well because in order to be virtuous one needs to have more than the appropriate desires and practise right-action, which simply describe the beginning and end points of the *phronetic* process (this is discussed at length in the chapter on *phronesis*). One must also, and this is crucial, perceive correctly the moral stimuli in the particularity-of-circumstance and apply *phronesis* to any given moral problem. Only this, combined with the character virtues, can lead to the admirable performance of

⁴⁶ This is not to say we cannot accept testimony as an object of deliberation. This will be made clear later in the chapter.

right-action.⁴⁷

Section II. The Subject of the Content of Moral Deference

Any discussion of moral deference carries with it the burden to explain how one acquires a moral belief or a desire for the good in the first place. The virtuous acquire moral beliefs through educational means; they are habituated to live virtuously. But being educated or habituated to live according to virtue is not the only way one can acquire a moral belief. Coming to have a moral belief may, in fact, happen in several different ways.⁴⁸

Deference, in the moral sense, is the acceptance of a moral judgment or belief without subjecting that belief to the mechanisms of deliberation or reason. In short, the right virtuous character is not correctly in place, since it is more important to the one who defers that he or she accept the testimony of another than it is to “get it right”. There may be any number of reasons for this, such as the agent being mistaken about the person to whom he or she defers in regard to their moral expertise; or perhaps the one who defers just holds the other agent in such a high regard that he or she does not question the other’s moral authority. This authority, as I’ve said, can come in forms other than people, such as a text, a law, an order, etc. In such cases I believe one has a harder time denying the authority, since there can be no interpersonal cross-examination. Finally, one may morally defer because one lacks the ethical sensitivity to know that the situation to which they are deferring is a moral one.

The presence of an authority is an important aspect of deference because it serves as the justification for deferring. Such deference, as we’ve seen, does not cause any problems when it comes to the empirical sciences, since in those areas it is acceptable to defer to the facts put forth by experts. And in any case, if one suddenly had a doubt about the expertise, true knowledge is but a few experiments away. Relying on expert knowledge in the moral realm is much more complicated.

The process of moral development, which includes a period of right desire cultivation and a period of habituation to virtue, is usually conducted under the

⁴⁷ Of course it is true that in the process of deliberating, one must take into account foreseeable consequences. But, consequences do not factor into whether one can claim to be virtuous.

⁴⁸ I mean specifically wrongful moral deference. This will make more sense as I proceed.

watchful eye of a variety of tutors.⁴⁹ The first tutors are usually one's parents. Later, teachers and even friends can become one's ethical tutors. Since a child does not have an understanding of the desires being acquired, the child is expected to defer to his or her tutors while growing up. I call this kind of deference educational deference which, notably, can manifest in both the empirical and ethical domains (and arguably any domain of knowledge or action). While important, educational deference is not my primary concern here.⁵⁰ My interest is in moral deference in military life, after someone has achieved some semblance of moral knowledge and should, by this time, be morally autonomous.

In the context of war, someone raised as a civilian with due regard for human life will not suddenly be able to kill another human being just because a commanding officer has given an order to do so. If the person has been raised to have a conscience, he or she will ask questions and deliberate on the reasons for killing, and, if virtuous, he or she will submit to the functional mantle. Although warfighters in combat are expected to morally defer in matters of mission accomplishment and general warfighting, I can say from experience that this is not so simple. Young warfighters are quick to ask why a particular mission or order has been issued. (Any moral claim or "testimony" that is answered by the question "why?" from the one being asked to morally defer is an example of a moral dialogue.) From this example it seems that in nearly all but a small number of deviant cases, when one is faced with a moral dilemma, one attempts to subject one's underlying moral belief to deliberation. However, the tendency for warfighters to question orders, and the moral authority of those giving the orders, can be "learned away" so that even senior NCOs and officers can end up blindly deferring. This tendency to follow orders is, I think, conditioned behaviour and will be addressed shortly.

Let us now consider the following thought experiment to help clarify the problem of moral deference in military life.⁵¹ We will put three different warfighters in exactly the same situation and see how each one responds. The three warfighters are:

⁴⁹ Such development is not necessarily dependent on a tutor and can come from the right kinds of texts or other sources, but to acquire a moral education without a tutor is extremely difficult and rare.

⁵⁰ I consider *educational deference* in some depth in the appendix, but it is not really the topic of interest here.

⁵¹ For the purposes of this thought experiment, assume that the considerations of this book have not yet been implemented into military training and work under the assumption that the military functions in the fairly traditional way often seen on television and in stories.

- Private (PVT) Green
- First Sergeant (1SG) Rock
- Captain (CPT) Strong.

The situation is this: the warfighter, while on patrol, has been separated from her unit. Good fortune has provided her with a radio, but the nearest extraction point is several miles away. Along the way the warfighter has come across a village where one of the farmers owns a jeep. The warfighter does not speak the language of the villagers, does not have any goods for trade, and is absolutely sure that if she does not find a way to get back to her unit quickly, she will be found by the enemy.

Just to further complicate matters, let us assume that the members of the village will react violently to someone stealing their jeep, their only means of transportation, meaning that it is reasonably foreseeable that trying to steal the jeep will result in someone getting hurt or dying.

The question for each of these soldiers then becomes: “Do I steal the jeep, or do I make my way on foot and take my chances?”

PVT Green is a recent graduate of basic training and has deployed to a forward operating base in Afghanistan. She is expected to be a fully trained, though inexperienced, soldier. Unfortunately, due to her inexperience, she does not consider the question of stealing the jeep and immediately calls for orders. She is ordered to take the jeep at all costs and move to the extraction point. Without further consideration, she executes her orders, with prejudice, killing several villagers in the process. PVT Green has no idea why she was ordered to conduct herself thus, and does so without question. She has not grasped the reasons for the commander’s belief and does not gain any understanding of the moral concerns inherent in the situation. Further, she has taken several steps toward the habituation of a behaviour that will be especially problematic outside of the theatre of war.⁵² This is moral deference in the strictest sense. The sole reason for acting is the moral belief of someone other than the agent. The agent neither considers the reasons for the order, nor deliberates on the advice given. I see this as morally vicious deference (even if the actions taken aren’t necessarily

⁵² This is not to say that the action isn’t problematic *within* the theatre of war, but therein lies the need for good ethical training.

vicious) because such deference lacks the necessary functional mantle and further habituates the agent towards a vicious disposition.

In the second case, 1SG Rock is a grizzled veteran with dozens of combat missions under his belt. He is well aware that if he is caught he will likely die or be tortured for information. He is also aware that there are consequences for stealing from non-combatants and has decided that he is unwilling to make the decision on how to act on his own. He radios for orders and is told to take the jeep at all costs and move to the extraction point. He executes the order, killing several villagers in the process. He is aware that the reason the commander has given him this order is because the commander agrees with his assessment that he will die if he doesn't get to the extraction point quickly. 1SG Rock has deliberated on the situation and the commander has provided moral testimony that his life is more important than that of the villagers. This is not moral deference, nor is it strictly vicious (even though the resultant act might be) because he has obtained personal confirmation of the course of action he had already reached by means of his own deliberation. The act itself might be vicious, perhaps because the deliberation was not good enough or the virtuous mean was not obtained, but the acceptance of the testimony was not problematic.

Finally we have CPT Strong, an established Army officer with a solid moral education. CPT Strong is well aware of the consequences of her actions. She is motivated to be rational and to live well. She realizes that her life is not worth more than the lives of the non-combatants, no matter how dire her circumstances. If this were the whole story, then she would simply not steal the jeep and start making her way to the extraction point, hoping for the best. But the CPT is part of the profession of arms and is expected to execute orders from higher command, so she radios in and requests orders. She is ordered to take the jeep at all costs and move to the extraction point. CPT Strong seeks clarification and learns that the commander considers her life to be more important than those of the villagers. The CPT now faces a new dilemma. She further deliberates on the problem and decides that the reasons given by the commander are not good enough to change her earlier decision. She disobeys the order and moves toward the extraction point on foot, prepared to accept the consequences of her actions. This is a denial of moral deference and is virtuous.

This thought experiment shows that there are three different ways in which

one seeking consultation can deal with moral testimony. One way is to grasp the reasons for the belief of the advisor, deliberate on them, agree and finally accept those beliefs as one's own (1SG Rock). Here there is no moral deference. What occurs is that the agent is convinced by the advisor's reasons and takes them as his or her own. This isn't based on authority, but is based on a combination of a regard for the advisor (which motivates the necessary charity to give the testimony due weight) and an acceptance of the advisor's reasons, which are seen as coherent and valid. This is moral advice, which is separate and distinct from simple testimony, since the agent is only guided by what the advisor advises (I will discuss moral advice in more depth later in this chapter). In short, the two agents have had a conversation about a moral concern and the agent who sought the advice now, due to the good advice and sound arguments of the advisor, has the necessary tools to deliberate, make a decision, and act.

The second way that one can deal with moral testimony is by grasping the reasons for the advisor's beliefs, but not agree or be convinced by them (CPT Strong). The disagreement could be the result of flawed or incomplete reasoning on the part of the advisor. Or the advisor's reasons might not be strong enough to address counter-arguments. The advisor might not be held in high enough regard to elicit the proper charity. It might also be that the agent accepts that the advisor believes something that the agent does not think is true. In that case, the testimony of the advisor is not enough to convince the agent to act on it. This is a denial of doxastic voluntarism, the view that one can choose what to believe. If, as I believe, the views of doxastic voluntarism are false, it is psychologically impossible for an agent to appropriate an advisor's beliefs.⁵³

There is a third way to deal with moral testimony. In this case the agent does not grasp the advisor's reasons but accepts the testimony as sufficient evidence to form a belief, or more specifically to adopt the belief of the advisor (PVT Green). Without a doubt, this is moral deference. I would take this a step further and claim that, with rare exception, this is wrongful moral deference and is vicious. Even in the case where an agent deeply desires to understand why the advisor recommends a moral belief, but is simply incapable of understanding those reasons, and then commits to an action based on that belief, the agent has

⁵³ A fully argued case against doxastic voluntarism is beyond the scope of this book. However, for those interested, I offer a brief defense of my position in the appendix.

done something vicious. This means that when one asks for moral advice one should want to see the connection between the reasons for the advice and the advisor's belief (Hills, 2009, 100). That is, one should engage in a moral dialogue:

A: "What should I do?"

B: "You should do x."

A: "Why should I do x?"

However, if one fails to look for the connection between the advice and the belief and simply adopts the advisor's belief as one's own, one is definitely deferring to the authority of the advisor.

I can imagine two possible reasons why someone might defer to an advisor in this way. In the first case, it is because the agent thinks the advisor is privy to an understanding that the agent lacks. This requires tremendous trust in the advisor, trust that the advisor is morally competent, a good person, and has the right intentions. The agent must believe the advisor is someone who wants to help and is someone who would not lie to the agent. Should the agent choose to perform the advised action, it would be based solely on the moral testimony of the advisor. The second and more cynical conclusion is that some agents are morally lazy and conduct actions based on another's testimony without accepting, considering, or caring about the beliefs behind the advice.⁵⁴ While the first case is an example of moral deference to one deemed to be an expert, the second is something more malign.

Although an agent may not understand the reasons for the moral advice given, there is nothing to say the reasons are wrong in and of themselves, or that the reasoning is invalid. The agent may have no good reason to doubt the advisor and simply feels less qualified to make a judgment. But what is important here is that, being incapable of understanding all the reasons for the advisor's judgment, the agent is left with a dangling remainder: the expertise (or perceived expertise) of the advisor. Since the agent has solicited the advice, it is fair to assume that there was an impasse in his or her own reasoning, so there is nothing that the advisor needs to defend or overcome. This isn't true in cases where the agent actually detects a flaw of some kind in the advisor's reasoning

⁵⁴ Modern military practice requires the agent to be morally lazy. The "good soldier" is required to hold the belief that they must or should accept the testimony of some authority. Questioning the actions to be taken based on another's testimony is actively discouraged.

(or maybe doesn't have full faith in the advisor's expertise). The agent here has full access to the reasons for the advice, but just doesn't have any good reason to believe those reasons.

It should very quickly be noted that morally deferring simply because one fears punishment is not adequate defence of moral laziness. It is likely one of the more common reasons early in one's development, but habituation soon renders the point moot.

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To summarize my argument so far: When an agent, through a moral dialogue based on reason and argument, takes on the belief of the advisor, it is not moral deference. And when it is impossible for an agent to take on the belief of a moral advisor, it also is not moral deference.

However, when the agent accepts testimony from a perceived expert for no other reason than the perceived expertise of the advisor (that is, the agent is not able to understand the rationale for the advice) it is plausibly moral deference.

There are two ways a deliberative warfighter might avoid viciousness while morally deferring in one of two ways. The first way assumes the agent tried to deliberate on the problem being addressed before soliciting advice. The agent therefore has his or her own reasons for-or-against taking on a belief, so the expert advice simply acts as a tie-breaker. Or, if the expertise was sought earlier in the process, it was one of the things the agent deliberates on. In this way, it is not strictly moral deference, and it isn't vicious since it includes the functional mantle. There is still a problem insofar as the agent is not able to understand the reasons the expert gave for the advice and can therefore not justify the resulting action in any way other than saying "the expert told me so".

The second way is when an agent does not deliberate at all but merely accepts expert advice or testimony. PVT Green is an example of this kind of moral deference, and it is vicious. There is, however, a caveat case, to be noted. That is when the agent forms no beliefs but simply does as he or she is told out of moral laziness rather than moral deference. Here the agent does not consider the moral stimuli of the environment, does not become habituated to virtue, and does not take into account reasons for the advice. Such moral laziness is vicious and dangerous and requires a certain disposition whereby one lacks moral sensitivity entirely.

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At this point it is important to introduce a distinction between what I call first person moral deference and third person moral deference. By first-person moral deference I mean the practice of deference from the first person perspective, i.e. I am deferring to (X) regarding what I should do. Third person moral deference refers to the practice of deference about another person, i.e. I am deferring to (X) about what (Y) should do⁵⁵.

At first it might seem peculiar to even consider third person moral deference since all the previous concerns about moral deference I have mentioned have been related to first person moral deference: autonomy, justification, and acting out of moral understanding. While these aspects may seem to have no application when it comes to beliefs about someone else's moral life, rather than one's own, I believe that the moral beliefs one holds about a third person *do* have relevance to one's own moral paths and therefore have to be given the same importance that one gives to the moral beliefs that concern oneself.

I have argued that first person moral deference is vicious, by claiming that it violates the obligation to take moral responsibility via understanding one's beliefs. Even if one agrees that first person moral deference is vicious, one might still wonder if moral deference is vicious when it comes to other people. For example, I want to know if Y is doing the right thing by attacking a village full of non-combatants to find a lone sniper. If X tells me that it is right, can I defer to X's testimony and believe that what Y does is right, or is it just as problematic as if I believe that I ought to have attacked the village just because X told me so? Do I still have a duty toward moral responsibility even if the moral dilemma is not one that I, personally, have, and the dilemma does not affect my own life, strictly speaking?

I think the arguments I've made about first person moral deference, as well as the intuitions I've noted, are applicable to third person moral deference. Claiming that I think that Y ought to have attacked the village because X told me so is just as morally dubious as saying that I ought to have attacked the village

⁵⁵ First and third person moral deference concepts were heavily influenced through dialectic with Adina Covaci who was my interlocutor throughout my study of moral deference. Many thanks to her for her interest in my efforts and the many helpful comments.

because X told me so (this doesn't necessarily imply I have not reflected on the matter, only that in the case of questions about moral deference, either deliberations were not enough or I simply did not grasp the reasons for the belief). From my perspective it is as vicious to form moral beliefs about what other people should do based on deference, as it is vicious to accept another's unquestioned moral beliefs when it comes to one's own moral dilemmas. The duty to take moral responsibility does not disappear simply because one is talking about third person moral deference.

In a way, this may seem strange because it is not the agent's moral performances that are the focus of attention, but those of someone else. This points to an important *prima facie* distinction between first and third person deference, namely that the stakes for one, as a moral agent, are less high when it comes to deferring about other people's moral lives. I am not the one to bear the consequences of a possible wrong action, and it will not cause any major changes in my life. The moral belief about another person may remain only that: a belief that will never affect my course of action. However, I believe it is philosophically sound to argue that if I form a moral belief about others, on the basis of testimony, it is possible that I could embrace and include that belief in my system of moral beliefs, and that will have a concrete effect on my life because I might employ it in my own decisions in the future. It would be as if I have deferred to X's testimony about my own decisions, but indirectly. So, if the arguments against first person deference hold, then they should also apply to third person deference.

One might object by saying that this reasoning conflates two different questions: "What should (Y) do?" and "What is the right thing to do?" The first seems to ask for a specific answer, shaped by the character of the person and their specific circumstances, while the second requires a more general response. It isn't uncommon for interlocutors to be more interested in a more general answer. Therefore, it would be implausible to say that I could use the specific answer to satisfy them. Although I believe that the distinction between the specific and general answer is incorrect (since the only answer is the right-action based on the particularity-of-circumstance), it does not cancel the relevance of the specific answer to my own moral life. What I learn about other people's moral lives does have an impact on my moral system. Even if I ask X about Y's attack,

X's response implies some further claims that penetrate my thinking and connect themselves to my web of moral beliefs. Attacking non-combatants entails discussions about personhood and rights. Whichever judgment X forms, if I defer to her, those adjacent views will get attached to my other convictions and will manifest themselves in other situations even if I will never have to handle a decision about such an action myself. As Philip Nickel points out, even if certain moral beliefs do not become actions themselves, they are closely related to other beliefs that will be translated into actions. One only rarely (if ever) holds abstract moral claims that will never be connected to other moral claims that will be relevant to action in one way or another (Nickel, 1979, 260-261). Even particular moral beliefs usually involve taking a stand on general issues that can and will be applied to other judgments that will have practical relevance and will be transformed into actions: as mentioned, attacking non-combatants brings forward the issue of personhood etc., capital punishment emphasizes issues regarding the importance of human life, desert and retribution etc. Given the many connections that hold between one's moral beliefs, it is plausible to say that judgments about other people's moral lives do affect our own moral lives. Because of that, it seems that there is no reason to think of third person moral deference as less harmful than first person moral deference. Moreover, I think it can be harmful in two ways: firstly, it can have terrible consequences; secondly, it can lead to not being virtuous.

Consider Y's case again. I ask X about Y's decision to attack the village and X tells me it is right. Later in life, I find myself in the same situation and I remember X's testimony about how Y's attack was the right thing to do. Can I make use of the result of my moral deference now? Should I believe I ought to attack because Y's attack was the right action? I think I should not apply X's judgment about Y to my situation because I lack moral understanding⁵⁶ and that could have some disastrous consequences.

Hills emphasizes that moral understanding of a moral claim gives me a set of abilities among which is the capability to draw moral conclusions in similar

⁵⁶ As I have argued in the first chapter, I believe that only deference with the failed attempt to grasp the reasons for the claim being appropriated is plausible. This holds for third person deference as well, so I would not gain moral understanding if I were to defer to Y. However, regarding third person moral deference, one might wonder if I would truly want to know Y's justification for his claim about X as it is not as pressing, important, or relevant to me and my current state. I believe that, usually, one would question Y about his reasons for his beliefs.

circumstances (Hills, 2009, 102). Due to that comprehension, I would be able to pick out and focus on the morally salient features which would lead me to making the right decision for the right reasons. Without moral understanding, I would not be able to judge similar cases and I would not be able to see if the same reasons apply. And if I would just blindly transfer the moral judgment about Y to my case, I could make the wrong choice because of the wrong reasons. I could end up attacking the village even though the non-combatant's lives were worth more than killing the sniper, but I was scared, insecure, and unwilling to find an alternative solution. This is one reason moral understanding appears to be equally important even when one is considering moral judgments about a third person: because of the effect it can have on one's own moral life; and, for the same reason, third person moral deference is vicious.

The second reason for rejecting third person moral deference is that, just as with first person moral deference, it prevents the agent from being virtuous. The web of moral beliefs is part of what is being evaluated when one is trying to determine whether someone is a good person or not. Not fulfilling the duty to take moral responsibility, thus forming moral beliefs without full knowledge shows the agent is ethically deficient. It is irrelevant who the subject of these moral beliefs is: it may be me (e.g. I believe I ought not to lie), a third person (e.g. I believe Bob ought not to lie) or it may express a more general claim (e.g. lying is wrong). All these beliefs have to be formed and guided by moral understanding because they count towards the ascription of virtue. Moreover, the fact that one has stopped to reflect on another person's situation, and has also asked a third person about it, shows some personal concern; asking for reasons for the moral belief of the third person might then be a natural reaction. Still, I am less certain about third person moral deference than I am about first person moral deference which is why I have to admit that strict moral deference might occur when it comes to third person moral deference (although I still find it improbable). But, related to the point I want to make above, strict moral deference would also preclude the possibility of my gaining moral understanding. Thus, either way, third person moral deference entails a lack of moral understanding.

In order to be called good one has to not only acquire a correct belief or act rightly, but grasp the morally relevant reasons, in this case, virtue. Taking moral responsibility, morally reasoning and choosing on one's own, gives one the

opportunity to gain moral understanding which, in turn, creates the occasion to form the right intentions, emotions and motivation, thus ensuring that one acts in a virtuous manner on purpose, not accidentally. Even if some moral beliefs are about others, they still have to be guided by an understanding of the right-making reasons, which one doesn't have if one defers. The agent is aiming for the equivalent of knowing, in the most robust sense, morality, namely to have all the features that are necessary in order to be called virtuous: moral understanding of the right-making features, appropriate moral emotions, good motivation, and good intention, and, of course accurate virtue habituation. An agent's moral performance still has to be adroit, namely to manifest their moral virtue and competence. In addition, that performance has to be apt, meaning that he or she reaches the right outcome because of their moral competence. The agent has to form a moral belief out of moral understanding and has to be guided by it, which can happen only if the agent fulfils the duty to take moral responsibility. Third person moral deference fails at all of these and thus is just as vicious as first person moral deference.

In the following pages I will offer more descriptive and prescriptive evidence for my argument that moral deference is vicious, except in instances of what I have called educational deference. From this it follows that warfighters should be trained as effective morally-responsible agents, making military moral deference unnecessary.

Section III. The Nature of the Content of Moral Deference

Understanding the nature of the content of moral testimony appropriated by an agent, following consultation with an advisor, can elucidate the nature of moral deference. McGrath differentiates between pure moral deference and impure moral deference. Here, pure moral deference refers to cases where one defers to someone who has purely moral information that the agent lacks, while impure moral deference refers to cases where one defers to someone who the agent knows has additional non-moral information (McGrath, 2009, 321). This is an important distinction because it indicates that there is something suspicious about giving up one's personal moral responsibility by appropriating, or deferring to, the testimony of another, while deferring to an expert on the grounds of the factual information underpinning a moral perspective may seem less problematic.

However, I am not convinced that what McGrath calls impure moral deference is, strictly speaking, really a form of moral deference. In impure moral deference the content or information one receives concerns very real facts about the world which, in and of themselves, have no normative component.⁵⁷ These are facts about the descriptive reality of things that are non-moral by definition. So why call it moral deference and not just deference?

The question then becomes: Are all instances of moral deference pure moral deference? Can facts and values, moral and non-moral aspects of the world, really be so clearly separated? I do not believe that it is always possible to know which feature of a problem is moral and which is non-moral until a sufficient degree of *phronesis* had been developed. This becomes most evident when one considers all the factors that come into play when dealing with a moral dilemma. Besides the immediate moral aspect of a given dilemma, one must consider the circumstances of the situation as well as the personal characteristics of the agents involved in order to anticipate the possible effects and subsequent issues of any given course of action affecting the final outcome.

Take for example the case of a warfighter who is deliberating about whether or not to accept a promotion that would require her to leave the relative safety of a military base to spend six months in a war-torn region as an active warfighter. Her decision will have to take into account both moral and non-moral aspects that are very difficult to separate. She needs to consider the rights and interests of her family, and her duties to them, which are not just abstract moral concepts, but relate to empirical matters. For example, what will it mean for her children to be separated from their mother for six months, all the while living with the risk of losing her as a casualty of war? She must consider that if she accepts the promotion her partner will become the sole and primary care-giver of the children, while at the same time that partner has to work at a job. Her deliberations must also include a concern for how her entire family will have to adapt to living with the constant threat of her dying in battle. It would be very difficult to separate the moral aspects from the non-moral aspects of such a decision in determining right-action.

Moving beyond McGrath's distinction what one finds is that cases of pure

⁵⁷ It is true that non-normative facts can be reason-giving and on a virtue account, that can be enough to make for right-making features. However, that is not McGrath's view.

moral deference are less frequently encountered than cases of what I call mixed moral deference, where factual and moral information are impossible to separate, as in the example above.⁵⁸ Given that mixed moral deference is partly about facts (where it is valid to defer to experts) and partly about moral aspects (where it becomes suspicious to defer without deliberation), is such deference vicious? I think it is vicious because as long as one cannot separate facts from the moral aspects of a dilemma, mixed moral deference does not allow the person who defers to be moral or virtuous due to the failure to fulfil the duty to take moral responsibility. I will clarify what I see as the duty to take moral responsibility later on.

Section IV. The Viciousness of Moral Deference

Why do I put such emphasis on the viciousness of moral deference? Because moral deference violates one's fundamental moral duty to conduct one's own moral reasoning and deliberation. As Anscombe puts it, it violates one's duty to be one's own pilot (Anscombe, 1981, 48). This duty to ourselves, which I call the duty to take moral responsibility, is the prerequisite for morality.

Subsection 1. Virtue First

The duty to take moral responsibility is an essential factor in displaying the definitive qualities of one who seeks the Good and is virtuous. Virtue ethics, in general, captures all aspects of morality which are strikingly plausible and which explain many of my intuitions better than other ethical theories. I am, however, not committed to any particular version of virtue ethics here but am discussing its general form, following in the wake of Hursthouse's defence (Hursthouse, 1999). Obviously I tend toward the Aristotelian, but the fundamental argument does not rely on that as such.

Virtue ethics attributes the success of one's moral life to the achievement of *eudaimonia*. The value of being a good person who takes personal responsibility for her or his own morality is explained in virtue ethics this way: being virtuous is part of what makes one thrive and one's well-being suffers if one lacks virtue. Intuitively, I don't think I am alone when I say recognise that morality

⁵⁸ This is different than McGrath's *impure moral deference* because in that case one is able to distinguish which aspects are moral and which are not: the person in her example is ready to defer because the expert has relevant non-moral information.

is an important factor in human life, a factor that contributes to one being fulfilled. When one is faced with a moral decision they are guided by the thought of their well-being and the well-being of others (which contributes to one's own well-being). Sometimes well-being is in conflict with what one thinks of as happiness (in a subjective and hedonistic sense). This is why some moral decisions are difficult, and doing the right thing may demand sacrifices or require one to go against one's immediate undeveloped desires. For example, even if one does not generally want to kill another human being (maybe because it makes them feel bad or dirty), as a warfighter (perhaps while under attack), if virtue requires killing a human being, it is the right thing to do (i.e. to protect one's mission or unit). If undeveloped, the warfighter is causing themselves temporary discontent or unhappiness, but the decision has to be made such that killing is the action taken. This example reveals that morality by means of virtue often requires one to make difficult decisions contrary to immediate self-interest in favour of the Good.

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The moral evaluation of a person according to intention, motivation, concern, and character is difficult and is explained by virtue ethics only by comparing the person to the virtuous exemplar. That is, morality is not only about doing the right thing. When one evaluates someone morally, one does not look only at his actions, but considers his reasons, intentions, moral concern, motivation, character, and particularity-of-circumstances. A suicide bomber who helps a weak, elderly woman by carrying her luggage cannot be called a good person based on this one act. His action in this instance is obviously right, even his intention and motivation regarding this particular situation may be good, but his character is not because he is a suicide bomber who will ultimately kill hundreds of people, perhaps even the elderly woman he helped board the plane. A person who does one good deed by accident (or even by design) cannot be called a virtuous person or praiseworthy based on that one action. Even in the case where someone is accidentally good his or her entire life, he or she cannot be called virtuous or praiseworthy. The action, in itself, is praiseworthy but he or she is not, since he or she did not want, or intend, to be or do good (Nagel, 1979,

25).⁵⁹

Here's another example. A warfighter, armed with his service rifle, has been defending his base from an extended enemy assault. There have been no obvious enemy combatants in the area for about five minutes when the warfighter is suddenly surprised by a young boy holding a toy rifle jumping in front of him. Instinctively, the warfighter pulls the trigger and shoots at the boy, but there are no bullets in the chamber. The warfighter has inadvertently spared the child's life. The frightened boy, relieved to be alive, drops his toy rifle and runs away. The warfighter certainly has not killed the child, but is he praiseworthy for not killing him? No, because his instinct and immediate action was to kill the boy, which he would have done had there been a bullet in the chamber. Because of his intention, the warfighter's action cannot be considered virtuous.

In this example, the warfighter cannot be considered good or moral and does not deserve praise even though his action did not cause harm. He was simply lucky -- the beneficiary of resultant luck (Nagel, 1979, 28; Zimmerman, 1987, 376). But the virtuous person's right-action is never the result of luck. Rather, he or she deliberately acts rightly as a result of his or her character which is comprised of deeply entrenched dispositions and a strong phronetic virtue that gives him or her a reliable, self-conscious way of conducting oneself. An accurate moral evaluation of a person requires that one look at the connection between a good action and the internal motivation for the action. Morality is an intersection of exterior and interior aspects, where good actions are based on the right motivational constellation. There is no wisdom in praising people for virtuous actions unless one is fully aware of all the particularities-of-circumstance.

Virtue ethics also highlights the importance of emotions in moral choices (Hursthouse, 1999, 108). Other moral theories, such as Stoicism (a virtue ethic) and Kantianism (a duty-based ethic), have difficulty considering emotions while making moral choices, seeing emotions as too irrational (Hursthouse, 1999, 109-110).⁶⁰ Given Aristotle's view of the *psyche*, virtue is able to account for emotions

⁵⁹ Nagel illustrates this point in his discussion of moral luck: Without being able to explain exactly why, we feel that the appropriateness of moral assessment is easily undermined by the discovery that the act or attribute, no matter how good or bad, is not under the person's control. While other evaluations remain, this one seems to lose its footing. So a clear absence of control, produced by involuntary movement, physical force or ignorance of the circumstances, excuses what is done from moral judgment. However, I think we are able to explain why we feel this way: it is because we also value intentions, motivations, character, and not only consequences.

⁶⁰ As Hursthouse points out, the stoics support the former, while Hume and Kant the latter.

in a way that avoids extremes. Emotions have both rational and non-rational characteristics because they dwell in the desiderative part of the *psyche*; this helps explain why humans share certain emotions with non-rational animals as well as displaying some emotions that non-rational animals lack. More significantly, it elucidates how “reason can radically transform an emotion that human beings certainly share with animals, such as fear” (Hursthouse, 1999, 111). The Aristotelian account of emotions imbues them with moral significance and allows them to play a role in determining virtue, thereby arguing that adequate emotions are a requirement of virtue.⁶¹ This is in agreement with both common intuitions and common practices.

I will spend much more time with virtue ethics in the next chapter. What I have included here is strictly Hursthouse’s view for the most part and included for the purposes of moving the conversation herein forward.

Subsection 2. Deference, Advice, and Dialogue

Although I intuitively feel that there is something suspicious about moral deference, in that it implies a level of moral bankruptcy, my intuitions about moral advice and moral dialogue are far more positive.⁶² One is inclined to see moral advice and moral dialogue as important and helpful resources when one is engaged in moral reasoning, and as such, one does not regard them as problematic. For example, advice and dialogue can assist those who have less experience with moral dilemmas by offering a different perspective. The same goes for those who find themselves uncertain or entrapped in their own subjective viewpoint. The dialectical method strongly encourages one to seek moral advice, and, in certain circumstances, moral advice might even be required. This highlights a significant difference between moral advice and moral deference which I will explore in order to illustrate that the duty to take moral responsibility does not preclude the possibility of moral advice and is not absurdly

⁶¹ Hursthouse argues that: 1) both vice and virtue are morally significant; 2) the virtues (and vices) are all dispositions to feel emotions as reactions as well as impulses to action and to act accordingly; 3) The virtuous person will feel these emotions on the right occasions, towards the right people or objects, for the right reasons, where “right” means “correct”⁶¹. Although Kant’s claim that the moral action made out of inclination does not have the same moral worth as the one made out of duty has served to deter many who may otherwise have aspired to virtue; emotions and inclinations as contemplated by virtue ethics negates this problem as these are considered part of virtue.

⁶² By moral dialogue I mean an exchange of views and perspectives on a certain moral issue between two or more people, which amounts to an exploration of arguments and counter-arguments, with the purpose of finding the best answer to the problem discussed. Moral advice can be part of a moral dialogue.

demanding.

To begin, it is important to note a primary distinction between moral advice and moral testimony which is usually evident in their linguistic form.⁶³ Moral advice is most-often presented as follows: “I think you should...”, “If I were you, I would...” or “In my opinion, you could...” The advisor here recognises himself as just that, an advisor, and does not present his judgment as the correct perspective, nor does he indicate that the advisee should adopt his opinion. He simply presents his own perspective on the matter; he does not assume he is an expert or a moral superior. His statements only apply to the case in point and do not purport to be anything more than considered opinion. In contrast, moral testimony makes more general claims, usually delivered in an imposing and imperative tone. For example: “All is fair in love and war” or “You have to fight fire with fire”. While it is obvious that moral advice applies to a specific situation, moral testimony may appear more like a general normative which is more extensive in its application.

In the context of moral deference, the perspective of the agent who defers, rather than that of the one who offers the testimony or the advice, is of greater interest to me. The attitude of the agent towards the moral judgments the agent is being given is essential in determining whether it is a case of moral deference or moral advice. From my perspective, the crucial difference between moral advice and moral deference lies in the way in which the moral judgments are received and used rather than the manner in which they are offered. Moral deference occurs when one appropriates a judgment but fails to understand the right-making reasons for the judgment being appropriated. When one assumes claims made by another as one’s own, despite the failure of comprehension, it becomes deference. Whereas moral advice is reflected upon, critically evaluated, and used to guide oneself in the process of moral reasoning, rather than being unconditionally accepted. Deference ends moral deliberation, whereas advice may instead enhance or improve that deliberation, and change its direction.

The most significant difference between advice and testimony is that even if the new considerations brought about by advice influence the agent’s process

⁶³ The examples I provide are, of course, not exhaustive and I do not want to say that neither moral advice nor moral testimony can only come in these forms (they can also come in identical linguistic expressions). My point is that usually the choice of the linguistic expression does represent an indication of what one is trying to offer and how conclusive one thinks one’s judgment is.

of moral reflection, one weighs the reasons, reflects on them, understands the connection between the right action and its right-making features, and makes the final decision for them self in light of all that.

Deference forces one to accept an expert's testimony as the correct perspective, whereas advice offers one a different viewpoint, without the authoritative aspect. Advice is not intended to be taken at face value, but to be scrutinised, so as to gain a fresh outlook, and assists in the identification of the right-making features. As Benjamin de Mesel puts it, moral advice helps by "clarifying a moral perspective" or "showing a moral world" and the advisor "puts the advisee's moral world, his moral self-image, into another perspective" (de Mesel, 2014, 29-30). Moral advice plays an important role in the stimulation of moral creativity and in the animation of new ideas that are essential when one is in a state of normative uncertainty.

Alison Hills appears to regard moral advice similarly when she writes:

You may treat the testimony as moral advice, which you subject to critical scrutiny, and you decide whether or not to accept, on its own merits. You take into account what others have said to you as a guide to your own reflections. (...) Advice from others, who can put forward another point of view, make salient the interests of others, and try to help you to see more clearly, is often essential to your gaining genuine moral understanding (Hills, 2009, 123).

Hills distinguishes moral advice from moral testimony (Hills, 2009, 122).⁶⁴ For this reason, I do not think that her distinction truly addresses the question that needs to be addressed. Nonetheless, her description of moral advice captures what I take to be its fundamental nature.

The difference in the linguistic form of moral advice and moral testimony only provides information as to the attitude of the person who offers moral judgments, but does not indicate whether it is a case of advice or deference. It is only by examining what the agent does with the judgments the agent is presented with that the agent can determine if it is a case of the former or the latter.

As I've tried to make clear, moral advice and moral dialogue do not violate

⁶⁴ "You may trust or defer to moral testimony, where you simply believe what is said to you. You make no attempt to gather the reasons why p and draw conclusions yourself or to devise explanations for moral propositions that you have accepted. You simply believe what you are told" (Hills, 2009, 122)

the duty to take moral responsibility. The advisee, the one who is offered moral advice, is able to fulfil their moral duty of deliberating and figuring out the moral answer on their own. The advisee uses the advice only as a guide for their moral reasoning. Thus the agent is able to form beliefs or take action out of an understanding of their right-making features. Moral deference precludes the possibility of moral understanding, whereas moral advice can actually contribute to its enhancement. Taking moral advice is virtuous in that it does not violate, but rather is compatible with, the duty to take moral responsibility.

Section V. The Duty to Take Moral Responsibility

Various philosophers have argued against the permissibility of moral deference for a wide-range of reasons. Some focus on practical matters, such as the difficulty of identifying moral experts (Driver, 2006; McGrath, 2009; Jones and Schroeter, 2012); others are concerned with conceptual matters, such as how there can be goodness of moral understanding without there being a necessity to reason for ourselves (Hills, 2009); and still others focus on the requirement to avoid deference, but without any elucidation as to the nature and origin of deference (Hopkins, 2007; Nickel, 2001). Although these views are of interest, none of them satisfactorily explains why one ought not to defer.

My argument against moral deference claims that it is morally vicious for a moral agent to defer to another person regarding moral matters because one has a duty to take moral responsibility.⁶⁵ It is the duty of each and every moral agent to solve one's own moral dilemmas and reach one's own moral conclusions. If one wants to be virtuous then one must do one's own moral reasoning and reach the end of moral deliberation by oneself, although, as I've shown, this does not preclude asking for and listening to moral advice. Most importantly, I believe that what I call the "duty-to-take-moral-responsibility" attitude is an essential element of morality, of what it takes to be virtuous, because it helps to acquire moral beliefs and take right-action for the right reasons.

I want to emphasize this point. Virtue entails more than having correct

⁶⁵ Robert Hopkins and Philip Nickel discuss something similar: Hopkins thinks that morality has The Requirement for one to grasp the moral reasons for a moral belief (Hopkins, 2007, 630), while Nickels argues for the Recognition Requirement, which states that one has to act from a recognition of the morally salient features of a situation, to understand them as relevant to action and to be motivated by them (Nickel, 2001, 256-257). However, neither of them explains why they think we have this requirement and what grounds it. My account, however, aims exactly at that.

moral knowledge or doing the right thing: it is the correct establishment of moral character guided by *phronesis*, the deliberative process that leads to decision-making, and the pursuit of virtue for its own sake. Moral deference, then, is evidence that one lacks understanding about moral belief and its role in guiding the agent. This does not necessarily mean that one should not have performed a certain action. Rather, it means that without the right moral beliefs one cannot be said to be virtuous because they lack the deliberative step (at least). One might be able to call a given action of theirs correct, but that alone does not make them a good person.

Thus, within a virtue ethics framework, being moral entails more than simply doing what is right, it requires one to have the right intentions, the right concern, right emotions, and right motivation. In other words, one has to believe or act because of an understanding of the right-making features. This gives rise to a further question: “Why should one think that morality requires one to act from an understanding and recognition of the right-making reasons?”

Virtue epistemology explains the value of reflective knowledge (or knowing full-well) with an argument that I believe should be transferred to morality. In his version of virtue epistemology, Ernest Sosa claims that there are two types of knowledge: animal and reflective. Animal knowledge “does not require that the knower have an epistemic perspective on his belief, from which he endorses the source of belief as reliably truth conducive” (Sosa, 2009, 135), whereas reflective knowledge entails such a perspective. For Sosa, reflective knowledge is of a higher level and more valuable. This is because it renders understanding (which is an epistemic value) of how one knows: “a belief constitutive of reflective knowledge is a higher epistemic accomplishment if it coheres properly with the believer’s understanding of why it is true (and, for that matter, apt, or true because competent) and of how the way in which it is sustained is reliably truth-conducive” (Sosa, 2009, 138). This does not negate the value of animal knowledge; quite the contrary, this is “how we know some of the things we know best” (Sosa, 2009, 138). But reflective knowledge is superior to animal knowledge because “reflective acquisition of knowledge is, again, like attaining a prized objective guided by one’s own intelligence, information and deliberation; unreflective knowledge is like lucking into some benefit in the dark” (Sosa, 2009, 142). Reflective knowledge is more admirable because it enhances one’s

epistemic virtues; it also contributes to the attainment of a comprehensive coherence which, via Descartes, is considered to be of high epistemic worth, according to Sosa.

Yet the more interesting and (for my purposes) more relevant part of Sosa's theory is his idea of the AAA structure of performances.⁶⁶ He argues that any performance with an aim can be assessed in terms of Accuracy (reaching the aim), Adroitness (manifesting skill or competence), and Aptness (reaching the aim through the adroitness manifest). For example, the performance of an infantry soldier who aims to shoot the enemy can be evaluated in these terms: it is accurate if he makes the shot; it is adroit if he makes it and manifests shooting skills; it is apt if he has made the shot because she is a competent soldier.

Beliefs can also be considered performances (Sosa, 2015, 84) and as such fall under the AAA structure: Accurate as in true, Adroit as in manifesting epistemic virtue or competence, and Apt as in being true.

Sosa claims that "animal knowledge is essentially apt belief" (Sosa, 2009, 24), while reflective knowledge is "animal belief aptly endorsed by the subject" (Sosa, 2010, 11). In his later works, he says that the deeper distinction is between animal knowledge and knowing full well. Knowing full well entails that the agent has an ability to competently assess the risks related to a performance before performing (Sosa, 2010, 8). In other words, being virtuous requires "meta-knowledge that his first-order performance is likely enough to succeed and be apt" (Sosa, 2010, 9). Thus,

We can now see that knowing something full well requires that one have animal and reflective knowledge of it, but also that one know it with full aptness. (...) One's first order belief falls short if it is not appropriately guided by one's relevant meta-competence. This meta-competence governs whether or not one should form a belief at all on the question at issue, or should rather withhold belief altogether. It is only if this meta-competence is operative in one's forming a belief at all on that subject matter that one's belief can reach the epistemic heights (Sosa, 2009, 11).

Here, knowing full well, the highest epistemic achievement, is to know why (or how) you know what you know you know. In other words: you know X (animal knowledge) and you know that you know X (reflective knowledge: having a

⁶⁶ Performances are "doings, aimed at certain objectives", *Judgment and Agency* (Sosa, 2015, 84)

stance on the reliability of the source), but you also have to know why (or how) you know X (full aptness: you have assessed the risks, you know that the belief will be apt exactly because this second-order knowledge is what leads it and secures its aptness).⁶⁷ Knowing full well thus becomes the most important guide to knowledge in Sosa's version of virtue epistemology. I believe Sosa's arguments are applicable to morality. Although the analogy is not perfect, his approach illuminates how and why the duty to take moral responsibility is plausible.

Section VI. The Requirement to Form One's Own Beliefs

When one looks at morality through the lens of Sosa's virtue epistemology one sees that forming a moral belief or doing a moral action are both performances and can, as such, be assessed in terms of the AAA structure, namely according to their Accuracy, Adroitness and Aptness. A moral performance⁶⁸ that meets all three conditions is a high moral achievement and has more moral worth. Furthermore, the agent here is on the path⁶⁹ to being considered a virtuous agent, manifesting virtue because his performances are marked by adroitness and aptness. Not only has he achieved an accurate moral performance, but his performance has other important right-making features such as right motivation and right belief. Besides the arguments from virtue ethics, and common sense intuition about common practices, virtue epistemology supports this thought: adroitness and aptness matter because they say something important about the agent that contributes to their own worth and the value of their performance.

In using concepts from virtue epistemology to examine morality one must recognise that for an epistemic agent to be adroit means to manifest epistemic virtue and competence, while for the moral agent, adroitness represents something slightly different. It is not controversial to say that the moral agent is, simultaneously, an epistemic agent. But adroitness in morality offers an illuminating insight into how a moral agent should be *qua* moral. That is, a moral

⁶⁷ "A performance is fully apt only if its first-order aptness derives sufficiently from the agent's assessment, albeit implicit, of his chances of success (and, correlatively, of the risk of failure)" (Sosa, 2010, 11)

⁶⁸ By "moral performance" I mean acquiring a moral belief or doing a moral action.

⁶⁹ I say "on the path to being considered good" because I will argue that adroitness and aptness are not enough, and that "knowing full well" is also necessary in order to call someone virtuous.

agent is considered to be adroit if he manifests moral virtue and competence. Moral competence then is having the right kind of disposition.⁷⁰

An adroit agent is inclined to do what is right through desires and habituation. This is someone who has the ability to respond appropriately in any kind of ethical situation. Sosa claims that the disposition of such an agent would ensure that he reacts in a morally adequate manner. However, their adroitness is not the result of choice necessarily, but of constitutive moral luck, the kind of luck that has to do with the sort of person he is, their temperament and inclinations, which may or may not be under their control.⁷¹ Given this, adroitness is not enough to make someone a moral agent.

In a moral context aptness indicates a connection between moral competence and the result of a moral performance. I think that adroitness refers to a conjunction between skill and outcome (reaching the aim), whereas aptness, involves a causal relationship between outcome and skill (the outcome is determined by the skill). Aptness, then, seems to eliminate any resultant moral luck by creating a connection between the skill and the result, thus generating greater reliability.

But it is the concept of knowing full well that clearly elucidates why moral deference is vicious. As explained, knowing full well means one has second-order knowledge about one's first-order knowledge, which allows for more epistemic certainty. Not only does knowing full well evaluate the accuracy of first-order knowledge, it also reveals how one came to have it, that is, through one's competence, skill, and virtue. This indicates that someone possessing this fullness of knowledge knows whether or not he will succeed at the task at hand. If he underestimates his competence or overestimates it, he obviously does not have full knowledge.

Two elements are necessary for an agent to be morally knowledgeable: moral understanding and a conscious awareness of that understanding. Moral understanding ensures that one's moral performance is deliberately right and that one's character traits and dispositions are not the result of some mechanical learning. To understand why a claim or action is right means to grasp the relation

⁷⁰ Sosa defines competence as a disposition "with a basis resident in the competent agent, one that would in appropriately normal conditions ensure (or make highly likely) the success of any relevant performance issued by it" (Sosa, 2009, 29)

⁷¹ Bernard Williams & Thomas Nagel have much to say about moral luck, Williams in *Moral Luck* (Williams, 1981) and Nagel in *Mortal Questions* (Nagel, 1979)

between the claim and the reasons that make it right (Hills, 2009, 101).

Thus, a morally knowledgeable agent is one who is guided by their understanding of why their moral performance is right. Such an agent cannot perform moral deference because moral deference precludes moral understanding and its guidance. The moral agent has to fulfil the duty to take moral responsibility: that is the only way he can gain and be directed by moral understanding and achieve full moral knowledge.

Moral deference hinders knowing full well in regard to morality, which is why it is vicious. Only when one figures out on one's own what the right moral performance is does one acquire the necessary knowledge: "This meta-competence governs whether or not one should form a belief at all on the question at issue, or should rather withhold belief altogether" (Sosa, 2010, 12). While I am arguing that moral knowledge is part of what makes one a moral person, Sosa is not so radical. He allows for animal knowledge without knowing full well, and is content with aptness such that it does not require full knowledge, although the latter of each pair is, for him, more desirable, epistemically praiseworthy, and what makes for a more virtuous agent who has gained higher epistemic achievements. Sosa claims that although performances suffer if they fall short of full aptness, and the epistemic agents are not as good as they could be, no duty is violated and there is nothing wrong with settling for second best. To the contrary, I firmly believe there is something wrong with Sosa's conclusions.

In Sosa's account, knowledge obtained through testimony and deference is animal knowledge, for which the agent, as believer, gets only partial credit. The aptness and the correctness of the belief is not attributable solely to the agent because it involves others (Sosa, 2009, 97), so the believer is not as virtuous, epistemically speaking, as the agent could be, and therefore deserves less credit. But Sosa does not view that as something bad. It is simply second best, which, he argues, is sometimes the best one can do.

Contra Sosa, I believe that in morality, second best is not good enough for two reasons. First, as I have argued, morality is not only about doing the right thing. Consequences are less important than right motivation and right intentions; moral concern and understanding count as well. However contentious it may be to say that one needs moral awareness of one's intentions and concerns in order

to be virtuous,⁷² I maintain that moral knowledge is necessary (let me emphasise: not optional) for virtue. It is important to reflectively have this moral understanding because it is the only way one can know that one is responsive and motivated by the right reasons.

If an agent is not conscious of his or her moral understanding, his or her moral performances may be inconsistent. If he or she acts rightly in a certain situation by accident, one may call his or her action correct, but one cannot call the agent virtuous. The agent is not a virtuous person if he or she does not intend to be moral, if he or she does not care about the action, if he or she does not understand the reasons for the action, and if the right-making features of the action do not motivate and direct him or her. Virtue requires that one acts out of an understanding of the right-making features, which means having the right emotions, the right intentions, and the right motivation as displayed by a morally knowledgeable agent. One can be a morally knowledgeable agent only if one fulfils the duty to take moral responsibility. Moral deference makes such fulfilment impossible.

The second reason for my argument with Sosa's acceptance of "second best" morality is based on intuition: the intuitions one holds about what people are, what people want to be, and what people call themselves. Most agents want to be seen as good, as virtuous, but moral evaluation does not depend simply on what people want to be. One does not deserve, and cannot be given, a status that one wants if one does not fulfil all the necessary criteria for its possession. And from my perspective to be good, to be virtuous, means to be the best one can be, not merely the second best one can be.

The difference between the moral realm and other domains is that one may choose which of the ordinary domains one wishes to participate in, but as long as one lives in society, then one is a moral agent. Not having full moral knowledge with respect to military knowledge is not something bad for most people (those who do not want to be warfighters), but not having moral knowledge is bad for everyone, because everyone is a moral agent. In order to be a warfighter, I have to know what makes my military knowledge right, and in

⁷² This is where I separate myself from Alison Hills as well: while she takes moral understanding to be part of what makes someone virtuous (Hills, 2009, 90), she does not think that one has to be aware of it, as one can have more or less moral understanding than one thinks.

order to be a virtuous person I have to know what makes my belief or action right. This is why warfighters have a duty to take moral responsibility and to reach moral decisions on one's own. If one defers to others in moral matters then they cannot gain the necessary understanding so cannot be guided by it in their moral performances. If one's moral performances do not have all the features of full moral knowledge, then the agent is not virtuous.⁷³

Section VII. Can One Be Virtuous Without Knowing It?

In a word, no. But for purposes of completeness, I offer the following. An immediate objection to my argument might be to claim that people can be virtuous even though they do not have a conscious awareness of the grounds for their moral beliefs and actions. Intuitively, full moral knowledge does not seem to be necessary for virtue. People's moral performances could in fact be motivated by right-making features even if these features are unacknowledged. For instance, people who are naturally and unreflectively quasi-virtuous could be said to do the right thing with good intentions and good motivations, without thinking about what they do. Such people would be considered morally apt, but not fully knowledgeable about their actions, in my view.

Arpaly and Markovits both think that for an action to have moral worth it has to be performed because of its right-making features. Markovits promotes the Coincident Reasons Thesis, which states that "an action is morally worthy if and only if – and to the degree that – the non-instrumental reasons motivating the action coincide with the non-instrumental reasons that morally justify its performance" (Markovits, 2012, 290).⁷⁴ Arpaly puts forward a similar view, in the claim she makes in her work, *Unprincipled Virtue*: "For an agent to be morally praiseworthy for doing the right thing is for her to have done the right thing for the relevant moral reasons – that is, the reasons for which she acts are identical to reasons for which the action is right" (Arpaly, 2002, 70). Both Arpaly and Markovits agree that in order to be morally praiseworthy a person has to perform an action because of its morally justifying reasons, whether the person knows

⁷³ As said above, one might attack these arguments by asking what is so good about being moral, why not just defer even if that means we would not be called virtuous. I lack the space here to defend the existence and the goodness of morality in general, but I think it is enough to invoke the argument that I have given when discussing virtue ethics, namely the connection between morality and eudaimonia. Morality contributes to our flourishing and well-being, so it is and should be important to us.

⁷⁴ Markovits is a subjectivist about right-making reasons, so she thinks that we are required to do only what we have sufficient epistemic reason to think that it would be best to do (not what actually is best to do).

them or not.

There is a difference between the moral evaluation of actions and the moral evaluation of people that needs to be considered. One can praise actions even when one knows nothing about their author or the reasons and intentions that motivated them. On the other hand, when one evaluates people one takes many aspects into account: actions, beliefs, intentions, motivation, character, and moral understanding. For someone to be called good or virtuous there needs to be a harmony among these elements, and the absence of one element affects the entire evaluation.

The web of moral beliefs, along with the moral convictions one has, are as important as the final action. One not only has to be aware of what the right action is, but also aware of why it is the right action, and be motivated by that. Doing the right thing without having a belief that it is the right thing to do and without knowing why it is the right thing leaves too much room for inconsistency. The danger of acting rightly by accident is too great.

Saying that people can be moral or virtuous without knowing they are being moral or virtuous seems to refer to people who have some natural moral disposition or are unconsciously driven by some kind of unarticulated goodness. But, like Hursthouse, I am inclined to wonder “what sort of fairly ordinary adult, one who has learnt to use language and engages in the practice of explaining and justifying their actions in response to questions, could conceivably desire to help others but have ‘no conception of goodness?’” (Hursthouse, 1999, 106). Hursthouse asks this in a slightly different context,⁷⁵ but her point is valid and relevant to my argument.

Like me, Howard J. Curzer’s interpretation of Aristotle’s ethics⁷⁶ draws attention to the notion that in order to have proper virtue, one has to have *phronesis* (and not merely a natural moral disposition) which, according to him, is knowledge of why an act is in accordance with virtue (Curzer, 2012, 293). Aristotle himself in the *Eudemian Ethics* claims that “if one gets insight to accompany natural virtues then it makes a difference in one’s actions” (EE,

⁷⁵ She raises this point in a discussion about how Aristotle’s and Kant’s views are more similar than they have been taken to be. Her point is that acting from inclination (in a very literal sense, like animals and children do) is not what the Aristotelian agent would do because it is absurd to say that she would not have any conception of the goodness and that she could not explain why she acted as she did.

⁷⁶ His reading of Aristotle is an innovative one and goes against some classical interpretations. See Cathal Woods’s review (2013).

1144b12-13) and that “it is not possible to be good in the proper sense without wisdom” (EE, 1144b31). He continues:

We say that some people are not yet just, although they perform just actions; for example, there are people who do what is prescribed by the laws either involuntarily or in ignorance or for some other reason, but not for its own sake; nonetheless they do what they should and what the virtuous person must do. In the same way, it seems, it is possible to do things while in a certain condition so that one really is good. I mean, for example doing things through decision and doing so precisely for the sake of what one is doing (EE, 1144a14).

The point made here by Aristotle and his interpreters seems to be that it is almost incoherent to call someone who does not know why their actions are right a good person (i.e. one who is virtuous).

In these accounts there seems to be a scale of moral development (Curzer, 2012, 351-352) such that to say that one does not have *phronesis* is equivalent to saying that one is not as good as one could be, but maybe not that one is not as good as one should be. But if one thinks about Aristotle’s function argument and his concept of *eudaimonia*, that the happy life is the virtuous life, then the idea that one should have proper virtue is not so implausible, because that is the only way to achieve well-being (i.e. to fulfil one’s function).

Curzer points out that Aristotle’s idea of happiness (*eudaimonia*) is complicated by the fact that Aristotle gives two different versions of what makes for a happy life:

In *NE [Nicomachean Ethics]* Aristotle seems to say that he is working out what the happy life is. But in *NE X.6–8* he says that there are two happy lives. All commentators (myself included) agree that the secondarily happy life is the ethical life which aims at morally virtuous activity, but neglects contemplation to a significant degree. However, there is considerable dispute about the supremely happy life. Aristotle says that it is the contemplative life (Curzer, 2012, 389).

In Curzer’s reading of Aristotle, the contemplative life involves the acquiring of proper virtue, but only insofar as it is necessary for achieving contemplation: “So morally virtuous activity is desirable solely for its own sake by people seeking to lead the ethical life, and as a means by people seeking to lead

the contemplative life” (Curzer, 2012, 408). But no matter which one one takes to be the supremely happy life, virtue is important for realizing it. In both cases one needs virtue and *phronesis*, which requires understanding the “why” of one’s actions, in order to fulfil the duty to take moral responsibility. Thus, being good without knowing it is not enough for one to be, or to be called, virtuous.

Section VIII. The Risk of Wronging Others and Concluding Remarks

A possible objection to my claim that deference is vicious is that there might be times when one risks wronging others if one chooses not to defer. When in a situation of moral uncertainty that has high stakes, deferring might be a better option if one can find someone more reliable to defer to. Enoch’s defence of moral deference is based exactly on this kind of argument: moral deference is permissible, even required at times, because it is the only solution when one does not know what to do, but finds someone who does. Imagine a scene of chemical warfare in which a warfighter encounters civilians who appear to be suffering uncommon symptoms of unknown origin. The warfighter is uncertain about approaching and trying to assist said civilians because he does not know what action will ensure their wellbeing. In this example, it would be best for the warfighter to consult an expert in the field of chemical weapons to ascertain both the risks and the most beneficial course of action for all parties involved. This is an example of mixed moral deference which I would deem right-action given the very specific circumstances described. The warfighter in this case would be considered virtuous for acknowledging and accepting the limitations of their knowledge and for consulting with an appropriate professional to limit the spread of contamination or infection, the potential risk to others. Nowhere in this scenario is it assumed that deliberation was not part of the steps taken.

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Morality is everyone’s domain. Everyone is a moral agent and as such one can be evaluated as moral or not moral (though evaluating one’s virtue is substantially more difficult). I have argued that such evaluation depends on one’s beliefs and actions, one’s internal motivational constellation, and one’s subsequent external actions. In order to achieve a unity of these internal and external elements, in the right way, one must decline to defer in cases of virtue. One must respect the duty to take moral responsibility so that one may become

virtuous who lead phronetic lives. One must be virtuous, know how to be virtuous, and know why one is virtuous. I have argued that moral deference precludes all this and is, as such, is vicious for those in pursuit of the phronetic life.

In this chapter I have not only shown why moral agents should not defer, but also why they do not usually defer. Even if the duty to take moral responsibility is not something every person is conscious of, one's practices and intuitions reflect this duty insofar as one is suspicious of moral deference and avoids doing it.

Rejecting moral deference leads to my claim that virtue is for everyone. My account shapes a very specific way of looking at what it means to be a virtuous agent. I argue for a harmony among right-actions, right moral emotions, right intentions, right motivations, right understanding and knowing full well. But bringing together all these elements in a harmonious way can be difficult. So, you might ask, can everyone succeed? Is morality for everyone after all?

My view requires the virtuous agent to be truly virtuous. Yes, it is difficult to become truly virtuous. But why would one think it should be easy? Morality is prescriptive, it is about how people are supposed to be and act. It is not about what people usually do, how much they care about virtue right now, or how much effort they are willing to invest to attain or actualize virtue. I do not think that one should make morality fit humanity's current preoccupations. "Ought to" implies "can," and what I propose is certainly possible. Difficult, yes – but possible. One might succeed at times yet fail at other times. Some will have to work harder than others to be virtuous. One's willingness to do that work depends, in the end, on how much morality means to each person — and that question can only be answered by oneself, in private.

Chapter 3

Military Authority

In this chapter I will describe modern military structures and authority, in turn considering the foundations for military authority. I will then discuss the place military authority is exercised in ethical decision-making by individual warfighters, and ultimately argue that military moral authority should be limited and warfighters should be empowered with training that provides them with the moral bulwark to face the horrors of war as a virtuous agent while still working within the structure military service demands. If it is true that warfighters should exercise individual moral autonomy, then I argue that soldierly virtue will be the most successful ethical system for them.

Section I. Modern Military Structure

Given that very little of this section will contain any philosophical argument, I unashamedly will be using my own extensive expertise as primary support for this section's claims. Twenty-four years, three wars in no less than six theatres of operation, a presidential commission, and over 600 hours of military instructorship teaching these very principles should validate these claims.

Modern military structure is surprisingly similar to the system of mass combat used in the era of Sun Tzu, and in fact, his *Art of War* is required reading for quite literally every officer in the United States military. My experience with foreign attachments leads me to believe that this is true for at least the UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, and Belgium. I have little doubt it proliferates through officer training in a broad range of military academies world-wide. This can be evidenced through my study of foreign military strategy, which looks strikingly familiar.

The core structure is hierarchical. Some manner of supreme commander leads the forces from the top down. With rare exceptions, each warfighter above the level of line unit⁷⁷ will have a subordinate or group of subordinates. An example of some common terminology includes (from highest order to lowest),

⁷⁷ Line units are your rank and file soldiery. These are your cooks, soldiers, seaman, mechanics, flight crew, etc. that comprise the majority of any military. At this level, usually as few as two, but as many as fifteen, warfighters will be assigned to a squad leader or fire-team leader. These will be warfighters with as little as a year of service at this point. It isn't uncommon to see 18 to 19-yo kids leading fire-teams.

commander-in-chief, chief of staff, directorates of staff (such as personnel, logistics, or intelligence), combatant command, forces command, corps, brigade, battalion, company/squadron, platoon, squad, fire-team, down to the individual warfighter. There are differences dependent on ground versus naval versus air forces, and even within each branch there are structural oddities, but ultimately it runs from a single supreme commander to the lowliest recruit.

In military terms, authority is a legitimate power to direct the actions of subordinates as proscribed by the various codes of military justice held by many modern militaries⁷⁸. Current military practice surrounding warfighting requires full deference to the authority of the established chain of command, especially at the lower echelons. I feel confident in saying that if one were to ask ten operational commanders, one would receive at least nine affirmative answers to the question, “Should a warfighter follow orders without question?” The tenth answer would likely allow for some questions, but general deference would still be expected.

These commanders would be well-placed to claim that their opinion was validated by current military doctrine. That is because doctrine in the military is difficult to nail down. There is the Uniform Code of Military Justice, training manuals, operation manuals, leadership manuals, military tradition, the freedom of drill instructors to inculcate any “doctrine” they choose (to an extent), and the common conceptions that people have about military service. It has been my experience throughout the writing of this work that civilians labour under an undue amount of belief what the military “should” be like and “is” like. They are, by and large, almost always wrong.

When everyone above the level of line troop is in charge of someone else, and each of them holds claim to the deference of those under their command, the “chain of command” can get incredibly long. Needless to say, that is a lot of people issuing orders. In the United States, civilian oversight of the military helps to protect warfighters against the abuse of authority within the chain of command. However, the chain of command remains an essential part of military protocol.

Most militaries use the officer/enlisted distinction. While I find this distinction personally to be outdated and unnecessary, it is a fact of the matter. The easiest way to wrap one’s head around these distinctions is to understand

⁷⁸ Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), 10 U.S.C §836 ch. 47 article 92 (1950). This is the document that the United States uses to authorize military authority and require moral deference.

that officers are the executives and enlisted are the labour. Having served as both, I can say that there is little difference between the two save empowerment.

Every military service of which I am aware has a military code of conduct. Not only is every single one of these codes of conduct different for every country, but they also differ between branches and even individual units. These codes are not rigorous and are given cursory focus at best during initial entry training at the enlisted and officer level. These initial entry systems are often a memorized collection of platitudes that lack action guidance of any kind. As some warfighters rise in the ranks, some additional training is given, but it may surprise some philosophers to learn that very little ivory tower ethics makes its way into the hands of warfighters. In many cases, there will be a handful of disparate codes of conduct that can often include contradictory ethics. For example the “cadet honor code” for the United States Military Academy at West Point is “a cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.” They are then taken into a classroom where they are taught that deception is the most powerful strategic tool at a commander’s disposal. Enlisted warfighters usually get even less.

There is often discussion of “honour”, but the trait lacks a consensus definition (e.g. the US Army defines it as “living up to the Army values”). The one ethic that every warfighter will leave initial training with is that of survival. It is this trait that is a hundred times more dangerous to mission accomplishment than any warfighter taking anything like a moral high road. The point being, military ethics training at the warfighter-level is lacking.

This brief overview of military structure should help illuminate later arguments. For instance, when I argue that a commander is too far removed from a particularity-of-circumstance, it should be fairly easy to see how just a few echelons of removal can take one from the immediate field of battle to a command headquarters half the globe away. Note that it is very rare for anyone above the unit level (company, roughly 150-400 warfighters) to actually take to the field of battle. Therefore, an order from as near as battalion command will likely be several miles away at best, or spread across the entire theatre⁷⁹ at worst.

⁷⁹ The theatre of war is the geographic area of air, land, and water that is, or may immediately become, directly involved in the conduct of war.

Section II. The Role of Deference in the Military

As previously discussed in ch. 2, moral deference is vicious, strictly speaking. But that is not to imply that all forms of deference are vicious. The collective war machine needs governance, and orders should, indeed, be followed to ensure the smoothest possible route toward victory. The hierarchical leadership used by the soldiery may act like a vast, incomprehensible, game of “telephone,” but empowering multiple levels of leaders to direct their troops within their sphere of influence has merit.

There is a quote often attributed to a post-war briefing by a German general after WWII, "The reason the American Army does so well in wartime, is that war is chaos, and the American Army practises it on a daily basis." During that time period, if there was an absence of orders, non-US warfighters would often simply hold in place (or if not properly motivated, even desert). American warfighters, on the other hand, could function with as few as five men under a fire-team leader. This is because that fire-team leader had the strength of authority to align the actions of his men and get them to work as a single team. If these warfighters were constantly questioning every decision the fire-team leader made, then not only would nothing get done, but it is very likely the lot of them would die. Therefore, it seems reasonable to say that deference is the right way to conduct war.

I juxtapose this with moral deference, which is a wholly separate entity. When one defers in matters of *techne* (in this case, the profession of arms), there is no threat to one's autonomy. The deference in this case actually improves production. The extra hands are acting in conjunction with a single will to produce a single outcome. If someone disagrees with a course of action, there is seldom cause for alarm (unless of course there is a threat to one's life, which is a moral threat, shifting the manner of deference called for). Therefore one can proceed through their soldierly lifestyle, deferring in matters of *techne*, without threat to their autonomy.

Section III. The Limitations of Moral Deference

War is a complex phenomenon. It has been described as essentially a massive clash between opposing behemoths. In reality, each belligerent is not a single homogeneous will guided by a single intelligence. Instead, each belligerent

is a complex system consisting of numerous individual autonomous parts. Each element is part of a larger whole. The goal is achieved through cooperation or not at all. At the same time, each element has its own mission and must adapt to its own situation. Each of these elements must deal with friction, uncertainty, and disorder at its own level, and may create friction, uncertainty, and disorder for friend or foe alike. As a result, it can't be said that war is governed by the actions or decisions of a single individual. War emerges from the collective behaviour of all the individual parts in the system acting in response to local conditions and incomplete information. A military action is not the monolithic execution of a single decision by a single entity but necessarily involves countless independent but interrelated decisions and actions being taken simultaneously throughout the organization. Therefore I claim that any attempted effort to centralize decision-making during the complex and distributed nature of war is doomed to failure.

It might be said that wars have been fought for thousands of years using the methods in place, but I ask the reader this, is this really the best way? Adherence to legitimate military authority is often considered a prerequisite of warfighting. Military authority constitutes political, legal, and moral authority in that as a warfighter, an agent is duty-bound to follow orders despite any potential ethical reservations (unless those orders are unlawful, which is covered under the UCMJ under article 92). In other words, duty requires an agent to disregard their own ethical code in order to defer to the imposed moral authority of the military. Walzer says:

The moral reality of war is divided into two parts. War is always judged twice, first with reference to the reasons states have for fighting, secondly with reference to the means they adopt... The two sorts of judgment are logically independent. It is perfectly possible for a just war to be fought unjustly and for an unjust war to be fought in strict accordance with the rules. But this independence, though our views of particular wars often conform to its terms, is nevertheless puzzling. It is a crime to commit aggression, but aggressive war is a rule-governed activity. It is right to resist aggression, but the resistance is subject to moral (and legal) restraint. [This] dualism ... is at the heart of all that is most problematic in the moral reality of war (Walzer, 2006, 21).

This does not mean that the agent is required to forfeit their own moral perspectives instilled during civilian upbringing, but rather that an agent should

submit to the moral authority of a commanding officer even if those moral underpinnings are at odds. It is true that it is common military practice to objectify warfighters as property, and cognisance of a warfighter's autonomy and moral well-being are given no consideration. Given that most initial entry warfighters are young and lower class, many do not realize the position they are in. The old adage, "all's fair in love and war" disregards personal responsibility and accountability for the virtue or viciousness of one's chosen actions.

Military training does not currently include sufficient training in ethics nor does it require any morality on the part of the warfighter beyond those required by law. In fact, military superiors⁸⁰ often applaud amorality or moral blindness so long as it doesn't bring discredit to the forces. It is easier to require unwavering obedience to an established authority in spite of any individual moral considerations than it is to conduct operations such that moral considerations are taken into account and morally educated warfighters will find no fault.

A warfighter that is amoral is easy enough to imagine. These are individuals who have desensitized to moral stimuli. They have "unlearned" the ethics of their pre-military life and now rely on their superiors to provide their morality for them. These troops tend to have the hardest time readjusting to civilian life.

Alternatively there are those warfighters that have mastered the ability to "go morally blind." Steven Mintz says:

I'm talking about people who would otherwise act ethically but for pressures either self-imposed (i.e., desire to be a "team player" even though you are asked to do something you know is wrong) or imposed by an outsider (i.e., a superior who threatens your job if you don't go along with something you know is wrong) (Mintz, 2012, 1).

Mintz goes on to claim that in order to make moral decisions, one must be able to identify ethical issues, i.e. have ethical sensitivity. That must be followed by a moral judgment followed by an action. The moral judgment and accompanying action cannot follow if one is initially blind to the issue.

⁸⁰ It may appear that I am disparaging of military leadership in general. While the trends I mention or objectively true, they are not absolute. The problem is that those most attracted to the most morally problematic aspects of war are those that will exploit moral blindness.

Moral blindness, then, is a state of unawareness or insensibility to moral issues pertaining both to oneself and to one's relations to others (Klikauer, 2014, 92). The consequence for the warfighter disregarding their moral perceptions and autonomy is moral injury. Further, they commonly suffer from trauma-related disorders as a result of their participation in actions which contradicted their own moral perception in accordance with their moral foundation (Greene-Shortridge, Britt, and Castro, 2007, 157-161).

Thomas Gibbons-Neff wrote that moral blindness leads to moral injury, since it shakes the foundations of one's moral beliefs (Gibbons-Neff, 2015). In Nancy Sherman's *Afterwar*, there is significant discussion regarding moral injury caused by moral blindness. I will be engaging with Sherman in Chapter 6. Moral Injury itself is looked at by Dr Delima-Tokarz, who was interested in the psychiatric ramifications (Delima-Tokarz, 2016, 10-12).

In wartime there will indeed be instances in which an agent will benefit from following the directives of an established authority rather than deliberating and discerning a course of action for himself. This will be particularly true in instances when the warfighter is ethically untrained and there is an imminent danger with factors influencing the threat to the agent that he may be unaware of. However, in terms of moral authority, moral deference is undoubtedly an infringement of personal autonomy in that the agent is subject to the repercussions of a moral decision that he may not agree with. It is for this reason that moral deference is problematic when it comes to warfighters on the ground executing a plan as directed by an absent authority with no knowledge of the true conditions. This leaves both warfighters and civilians vulnerable should faulty decisions be made.

Although warfighters may take vicious action under orders from an established chain of command, it is the warfighter rather than the authority that will need to live with the consequences of such action. Furthermore, decisions made by an authority without the necessary contextual information could result in far greater losses than had the agent been equipped to assess the information, evaluate it and make an ethical decision aimed at furthering the Good. As such, it would be a gross violation of the warfighter's sense of moral well-being to have to live with something like murder as a consequence of adherence to the chain of command against their own moral assessment.

The autonomy to make the best decision toward the Good whilst taking moral stimuli into account would empower the warfighter to accept personal responsibility for their actions. This doesn't mean the warfighter can do whatever comes to mind. The premise that the warfighter is pursuing virtue is present throughout this work and as such we must remember that a warfighter's desires are for the good, and that any actions they desire to take will be in pursuit of that good. By requiring moral deference, a military authority is wilfully harming warfighters and making it difficult to readjust to civilian life. The point, then, is that amorality and moral blindness do not solve problems. They are "field expedient" fixes to the moral dilemmas one faces during war that ultimately cause more harm than good. A robust and rigorous military ethic based on virtue can manage these situations and more.

Section IV. Raz and Authority

Joseph Raz provides a justification for authority that easily applies to military authority using the "normal justification thesis" in regard to warfighters. He states, "the normal way to establish that a person has authority over another person involves showing that the alleged subject is likely better to comply with reasons which apply to him (other than the alleged authoritative directives) if he accepts the directives of the alleged authority as authoritatively binding and tries to follow them, rather than by trying to follow the reasons which apply to him directly" (Raz, 1986, 53). Since military authority is a legal authority, Raz further justifies obeying military authority thus, "the law is good if it provides prudential reasons for action where and when this is advisable and if it marks out certain standards as socially required where it is appropriate to do so." So far so good, but he goes on to say, "...It makes sense to judge the law as a useful and important social institution and to judge a legal system good or even perfect while denying that there is an obligation to obey its laws" (Raz, 1979, 249). Much to many a commander's chagrin, he generally denies that there is any content-independent, universal duty to obey the law, instead claiming that the law needs to pass through an individual's moral perceptions and ethical interpretations thereof in order for said individual to consider the law legitimate, dependent on its content. I should stress here that this kind of consideration through one's moral perceptions makes such an action subjective (but not arbitrary or relative).

Regardless of claims of strict objectivity within Raz's works (Chang, 2004, pp 59-63), his use of subjectivist language regarding wants (Raz, 1999, p.62) occurs often enough that, I think, justify equally using Raz's work for subjectivist morality as well.

Raz holds that authority is illegitimate unless it is in accordance with reason (Raz, 1995), or more specifically in accordance with the agent's autonomy. Of course, an agent's autonomy can be exercised in any number of ways, including succumbing to authority and obeying the lawful orders of those appointed over the agent. The agent may have perfectly good reasons for succumbing to military authority and may even feel that allowing the military to make moral decisions in one's place is aligned with that authority's place and purpose. It can be argued that in the military context, the agent's exercise of their autonomy in becoming a warfighter included the decision to submit to authority. The reason for this submission might be thus:

Human judgment errs. It falls prey to temptation and bias distorts it. This fact must affect one's considerations. But which way should it incline one? The only general answer which I find persuasive is that it depends on the circumstances. In some areas and regarding some people, caution requires submission to authority. In others it leads to denial of authority. There are risks, moral and other, in uncritical acceptance of authority. Too often in the past, the fallibility of human judgment has led to submission to authority from a misguided sense of duty where this was a morally reprehensible attitude (Raz, 1995, 351).

In other words, a military unit will likely falter without the submission to authority, and denying authority outright isn't an option. For many naïve warfighters, submitting to authority is ethical. Many warfighters in fact believe that they are extending themselves above and beyond their moral responsibility. By going to war, the lives of innocent civilians may be spared.

Yet Raz is first to claim that following an authority simply out of a sense of duty is morally bad. One must still engage with the world around them as a fully autonomous moral agent, or one has made a grievous error.

An authority, then, is limited to providing moral guidance, rather than prescribing moral action. An order must be followed if it contains no overtly

ethical issue. If there is an ethical issue, then one of the aspects of the situation the warfighter must consider is the orders of their commander, but it is only one of the aspects. Ultimately, the decision is the warfighter's to make, and if properly morally educated, it can reliably be assumed the warfighter did the right thing.

Section V. The Ethical Warfighter

The German Military concept *Innere Führung* which has been in practice since after WWII acknowledges that warfighters are citizens first and protects them against punitive action should they refuse to obey an unlawful or an irrelevant command. This supports Raz's concept of authority which renders it illegitimate unless it is consistent with reason. *Innere Führung* aims at maintaining the right balance between effectiveness and morality. The concept assumes that the warfighter is sufficiently morally developed to make the virtuous choice when placed in a position that such decision may be necessary. What it doesn't do is train or prepare. The concept exists, but it isn't part of initial entry training. Still, it is a useful concept, especially in regard to freedom from punitive consequences. *Innere Führung* is an example of a forerunner to *phronesis* training in that it empowers the warfighter to decide whether an order is moral or not.

To this end, soldierly virtue must be inculcated during initial entry training. The presence and influence of an exemplar will expedite the process of phronetic development, as will the unique environments that recruits find themselves in. Once released from initial entry training, the warfighter will need to take more of an active role in their own development. I will not argue for a system of moral development here, but as demanding as it may be, at least a degree of phronetic virtue ethics can be inculcated in the soldiery during initial entry.

Section VI. The Warfighter *Politikos*

As previously mentioned, moving into a leadership position in the military requires no significant effort. In fact, it is usually just a matter of time. The forces in the US are keen to play up to idea that every service member is a leader. This assertion isn't wrong for any warfighter that completes a full tour of service. Within this context, any warfighter who goes to war with the aim to create an environment in which virtue flourishes may be regarded as an authentic *politikos*

(unlike the many politicians who become politicians by position rather than by virtue). The battlefield can be an ultimate proving ground for virtue, and the *politikos* is well-placed to ensure those assigned to them are prepared and tested.

Being that I am not proposing pacifism, it is accepted that during warfighting the defeat of the enemy is the primary objective. The application of *phronesis* will simply serve to seek mission accomplishment while limiting or eliminating collateral damage and ensuring a virtuous outcome. This opens the door for the *politikos* to post-conflict negotiations and long-term peace possibilities.

However, moral deference renders the warfighter vicious. Without a redesign of modern military ethics training in soldierly virtue, warfighters are ill-equipped to be *politikos*. In order to be equipped to make truly ethical decisions, the agent needs to have moved beyond their own parochial interests in favour of the Good. In other words, actions cannot be taken based on unmitigated self-interest, personal opinions, or simply because someone told one to do it.

In conclusion, I leave you with this excerpt from HQUSMC that explains how top-down intent is handled. It will be useful for the remainder of this thesis to keep in mind how much more efficient a military that uses this intent structure would be if each warfighter were empowered with a *phronetic* bearing and the authority to act on the intent in the way most virtuous to the mission.

The intent for a unit is established by the commander assigning that unit's mission—usually the next higher commander, although not always. A commander normally provides intent as part of the mission statement assigned to a subordinate. A subordinate commander who is not given a clear purpose for the assigned mission should ask for one. Based on the mission, the commander then develops a concept of operations, which explains how the unit will accomplish the mission, and assigns missions to subordinates. Each subordinate mission statement includes an intent for that subordinate. The intent provided to each subordinate should contribute to the accomplishment of the intent a commander has received from above. This top-down flow of intent provides consistency and continuity to our actions and establishes the context that is essential for the proper bottom-up exercise of initiative (US Marine Corps, 1997, 89-90)

Chapter 4

Interpreting Aristotle's Account of Virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Aristotle's encyclopaedic body of work includes one of the finest ethical treatises in existence. A bold claim, no doubt, but one to which 2,300 years of scholarship attests. In what follows I offer an interpretation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* that brings the pertinent elements of this wizened guide-for-living-well to the battlefield. Given the millennia between the writing of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and today, and the fact that this text has been interpreted in the Western world in every era, I believe it is wise to situate my work within the framework of Aristotelian scholarship. These interpretations, mine and that of other thinkers, are simply meant to elucidate current debates in order to be able to attend to the problem of soldierly virtue more directly, without confusing the reader as to which interpretation of virtue ethics is in play. To this end, I focus on both the ancient text and modern scholarship regarding that text. Any discussion regarding reinventions of virtue ethics are set aside for later consideration.

The decision regarding what to include in this chapter focused on the idea that the interlocutor would be philosophically trained, but not necessarily an Aristotelian scholar. Given the relative complexity of the work, a strategy for this exegesis seemed pertinent. I conclude that a two-pronged approach would work best, while also allowing me to highlight important matters of interpretation unique to this body of work. The two-pronged approach means that I will give both a cursory reading and a deep reading analysis of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The cursory reading will introduce virtue theory as interpreted by translators of the original work, and will generally characterize virtue in a fairly simplistic way. Here I assume no prior knowledge of Aristotle's work and focus on what I feel is the minimum necessary background in order for the reader to follow the remainder of my argument.

The deeper reading, on the other hand, will look specifically at analyses of the core concepts of my work: *phronesis*, *politikos*, *orthos logos*, right-action, *eudaimonia*, and virtue. That is, I will carefully examine each of these concepts as conceived by Aristotle (or at least how I and other modern scholars interpret the terms). This deeper reading is a detailed and rigorous analysis of the more difficult aspects of my work and is necessary for understanding my argument

overall.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *NE*), as well as his *Eudemian Ethics* (hereafter *EE*), are the primary works being considered here. As I am not a classicist, I must rely on the translations and interpretations of the language of the ancient texts by accepted experts in the field. In Section I of this chapter, I specifically look at the work of Aristotelian scholars on the *NE* books I-IV and VI. This is only possible by my surveying several translations and discussing the interpretations contained therein. While I may occasionally disagree on some points, I allow that each interpretation has something of value and, for the most part, will not argue in favour of any one interpretation during the survey. Nevertheless, upon completion of the survey, I will argue for specific elements of each of the accounts that suits the needs of my own work. In some places I will add substantially to the current conversation concerning Aristotle's ethical theory. Overall, however, while my work is certainly inspired by Aristotle's work, my final arguments only borrow key elements of his theory in order to develop my own unique perspective on virtue ethics as related to military life.

Section I. The *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aristotle's Philosophy of Virtue⁸¹

In order to understand the import of the concepts from the *NE* that I will work with, it is helpful to begin by discussing the historical state of affairs in which the *NE* was written. While a complete and detailed history isn't necessary or possible here, there are a few facts that I think are significant for interpreting the *NE* with a keen eye.

During Aristotle's lifetime there was both political and personal instability that resulted in, among other things, his flight from Athens and eventual return. Assuming there is truth in the widely held belief that the *NE* was written after his establishment of the Lyceum, these upheavals must surely have influenced at least some aspects of his thought (Barnes, 2004, xi). The instability might in fact be the cause of the proscriptive political stance in parts of the text, such as the idea that political philosophy, properly employed, should ensure that people lead excellent lives. My claim here is not as intuitive as it might seem at first blush,

⁸¹ For purposes of this review, I have focused on using the Irwin's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* for purposes of citation, but should note that of the several commentators I present, each accompanied a wholly unique translation with its own quirks and insights.

because, in those days the politician's purpose was to ensure the efficient functioning of the state – the well-being of the citizenry was secondary at best. This point about the historical reasons behind the proscriptive aspect of some of Aristotle's work is a significant addition to the contemporary dialectic regarding virtue.⁸²

Also, the *NE* is written from the perspective of a city-statesman. This is important for the military scientist studying virtue, especially the fact that city-states are not countries with vast land-holds and disparate and distant cities ruled as equals by singular governments (Sehgal et. al, 2015, 1). Aristotle could reasonably have assumed that his lectures were for civilised men only, for Athenians but not for barbarians or Spartans. Current concepts of cosmopolitanism, or even the primitive version held by Diogenes, would not have held much sway with Aristotle.

One must also consider that, as a student of Plato and a citizen of Athens, Aristotle would have held to any number of common intuitions, assumptions, and conceptions that would have constituted a Hellenic sense of common sense. What a modern scholar might take as a gap or hole in Aristotle's work might have been something he simply had taken for granted (Barnes, 2004, x-xii).

Finally, and what I believe is most important, the *NE* is widely accepted to have been something like lecture notes. While it would be ludicrous to assume that lecturing now is a replica of lecturing then, I think it uncontroversial to believe that one's lecture notes would not be the final publishable content (in the modern sense) of one's reasoning and arguments. At the very least, these notes were simply prompts used to guide a dialectical conversation with students in attendance at the Lyceum. At best, they are detailed notes (possibly modified and edited many times over the years) which meant there was no need to identify every premise and assumption that would have been common knowledge for student attendees (Ross, 1966; Irwin, 1985; Crisp, 2000; Barnes, 2004). For all that is known about the *NE*, it may not even have been a completed work (Irwin, 1985; Crisp, 2000). As Barnes notes:

Written in a time of political upheaval, when the jealously individual states of Greece

⁸² There are some interesting conversations regarding Plato's *Republic* on this topic, but that would be a significant digression.

were becoming, perforce, members of a larger commonality; written by an old member of Plato's Academy who was at the same time a brilliant and self-confident scientist, the *Ethics* must from time to time betray its origins. Like all great works, it transcends the particular conditions of its conception; and like all great works it is misunderstood - mispraised or miscondemned – if it is not read with some general comprehension of those originative circumstances (Barnes, 2004, xiii).

In the first part of my review, I will look at the commentary on happiness (*eudaimonia*), virtue in general, and the virtue of character specifically. This will include Aristotle's defence of the good, the virtues, and the doctrine of the mean. In the next chapter I will offer an exhaustive look at the only intellectual virtue one needs to know about for my purposes. One cautionary note: I will be addressing only a fragment of the overall work of the *NE* so the reader should not read any of those aspects of the *NE* left by the wayside into my final account, unless specifically granted.

The statement, "... for Aristotle, happiness consists in, and only in, virtuous activity," is a glimpse of the generally agreed understanding of Aristotle's core concept of *eudaimonia* (Crisp, 2000, 15). Ross interprets Aristotle's opening comments in the *NE* as referring to the pursuit of ends. The highest end (*telos*) for a human being is that of *eudaimonia*, which Ross defines as "a certain kind of activity" (carrying feeling, no doubt, with it). He believes that Aristotle's primary interest was in discovering what the most enviable life might be (Ross, 1966). None of the three "popular" ancient Greek conceptions of happiness, namely 1) the life of pleasure (fit only for bovines), 2) the life of honour (which puts the agent under the power of another, not of the self), and 3) the life of money-making (which is only a means to some other end or life), seems to fit the Aristotelian concept of happiness. Ross sees Aristotle as presenting a fourth, superior alternative. This alternative focuses on the contemplative life. Irwin believes that Aristotle was wise to start with the concept of *eudaimonia* as a first principle (Irwin, 1985, xvii). Irwin claims that Aristotle believes rational human beings choose, from their own point of view, what is ultimately good. If the ultimate good is one's own happiness, then it is easy to see that it is good for its own sake. According to Irwin, as an ultimate good, what is good for its own sake,

eudaimonia must be *teleion*,⁸³ that is, absolute or complete (Irwin, 1985, 181). I only partially agree with Irwin's account because, by its very nature, *eudaimonia* is complete: it is essentially a faculty of the *psyche* and a consequence of a virtuous life. It is unnecessary to add a qualifier such as *teleion* to an absolute. Crisp believes that discussions of happiness, in this somewhat egoistic way, were common in Greek education. He claims (and I have found nothing to refute this claim) that "nowhere in Aristotle is there a recommendation of any kind of genuine self-sacrifice" (Crisp, 2000, xi). Also, one's happiness was seen as dependent on "whole-life" experience, as opposed to being dependent on any one action or small subset of actions. This is an issue in need of redress if one is to have a concept of the warfighter as a selfless servant. For now, however, I will simply stipulate that this isn't as problematic as it might seem.

To be clear: none of what has been discussed so far should lead the reader to believe that Aristotle was unconcerned about actions or about other human beings. Human beings, for Aristotle, are by nature social beings (NE, 1097b8-11). *Eudaimonia* must be self-sufficient as an end in order to properly motivate imperfect actors to virtuous actions, but *eudaimonia* is not itself the action. As Crisp states it, "there is a difference between the concept of happiness, and various conceptions of it" (Crisp, 2000, xi). In other words, Aristotle proscribed that one be virtuous, and in so doing, one would become a *eudaimon*,⁸⁴ (and further, one would become a *politikos*, which would set the stage for others to achieve *eudaimonia*).

It is important to understand just how *eudaimonia* relates to virtue. One shall see as one progresses that there are many consequences for the agent when the agent deliberately acts virtuously. It is not unlike the saying, "a job well done is its own reward, but the pay check is nice too." For example, someone who loves to dance and chooses to dance, will dance, and the act of dancing is for its own sake. The dancer dances simply because the dancer wishes to dance (and dance well). The dancer might even best enjoy dancing when dancing alone and no one is watching. If one were to ask the dancer why she dances, the dancer may well say it is because she loves to dance. One might say that this

⁸³ There are a number of translations of this term, the most common being "complete". Taylor offers as possible alternatives "perfect" or "final", with some commentary depending on the translation's accuracy. In other words, *teleion* means absolute happiness. As previously mentioned, the Greek virtues frequently refer to faculties of the soul.

⁸⁴ One who has achieved *eudaimonia*.

dancer is superior to the dancer who only dances because it is an expectation on the part of the dancer's parents. Someone who dances for the sake of dancing would be unlikely to say that she dances because it makes her fit, even if, in fact, it does increase her fitness. The dancer is fit because of the dancing, but that is not the reason for the dance. In short, virtue is like dance in this analogy, in that it is simply what one wants to do (if it is true virtue), and it just so happens that in doing this thing that one wants to do, one also achieves a certain life satisfaction, *eudaimonia*.

So *eudaimonia* is *teleion* when it is both sought for its own sake and is self-sufficient, making it life-choice worthy and lacking nothing (NE, 1097b15). This has led Taylor⁸⁵ to point out two possible views derived from how one chooses to define completeness (or "final-ness" as the case may be). One view is inclusive, whereby *eudaimonia* means that while one can say one seeks many things for their own sake (he uses intelligence and pleasure as examples), they are actually not sought as such, but instead sought as constituents of the best life. The ultimate end is still the best life, the life of *eudaimonia*. The alternative view is that *eudaimonia* is not inclusive, but dominant (Taylor, 2009. xii). The "dominant" view claims that *eudaimonia* could be any of the possible "good lives," and that Aristotle is arguing for the contemplative life to be seen as the best among them.

For our purposes it suffices to point out that even if the formal specification of *eudaimonia* as sought for its own sake and self-sufficient points (as I agree it does) towards the inclusive conception, that conception is not sufficient for Aristotle's project of adjudicating between specific claimants to the title of the supreme good (Taylor, 2009, xii).

Eudaimonia seems to be simply stipulated by Aristotle without much effort made to give a definition beyond "an activity of the soul" (which makes sense given the context of Hellenic Greece I mentioned earlier). Even so, one reading of Aristotle does give a strong argument for why the contemplative life is the best account of *eudaimonia*, often called the function (*ergon*) argument. In summary, the function argument is something like this: All things in existence have many

⁸⁵ Also see Hardie's "Aristotle's Ethical Theory"

purposes, but one is chief among each. For a rock it might be that its chief purpose is to be heavy and solid, for a plant, to live, for animals, to seek sensations. Many things can be solid and heavy, but it is the rock that is the “solidest and heaviest,” and the best rock is the one that is most solid and most heavy. Animals, like plants, seek to live, but they possess a higher function, that of sensation. Living, then, is not their best life, or chief function, as it is for the plant. Human beings are like non-human animals in that one can sense the world around them, but one has a higher order function, the ability to reason.

The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason [...] itself having reason and thinking. Moreover, life is also spoken of in two ways [as capacity and as activity], and we must take [a human being’s special function to be] life as activity, since this seems to be called life more fully. We have found then that the human function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason (NE, 1098a3-9).

This can be taken to support the primacy of contemplative *eudaimonia* over other possible kinds of *eudaimonia* (assuming an inclusive view).

Of course, as Taylor suggests, there are complications, but I think Aristotle is well placed to manage this:

And so the human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and indeed with the best and most *teleion* virtue, if there are more virtues than one (NE, 1098a18).

A charitable Aristotelian can happily accept that there are other kinds of goods that one might pursue, but if one is to be *teleion eudaimon* (the most completely happy person), then only the highest good life is good enough.

It should be noted that Aristotle does allow that a knowledge of commonly-recognised goods must be accounted for (NE, 1098b10). He systematically subjects each commonly held good to the standards listed above and shows that each is inherently part, or pursuant, of the ultimate Good. He states: “life does not need pleasure to be added [to virtuous activity] as some sort of extra decoration; rather, it has its pleasure within itself” (NE, 1099a16). *Eudaimonia* is inherently “best, finest, and most pleasant.” Also discussed are the possibilities of *eudaimonia* being affected after one has died. Crisp believes that Aristotle

strongly disagrees with the commonly held Greek belief that one's plans and projects can affect one's *eudaimonia* into the afterlife. This seems to be a correct assumption given that virtue is activity, and obviously activity ends when the mortal coil expires (as far as mortals can judge).

I add here, as an aside, that in what follows I will deny lesser forms of *eudaimonia* as *eudaimonia as such*. Instead, each lesser "good" will be given its own place and term. The purpose of this is to avoid confusion; I prefer a careful use of Greek terms, reserving *eudaimonia* to refer to only those circumstances of well-being attributed to the one who has achieved virtue. Commonly considered lesser forms of *eudaimonia* will instead be directly identified with the kind of well-being each produces. The life of the fully virtuous is *eudaimonic* and the term is reserved solely for those agents.

Crisp would have us take the *ergon* (function) argument as concluding that "human happiness consists in the exercise of the virtues," which can be seen often enough at this point to agree to without controversy (Crisp, 2000, xiv). His account of Greek culture as it would have informed Aristotle's intuitions is extremely useful for understanding Aristotle's concept of virtue. He claims that Greek culture (perhaps it would have been more precise to say Athenian culture, though some generalisation is allowable) was a culture of competition. The one who was best was considered excellent, and as such had a virtue in whatever it was they might be best at (i.e. the virtue of being fleet of foot). Aristotle wants to claim that *eudaimonia* comes from having the best character and the best intellect. Irwin frames this within an understanding of desires. There are rational desires and non-rational desires (appetites). Each desire has a corresponding set of virtues (much like there might be some physical virtues that are based on endurance and another set based on strength). Cultivation of the rational desires in the correct manner will lead to virtues of the intellect, while cultivation of the non-rational desires in the correct manner will lead to virtues of character (Irwin, 1985, xvii). Correct cultivation would be through the utilisation of reason in either case. The virtues of character then are the traits motivated by our non-rational desires when guided correctly by reason. Ultimately, I will be arguing that only the character virtues and *phronesis* (which was one of Aristotle's intellectual virtues) are within our area of concern. As I consider *phronesis* to be the ultimate virtue, matters regarding the intellectual virtues as such seem to apply both in and out of

morality equally, so I will stipulate that the intellectual virtues of the warfighter aren't in contention.

Irwin claims that Aristotle defines virtue as a state of the soul (Irwin, 1985, xvii). This is meant to deny that virtue is a capacity or a feeling. If it were simply a capacity, then there may be occasions when one with the ability would have the opportunity to use it and not do so; and if it were a feeling it might not be toward the right entities (NE, 1104b). So one could have a virtue and not use it or one could be virtuous for vicious reasons, but that is not virtue as such. Virtue as such is acting rightly for the right reasons, toward the right objects. Therefore virtue must transcend simple capacity or feeling, and instead be a state of being such that the being could be no other way and still be considered virtuous.

The virtues of intellect are acquired by study, and arguably the task of a mature citizen; but the character virtues are acquired through habituation and must be acquired as early as possible (Crisp, 2000, xviii). Ross claims that there is difficulty for Aristotle regarding habituation. "To do just acts we must already be just," he charges, which means that one must be virtuous to be virtuous (Ross, 1966). This is one example in a long list of criticisms that claims Aristotle's theory is circular. I will return to the idea of circularity in Aristotle's work and show why it isn't valid a bit later in this chapter. Habituation for Aristotle shares many of the early childhood development traits of the Platonic method.⁸⁶ Crisp comes to Aristotle's defence, arguing that a truly virtuous person will conduct him- or herself virtuously, knowing full well what he or she is doing, choosing virtuous conduct for its own sake, and doing so from a well-grounded position (Crisp, 2000, xviii). Therefore one who is cultivating virtue need not be virtuous first; they must simply mirror or mimic the activities of a virtuous exemplar or at least a suitably more virtuous role model than themselves. This has its own problems, but does show how one can become habituated to virtue without first being virtuous: "Virtues, then, are the dispositions engendered in us through practice or habituation" (Crisp, 2000, xvii).

The *mean* (sometimes referred to as the Golden Mean or the doctrine of

⁸⁶ Namely the instruction of heroic stories, music, gymnastics and mathematics. I have often argued elsewhere that Aristotle simply assumes that Plato was right about the moral development of children, but that it would require his own method to bring someone from that state into virtue.

the mean) is an important concept for Aristotle from this point on.⁸⁷ For Aristotle,

Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the reason by reference to which the prudent person would define it (NE, 1107a1-3).

Irwin recognizes the primacy of prudence (*phronesis*) in determining the mean (to be discussed shortly), making the intellectual virtues, or at least this one, inseparable from the character virtues (Irwin, 1985, xix). But not to get ahead of ourselves in this discussion, the mean is a relative point of specific virtues (such as bravery or generosity) along a continuum of excess and deficiency. Character virtues admit of a mean, but virtue itself does not (Ross, 1966). The details of the doctrine of the mean are defined by example in the *NE*. For example, the virtue of courage is described as the mean between the excess of rashness and the deficiency of fear (Ross, 1966). Righteous indignation, the mean between envy and spite, does not appeal to Ross, but it is Aristotelian nonetheless. The mean is not a midpoint or mathematical entity, but is that which one with a well-cultivated *phronesis* indicates upon perceiving a given situation.

J. Urmson and Lesley Brown have both considered what happens when a trait's alignment to the mean brings one very close to the extremes. While not explicitly stated, it seems reasonable to believe that the dictates of virtue might well lead one to act very near the extremes. This is unproblematic for Aristotle's account, so long as it is what is truly called for.

Crisp opines that it may appear that by allowing for a mean in relation to oneself, Aristotle is allowing the current character of the agent to have an effect on the requirements of virtue (Crisp, 2000, xvi). He denies this, stating that what is required of us is what the virtuous person would do in our place. Therefore, according to Crisp, the mean is normative. It is not a doctrine of moderation, but one of circumstance and good reasoning. The virtuous mean then is determined by observation and the consideration of moral stimuli in order to discern the most appropriate course of action for achieving the Good under the particular

⁸⁷ It's interesting to note that the concept of "Middle Way" in Confucius' system of ethics is very similar to Aristotle's mean. It is also interesting to note that in sacred geometry the Golden Mean spiral is almost identical to the Fibonacci spiral differing only in the first three movements. This can be interpreted as evidence that the Golden Mean is a faculty of *psyche* as opposed to a faculty of nature. In other words, *phronesis* could be considered a faculty of *psyche* whilst the other virtues could be considered faculties of human nature.

circumstances. He adds that the doctrine of the mean shows us that for every virtue there are two ways in which one can go wrong. He uses fear as an example: “feeling fear at the right time is in between not feeling fear at the right time and feeling fear at the wrong time” (Crisp, 2000, xvi). It isn’t unreasonable to assume that for any trait one might include in a virtue list the same formula could be applied. Acting in accordance with x at a given time is acting rightly when it is done when the action is appropriate and not done when the action is not appropriate. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is entirely possible for there to be a well-thought-out virtue list that denies the doctrine of the mean, or at least includes virtues that seem to not admit of a mean. But such virtues would most likely be virtues of thought (which themselves do not admit of the mean in the same way as the character virtues). That said, for Aristotle, whose list was fairly abbreviated, this wasn’t an issue.

One problem that arises from the doctrine of the mean is that it could be said to be empty. The example used is that telling someone to perform the mean action is like telling them to take the medicine the doctor prescribed for them (which leads to problems such as “who is the doctor?”; “is the doctor competent?”; “is the medicine the correct medicine for the illness?”; etc.). This is an interesting point, especially since it is Aristotle’s own example (NE, 1138b). Still, Crisp believes that there is something useful to be gleaned from the doctrine. He claims that it acts to temper certain temptations toward extremes. Even if it does seem somewhat empty on its own, when combined with something like “first principles,”⁸⁸ the doctrine is quite useful. I will not spend much of my argument on the doctrine of the mean as it specifically applies to individual virtues since I do not want to endorse a specific virtue list. That said, the doctrine is action-guiding and that aspect plays a role in my later arguments.

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Each of the interpretations of Aristotle’s work I’ve addressed here adds something to the image of virtue that Aristotle might have had in mind. That said, these are cursory reviews with some commentary; they are not comprehensive nor do they provide the depth one might achieve in a review that examines more of the vast body of literature that has grown out of Aristotle’s work. I present them

⁸⁸ Crisp is talking here about the passage 1098b in which Aristotle discusses the discovery of different types of primary first principles. In this case, we would be using the first principles discovered by habituation.

here solely to assist my arguments, arguments that are more focused on the ethics of war, and to clarify what aspects of the *NE* I wish to appropriate for my later efforts. The next section will engage with in-depth studies of the *NE* (and to a lesser extent the *Politics*), as well as specific elements of interpretive work by Aristotelian scholars. This ends the cursory reading I promised in Chapter 1.

Section II. Sarah Broadie on Aristotle

Subsection 1. Introduction and *Eudaimonia*

In order to go beyond the brief introduction I've provided so far, I now turn to a more rigorous interpretation of Aristotle, one that will be useful for creating a framework upon which to hang my later arguments. I begin with the interpretation of Aristotle's work by Sarah Broadie⁸⁹ in order to consider more thoroughly some key elements of Aristotle's virtue theory that I wish to carry forward.

Sarah Broadie, in *Ethics with Aristotle*, claims that "Aristotle's supreme good is the well-functioning of the human being qua human" (Broadie, 1991, 3). I take her to mean that "human qua human" is a reference to Aristotle's function argument⁹⁰. This follows from the earlier argument for *eudaimonia* as an end (of sorts⁹¹). This does not seem to be the only, or even the ultimate end for virtue. I find it useful to make these ends distinct. Even if *eudaimonia* is the sole end which the virtuous agent is pursuing, that does not necessarily make it the "ultimate-supreme-good." As Broadie so rightly points out, that ranking is reserved for excellent human functioning. In fact *eudaimonia* cannot exist as an end in itself as it comes about as a consequence of living a virtuous life. This is important for me since it works to deny that virtue is consequential,⁹² and opens the door to an understanding of virtue for its own sake. In other words, one is not virtuous because it will make oneself happy, or because it will make one anything. The agent is virtuous because it is what the agent wants to be.

Broadie finds that Aristotle does seek a universal end (Broadie, 1991, 9). But she claims that human activity has two ends, one aims at some good (one

⁸⁹ I have decided to focus on Broadie's work due to her completeness and my general agreement with her interpretation. It contains the depth of scholarship necessary for me to compare my own interpretation in relation to.

⁹⁰ I had the good fortune to correspond with Dr. Broadie on this, and she has agreed with my interpretation, which I admit is both a relief and makes my job a bit easier.

⁹¹ I will argue against personal *eudaimonia* as an end, but instead focus on the dialectic regarding it as a target toward which to aim. As a faculty of *psyche*, *eudaimonia* is more a state of being than a personal goal or personality attribute.

⁹² As in "solely concerned with outcomes" broadly. This work will not argue against "capital C" consequentialism or utility except to say that virtue is an ideal subjective normative ethical account.

might say, it aims at the fulfilment of the task at hand), the second aims at the Good “which is an end common between it and all others” (Broadie, 1991, 12). I take this to be saying that when one takes on a task, one end is simply the fulfilment of that task. If this is successful, then the targeted end is achieved. If it is excellent, then completion of the task not only succeeds in achieving the end in mind, but will, by the nature of the excellence, also lead one toward a higher end, in this case, the Good. The crucial task is to conduct oneself rightly, and success at acting rightly exercises virtue (the end sought), but doing so excellently will also succeed at realizing *eudaimonia*. This works for me.

But what is excellence? This is the question Broadie takes up in order to provide an answer to the implications of what it means to act in accordance with excellence, or virtue (Broadie, 1991, 58). She claims “a virtuous person is one who is such as to, who is disposed to, act well when occasion arises.”⁹³ I take her to mean that it isn’t just “acting” in accordance with virtue, but more like living in accordance with virtue:

And so far as ‘acting well’ implies not merely causing certain changes in the world, but doing so in the right frame of mind or with the right motive, a disposition to act well is also a disposition to act in the frame of mind. ‘Action’ means the agent’s involvement, not merely his body’s (Broadie, 1991, 58).

So to live excellently, or in accordance with virtue, or well, or nobly, is the way to bring one into *eudaimonia*. Therefore one’s actions are constitutive of virtue, but so are one’s thoughts, motivations, desires, and dispositions. When there is alignment and one is virtuous, then one may claim the title of *eudaimon* in addition to claiming the title of virtuous agent (and *phronimos*, and *politikos*, etc.). I think this fully satisfies the argument regarding how much one should take happiness into account when deliberating about how to act. If one is overly concerned with *eudaimonia*, then one is actually missing the point of the task.

Broadie has a bit more to say on the subject, however. In other words, it is not sufficient for one to claim to be virtuous based on one’s personal sphere of thoughts, motivations, desires, and dispositions. She claims that ethics are a

⁹³ I take small issue with this quote, since the truly virtuous person would not be limited by occasions, but would simply be acting rightly all the time. But this is a small quibble.

practical issue for Aristotle, with a purpose toward achieving a better life. In fact, she claims Aristotle is first and foremost interested in providing an “offer to help”⁹⁴ (Broadie, 1991, 60). Among the many confusing components of the *NE*, is the first chapter’s elements of *politike*, which seek to achieve some supreme good. The dialectic throughout the rest of the work emphasises the actions of the individual for improving his own life through virtue. I see Broadie’s concern here. There seem to be a great number of supreme goods in Aristotle. Her conclusion, which I am satisfied to concede, is that among these supreme goods, *politike* “looks in aiming to bring about, not that end, but its conditions” (Broadie, 1991, 59).

I find this argument persuasive. I do not find the function argument, as laid out briefly by Aristotle, to fully address the social requirements of the agent. Aristotle recognises the social aspect of human nature, and embraces it, but in regard to the discussion of human function, it is oddly missing. While it is a human capacity to reason, the fact that we form the kind of communities we do also seems uniquely human. The idea that in order to be virtuous, one must also try to create conditions that allow others to achieve a state of virtue (or at least something close to a state of virtue) appeals to what I believe are the duties of the soldiery,⁹⁵ especially as they rise to “command positions.” A warfighter who practices virtue must also create an environment in which others may also practice virtue, otherwise the warfighter has lost sight of the Good. And if someone is further along on the path to virtue than others, I think Aristotle would believe that that person would not have to keep an eye on the good of proper *politike*, but would, by being like the virtuous agent, simply create a “virtuous” environment by being virtuous in the first place.

So far, we have seen that virtue is: the path to *eudaimonia*, the state of character of an excellent agent, the actions one who acts as a virtuous agent would enact, and now the path to an ultimately good society. To my eyes, none of these are mutually exclusive and I will show that they are interlinked. Before I do that, however, I must add yet another definition. Namely, the right-action in a circumstance is that action which admits of not too much excess and not too

⁹⁴ I will revisit this idea in later chapters under the “role of the tutor” and at what stage the tutor must be a *phronimos*.

⁹⁵ And everyone else, but that can be assumed. It is often thought that a warfighter’s duty is to do as they are told, but I will argue that their duties are to everyone.

much deficiency. The doctrine of the mean offers a way to measure virtue in that it serves as a gauge to determine whether an action can be deemed appropriate in particular circumstances (action-guiding). The doctrine of the mean is, perhaps most importantly, not a promise to provide rules or laws for how one should act well (Broadie, 1991, 60). The mean is given as a way to guide actions in relation to one's virtue list juxtaposed to one's circumstances. Therefore, the *politikos* is troubled by the fact that since only the acting agent can know the full circumstances of an act from his or her point of view, one cannot inform another of the correct action. A *politikos* trying to make someone virtuous by telling that person what to do – full stop – will fail; it is only through education and training that the *politikos* can fulfil his or her mandate. Being virtuous himself, while simultaneously providing an environment in which another's virtue can flourish, are key. Laws can be put in place to assist with habituation but such laws must be open to interpretation based on circumstances. In the end, the *politikos* cannot legislate virtue, but he or she can create an environment that enables virtue to flourish and fosters autonomy:

We might say that even if one were concerned only that right or good actions get done, and attached no value to their being the free expressions of autonomous agency, still in the end it could only be by allowing such autonomy that one would increase the incidence of right action (Broadie, 1991, 61).

Subsection 2. *Phronesis and the Politikos*

Phronesis stems from one's ability to understand how to make good choices, and why these choices are inherently good. *Phronesis* allows one to contemplate decisions, thus determining the proper course of action for both oneself and others. The ability to do this suggests that one is fully in tune with one's depth of action and discovery, fulfilling the good life of creating effective happiness. This is what I called "full moral knowledge" in ch. 3. This characteristic is a necessity for those active within the political realm trying to create a more unified public. Sarah Broadie's *Ethics with Aristotle* explores her position on both *phronesis* and the *politike techne*, as well as the responsibilities of the *politikos* to utilize *phronesis* for the most practical outcomes for the public good.

Broadie situates *phronesis* within the realm of rational choice. She believes that although Aristotle's definition is vague, there is enough evidence on the topic in his work to establish it as a relevant theory. I agree in part, but will add to the analysis in ch. 6. According to Broadie's interpretation of Aristotle, *phronesis* is defined as "the virtue by which one deliberates well" or "reasons in a practical way" (Broadie, 1991, 179). It is comprised of the exercise of reason, deliberation, and the choice to act; and it is the process through which rational choice is formed. Broadie suggests, however, that it is more than just a process and product, for there are instances where a product can be formed without following a strict procedure. Thus, it is more critical to engage the product, the rational choice. There can be the same choice made for a variety of reasons—a variety of processes. This suggests that the choice may not be an appropriate end and the process may not be the appropriate means (Broadie, 1991, 179). To me, this sounds as if Broadie wants to claim that we use *phronesis* for deliberation outside of moral endeavours. This is a fact her and I disagree on greatly.

Broadie interprets Aristotle as making *phronesis* a three-term relation between the "agent, what he chooses and what he chooses what he chooses for" (Broadie, 1991, 180). This blurs the line between what should happen and what one wants to happen. Rather than making a choice because of something, a choice is made because something else determines its direction. A desire for something is not a factor, but rather, a co-determinant. This then strays from logic and rational choice because the desire invokes a discussion as to what type of choice is made, rather than focusing on the logic behind rational decision-making. I think this may be a bit over-complicating the concept, but I take her meaning.

For example, to ask someone looking through a telescope, "what are you doing?" warrants a response of "I am looking through a telescope." Such a response is valid in Aristotelian terms because Aristotle's definition of (token) action is not narrowed down to a specific direction of thought. Given Aristotle's focus on circumstances, I think he would be less interested in action types, in regard to external judgement (though types of actions would certainly be important subjectively). Technically, there is a reason behind the action. "What are you doing?" can also warrant the response of "I'm looking at the stars" or "I'm spying on my neighbour," two totally different answers to the same question,

based on the same action. Further investigation into the reason for an action depends on the individual at hand and cannot be determined immediately. Therefore, the action is separate from the process, and even then, the action and ultimate choice do not necessarily correlate. There is minimal knowledge needed to ask the question “what are you doing?” and even less knowledge needed to accept an answer; therefore, character in full is still up for discussion (Broadie, 1991, 180). This, I believe, is part of “knowing full well”.

According to Broadie’s interpretation of Aristotle, it is important to note that “It is from a man’s choice that we judge his character—that is from the object for the sake of which he acts, not from the act itself (NE, 1228 a 2-4)” (Broadie, 1991, 180). Thus, when we see someone is looking through a telescope, we might guess that he or she is scholarly, involved in astronomy, or has a unique hobby. If we find out that someone is looking through a telescope to spy on a neighbour, we could deduce that he or she is perverted, curious, or investigative. Our conclusions surmise the type of character of the individual, so that even though the same action is performed, the outcomes are widely different. I want to deny these claims in part, because I do not believe that one can truly judge virtue in another in a great many cases, but I do agree that we can definitely see what virtue is not based on observation of another’s actions.

“Choice” is valued higher than the “act.” Thus the question is raised; must choice be separate from the act? Can one choose independently of action and vice versa? If rational choice is the ultimate decision-maker, Broadie suggests that the “rationally choosing agent is one who also (in some sense) aims at the best” choices (Broadie, 1991, 180). However, practicality does not necessarily rely on what is the best, but rather, on what is the best at the time. Therefore, someone can have a reasoned choice even if the reason does not follow the best path. For example, a student is brilliant and has an easy path to becoming a doctor if she stays in school and keeps her grades up—there is an internship waiting for her, money is not an issue, and her family is fully able to help her study and support her in any way possible. However, the student wants to become an actress. She understands that acting is an unreliable profession, but she has a passion for films, and she wants to move to California to pursue an acting career, no matter what. She puts her mind to it, moves, gets odd jobs and is hired for one commercial, but never anything more. Ultimately, this student was

successful in that she chose to do what she wanted to do, yet it was not the most rational choice, given all the circumstances considered.

Choosing to do what we want to do could simply seem to be instant gratification. But a more realistic understanding of this process is that this is the human experience. Humans are not always good or bad, and things are not always black or white; there exists a huge area of grey in the human condition. As humans, it is natural to act against our better judgment based on what we want. The conclusion remains the same, though: “even children... can do things to bring about other things” (Broadie, 1991, 181). But even so, without prior knowledge, sometimes the outcome can merely be very successful, fail outright, or be considered a fluke. There may be reasoning behind why someone takes a particular action (even it didn’t lead to the best end); thus, rational choice and craft are linked (Broadie, 1991, 182).

Alongside Aristotelian ethics, it is critical to understand that *eudaimonia* is the “dominant signification of ‘end,’ since it is the end of ends, without which more easily recognizable ends would have no rational force as ends” (Broadie, 1991, 182). This suggests an end to a means that is of bad character—the ability to desire something that would bring happiness even if so wrongly deserved, gained through any means possible. One could reason as if using rational choice, merely copying what reasoned choice should be. Therefore, the end outweighs the process, yet this is not achieved through rational choice or positivity of character (Broadie, 1991, 182). This, then, is not virtuous.

Yet due to the duality of the individual (that of rational agent and being of desire), deliberation on means could be defined differently. Aristotle uses examples of craftsmen that Broadie rationalizes. For the carpenter, the ultimate “end” is the completion of the task; this will bring about satisfaction. However, for the carpenter as a human being, the ultimate end is still *eudaimonia*. This is the same as the concern of the statesman, his client, who also seeks *eudaimonia* (Broadie, 1991, 182)⁹⁶. This is where discrepancies in rational choice and happiness emerge.

Rational thinking and *phronesis* are then only attributed to humans who can think about an action and then decide to pursue a particular path to achieve

⁹⁶ Of course I think it is a mistake to even talk about *eudaimonia* as something one can pursue, but I see how thinking of it in this way assist Broadie in her analysis.

the end. Others may infer a proper outcome, however it is not always guaranteed and appropriately thought out. However, there are times when one acts appropriately and understands what the right thing to do is, yet this still raises the question of “why did they do it?” This seems to indicate that it is possible to be of good character yet one can seemingly choose an act in an irrational fashion, especially if a given choice changes the outcome of an anticipated end. In that case, answers are not created from experience, but rather from an investigation into the mind-set of the individual who has strayed from what is expected. Logic can still be applied, for the individual can justify his course of action, even if the action may not make sense or lend itself to generalized happiness. This suggests that the logical path may create a variety of outcomes (Broadie, 1991, 183).

If it is possible to choose wrongly or irrationally when one is pursuing an end such as *eudaimonia*, then perhaps it is wise to focus on more immediate tasks. This, I think, is where Broadie’s analysis helps when discussing soldierly virtue. Warfighters can focus on the end of completing their task in the most rational and virtuous way, and if successful, will be rightly on the path to *eudaimonia* without needing to be aware of it.

A debate then emerges between reason and logic (*logos*). If *logos* relates to the ultimate end, *eudaimonia*, then there is only one choice. However, if there are a variety of ends, this suggests reason which stems from the ability of the individual to incorporate experience as well as necessary planning of action. This suggests a hindering of one option over another and a justified end to a means that overpowers the choice of an alternative (Broadie, 1991, 183).

Broadie demonstrates that the rational choice “of something” is “for the sake of something” and that the supreme good is inherent in this choice “par excellence” (Broadie, 1991, 183). Without ethical consideration, choice becomes a technical manifestation of what someone thinks he or she wants without justified reason. Therefore, anything that has a means to an end could be rationally selected, and still be missing *phronesis*. Metacognitively, in relation to Aristotle, what makes the human race unique is that not only can we decide to apply these decisions to our behaviour, but we can also understand why we choose to do what we do and what we expect from our selections (Broadie, 1991, 184). We have the potential to realize our desires for good(s) by understanding our realizations through thought; we have to know what we are doing for the sake

of something in order to do it (Broadie, 1991, 184). Rational choices are character building. Where *phronesis* is debatable is in the realm of impulse and quick thinking since rash decisions can complicate matters.

Rational choice is not only rational, but practical (Broadie, 1991, 185). *Phronesis* elicits logical practicality. The rational and practical are fused and the individual uses his or her best judgment to act upon what is the best behaviour. Complications arise, however, when Broadie reverts back to the consideration that *phronesis* and the human agent do not always make sense. Humans do not only act out of necessity, but out of desire, which, as an emotion or pre-rational impulse, can produce challenging outcomes of interpretation. Thus, the “supreme good in practice” must always be analysed to determine whether or not someone operates with *phronesis* (Broadie, 1991, 185). The cognitive and moral substructure must be analysed in relation to moral virtue and incontinence.

Broadie questions practicality by asking the question “what can rationally bridge the gap between the undiluted abstractions of the End as such and a particular decision to do something in particular?” For example, when someone builds a house, that person does so because he knows what a house should look like. He knows what materials to use and what the end-product should look like; but ultimately, the process is based upon personal preference. The object is to determine how the individual proceeds through the cognitive process. Although rational choice and decisions of craft are discussed by Aristotle throughout the *NE*, there exists a barrier between the two such that ethical reasoning is seen as a departure from craft (Broadie, 1991, 186). In regard to the *politikos*, the political body and its responsibility, it does not deliberate about the means but rather develops a course of action to complement the means; the *politikos* does not question whether or not to honour law and order but rather elaborates on the concepts of law and order in order to fulfil its duties. The *politikos* possesses good *orthos logos* defined most basically as “good rational choice.” Though the concept of correctness—what one should do in a certain situation—can vary due to differing individual perceptions, ultimately, the one who is the most correct utilizes proper *orthos logos*.

To connect the craftsman to the individual who possesses *phronesis* likens each to a craftsman—one with building blocks of material, and the other, with ethical building blocks: considerations of emotions, actions, pleasures and pains.

The *politikos* has a responsibility to understand what its society needs and wants, what is the best course of action for the population at hand. This is not necessarily what the *politikos* wants but rather, what the citizens require.

Aristotle expands his discussion of *orthos logos* through representation of other characteristics: craft, scientific understanding, good sense, wisdom and comprehension of intelligence. According to Broadie's reading of the *NE*, Aristotle defines *phronesis* as the ability to rationally arrive at an ethical and rational choice (Broadie, 1991, 187). According to Aristotle, the moral philosopher is one who achieves this. The example of the physician versus the moral philosopher is discussed. If someone is in pain and goes to a moral philosopher and asks what should be done, the philosopher can rationally say, "Do what is best for the body and find someone trained in the medical arts for help." If someone goes to the physician and gets the same answer, they may be thrown off, for it is not specific, and unexpected, especially since the human body is a physician's area of expertise. No one would expect medical specificities from the moral philosopher, even though the moral philosopher provided the correct, rational answer: Go to the person who knows the most about the human body. No one would fault the moral philosopher, even though one would fault the physician since the physician should know better. To the moral philosopher, however, the one who possesses the knowledge is the physician and this is why the rational decision is made to see a medical professional.

This mimics the potential of the *politikos* with its specific responsibilities of *politike techne*. If someone just wants a generalized answer of what to do, then any reasonably intelligent, well-considered answer is probably good enough (e.g. someone is not sick but just wants to know how to live a healthy lifestyle, a physician does not need to be around to answer – anyone who possesses such knowledge will suffice). If this interpretation is followed, then "the questioner is the present or future *politikos*, whose goal is to foster virtuous and happy citizens" (Broadie, 1991, 190). Broadie continues:

For moral virtue was defined in terms of a certain type of *orthos logos*, and now we must consider in more detail what that is. On this view, the questioner is asking about the general nature of the kind of rightness that is operative in particular wise decisions by virtuous citizens; and the achievement of this generally conceived rightness in others is

the target to which he, as moral educator, looks when he seeks to create a balance of emotions and values in the young for whom he is responsible (Broadie, 1991, 190).

In this respect, the virtuous citizen can be both a target for the *politikos* as well as an effective member of the *polis*. One can be both seeker/questioner and producer/the one who answers of Aristotle's own advice, as defined through the type of rightness developed.

It is impossible to rely only on professionals for advice about the proper ways of life; human life is incomplete without the virtue of *phronesis*. One does not get the full picture if one is only receiving advice from an "expert"; one needs also to understand how the exceptional person, who has a knack for the topic from experience, is also able to live and make appropriate choices simply by using *phronesis*. This creates an "archetype" of the kind of person we should all aspire to be. In Broadie's analysis of the *NE*, she finds it necessary to analyse *phronesis* in relation to theoretical wisdom, craft, and moral excellence. All these depend on intellect and are not subject to the mean, but *phronesis* relies heavily on moral excellence; there is significance given to the character component. According to Aristotle, *phronesis*, theoretical wisdom, and *techne* can be characterized by their similar ends. The craftsman knows what something will look like before he builds it, but how will he know what the best will look like before he starts his process? This is similar to how a scientist anticipates truth, wondering if an answer that is found will be the best answer. In addition, Broadie believes that Aristotle does not properly discriminate between good and bad practical deliberation, but rather, focuses on the ends. To Broadie, such discrimination is necessary for determining who has internalized the concept of *phronesis* and who has not. This bleeds into Broadie's discussion of a craftsman's end versus his process as well (Broadie, 1991, 192).

In relation to craft, Broadie argues "moral virtue makes the aim right," meaning that there can be two professionals, one of whom is better than the other, one acts from wisdom, the other acts out of malice. Clearly the one who acts out of malice manipulates any oath of professionalism, yet the one who operates with the best intentions can only be defined as having moral virtue because the act she or he performs is the right-action. One who is practically wise can deliberate about what is good for another human being, like a

responsible *politikos*. On the other hand, if two people can both deliberate well, but one is of good character while the other is of bad character, Aristotle says they both could be practically wise in some small sense; Broadie disagrees, explaining how practically wise individuals have a responsibility to uphold the good for the betterment of society.⁹⁷ Political systems, she argues, become flawed when speeches and digressions, rather than what is good for the citizens, are the target.

Aristotle admits that there are different aims based on levels of morality. He believes that everyone wants the same end, but how can everyone achieve this if there are distinctions among individuals? Broadie believes that Aristotle fails his readers at this point. Confusion arises due to the craft mentality: craftsmen all seek the same aim, regardless of good or bad character, the only difference being how they seek to realize their aim. As Broadie offers arguments against Aristotle's findings of *phronesis* in conjunction with craft, she finds that his explorations in the *NE* do not create a comprehensive picture because too many of his examples leave her with more questions than answers. Broadie then relates her findings to the *techne* of medicine in order to justify some of Aristotle's findings:

Practical wisdom, according to one model proposed at the end of the last section, is like a craft such as medicine; it seeks to realise, not health, but the human good without restriction; and in this it takes its cue from an explicit, comprehensive, substantial vision of that good, a vision invested with a content different from what would be aimed at by morally inferior natures. This blueprint of the good guides its possessor in all his deliberations, and in terms of it his rational choices can be explained and justified. A choice shows practical wisdom only if two conditions are satisfied: (1) given the facts as seen by the agent, enacting the choice would lead to the realisation of his grand picture; (2) his grand picture is a true or acceptable account of the good (Broadie, 1991, 198).

The argument about a need for practical deliberation is lacking in Aristotle's text. It is discussed by Broadie as a necessity to further divide those who are practically wise from those who can see the end but are not wise. The *politikos* must possess *phronesis*, not simply as a construct of philosophy but as carefully

⁹⁷ I think Aristotle properly tackles this issue; I mention it here for Broadie's sake.

reasoned deliberation, because a comprehensive picture must be created with the potential for replication in order to ensure the best outcome for the *politikos*, an outcome that is achieved not merely by some fluke or ethical consideration. With a “grand end” formula, which Aristotle relies on, we miss the necessary process which counts for more than Aristotle explores according to Broadie (Broadie, 1991, 199). Aristotle appears more concerned with the ultimate goal of happiness than with *phronesis* as an intellectual construct that establishes practical reasoning. Without this element, though, how can one be practically wise? For Broadie, what is required is a command of philosophical ethics (Broadie, 1991, 200).

Phronesis and moral excellence rely on each other through decision-making, for one could have the power to act, yet without good character would not know how to affect change. Even with all these discrepancies, Broadie connects various chapters of the *NE* to illuminate the idea that “...in a broad sense we call people ‘wise’ when they are good at working out answers to practical problems of a restricted kind that fall outside the scope of any craft. Thus deliberation is necessary” and upholds the idea that the process must always be acknowledged (Broadie, 1991, 203).

What does not vary in the *NE*, however, is the necessity for some type of ultimate good, shouldered by the *politikos* using *phronesis* to cultivate a phronetic *polis* (Broadie, 1991, 204). The statesman can be related to the craftsman due to the professional nature and skill associated with both positions. So, if the statesman does not operate with a Grand End, how is he practically wise? On the other hand, the statesman must create the rules and establish standards, so is he not practically wise if he has no construct to follow but must forge rules and standards? The ultimate end will establish a way to reflect upon the process that brings out the best of the *politikos*, however, it will likely only appear in hindsight.

Aristotle has conflicting views of the *politikos*, seeing them as egotistical persons who endorse themselves on the large stage of politics, but also as complicated individuals who, like Pericles, are “concerned with (their) own good” but also “set (their) sights on (their) own responsibilities as one citizen amongst his fellows.” In this respect, phronetic statesmen are separated from craftsmen who bring financial gain to a region. It is the duty of political leaders to utilize *phronesis* to bring order (and *eudaimonia*) to the state. And, since *phronesis* is

part of “human excellence,” no class must benefit more than any other, but rather, the collective must thrive (Broadie, 1991, 205). “Aristotle upholds this by pointing out what Plato missed: that many non-specialist areas of ordinary life are best managed by the persons immediately concerned. These constitute the primary sphere of Aristotelian practical wisdom.”

The *politikos* takes into account the needs of the people, and it becomes their duty to carry out actions with respect to those needs. They must be practically wise about more than their own needs, prescribing how to act and react for the benefit of others. The *politikos* operates with *phronesis* on a metacognitive level, taking into account what should be done by putting themselves in the shoes of others. This creates a “self-sustaining, self-reproducing structure that seems a fitting attribute for the supreme activity of happiness, especially as happiness is the highest expression of human vitality” (Broadie, 1991, 206). Therefore, *eudaimonia* all around is a reflection of *phronesis*, which is then reflected back to a need to produce an end that is of *eudaimonia*. There is a need for self-reflection, reproduction, and an analysis of the process, human counterparts, and personal goals in order to enact all the parts needed for the proper intervention of *phronesis*.

Furthermore, Broadie explores the idea that throughout the *NE*, the supreme good is the craft of politics through the actions of the *politikos*. The “objective of statecraft” becomes synonymous with *eudaimonia* yet, since there is no precision in Aristotle’s ethics, the rational decision making falls into the hands of those in charge of constructing the laws and regulations (Broadie, 1991, 17). Therefore, “good” is still the ultimate end reached through the direct action of constructive policies. Whether this is due to the innate characteristics of those who comprise the political sphere or through their virtuous understanding that their good deeds can create a good effect on the citizens is undetermined. However, it can be assumed that the “good” is connected to “happiness” through an action (Broadie, 1991, 59). Happiness is the goal for the few or the many, and the *politikos* is the agent to bring about the beneficiary’s happiness (Broadie, 1991, 59). Thus, the ability to rationally decide is accompanied by an understanding of the needs of others, not for the benefit of only one *politikos* or one citizen, but rather, the entire *polis*. Even if it were possible for one person’s needs to triumph over another’s, ultimately the group good would have to be

constructed. Therefore, the *politikos* can “effect the conditions of the substructure for the activity of happiness. In the same way, the physician cannot directly make happen the healthy use of the limb he has healed; only the user can be agent of that” (Broadie, 1991, 59). In effect, the conditions of happiness are strengthened for the group due to the efforts of the *politikos*. Aristotle explains:

The true student of politics, too, is thought to have studied this above all things; for he wishes to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws. As an example of this we have the lawgivers of the Cretans and the Spartans, and any others of the kind that there may have been. And if this inquiry belongs to political science, clearly the pursuit of it will be in accordance with our original plan. (NE, 1102 a 7-13).

(Broadie, 1991, 59)

Since *orthos logos* cannot be predetermined, the *politikos* must follow Aristotle’s train of thought in order to know how best to act for the public good.

By referencing the *NE*, Broadie assumes that “morally virtuous activity is informed by practical wisdom” (Broadie, 1991, 370). In relation to the *politikos*, the aim is whatever the goal of the statesman is. Without being able to prove a single supreme end, the *politike techne*, the “craft of the statesman,” tends to override the basic concept of happiness (Broadie, 1991, 370). The *politike techne* acts as the device for the *politikos* to “act a certain character *viz.* good and capable of noble acts” (Broadie, 1991, 370). There is a nobility that is warranted for those in character-shaping or society-moulding positions and institutions; it can also be assumed that such institutions are houses of practical wisdom trying to steer society in the proper direction for the “moral quality” of citizens (Broadie, 1991, 371). Broadie suggests that Aristotle, rather than stray from a view that identifies happiness as the ultimate goal, supposes that happiness is associated with the statesman’s objective, whatever form it takes. This suggests that “happiness” comes in a variety of forms and is established to address whatever is needed for citizens and society to develop properly. Therefore, she believes that happiness can be equated with “human well-functioning” in conjunction with the *politike techne* (Broadie, 1991, 371).

Since the *politike techne* is, in essence, the rules required for creating the best life possible for the *politikos* and his or her constituents, decisions must be made that establish either a “supreme end as the best life” or the “supreme good

of the best life” since “there cannot be a best life unless there is a best good at its centre” (Broadie, 1991, 29). This infers that people desire and constantly try to aim for happiness even though they may not know what happiness is at the moment. How can someone be faulted when he or she tries for the good yet the result is not necessarily favourable? Is this not a form of practical wisdom similar to Aristotle being unsure of the presence of an ultimate supreme end, but insisting that one try? With the spotlight on the *politikos*, the decision-making process is highlighted and the good receives accolades while the bad receives intense negativity. Doubts may arise as to the whether there is a single end of statecraft, or whether *politike technē* actually has a rational structure for its activity (as compared to the obvious cause and effect of crafts, such as carpentry or medicine), yet political leaders do their best to lay out plans and act on them. However, leaders cannot tell the public “what they aim for” nor “teach their craft” because their ability to lead and direct tends to come from an innate quality, namely *phronesis*, that enables them to take charge and manoeuvre along the way. From an outsider’s perspective, it seems that there can be no supreme end for such a hypothetical way of acting. Therefore according to Broadie’s reading of Aristotle, if people aim for an ultimate end that seems impossible, and the only way to achieve said end is through the help of others (like the statesman), it can be assumed that there is no such end and professionals are grasping for something out of their reach. However, “when the notion of happiness is introduced we see that we are in the same case as the statesman” (Broadie, 1991, 30).

With regard to etymology, happiness is associated with a “favourable divinity steering a person’s destiny” which connects to the statesman who has that intangible quality that allows him to achieve happiness for the *polis* (Broadie, 1991, 30). To be more specific, the *politikos* helps conjure the “good we are seeking,” not necessarily the ultimate good, for we do not know if there is one (Broadie, 1991, 30). For example, if a community needs better access to resources and the legislative team decides that they will invade a more prosperous nation in order to acquire those resources, this aims toward the ultimate happiness of a more resource-rich population, better opportunities for citizens, and a better way of life for them in the future. However, simultaneously, the lives and livelihoods of those in the more prosperous nation are now in

jeopardy. I believe this to be a poor interpretation of the task of the *politikos* since it implies that their constituents do not include those neighbouring entities. Such a dilemma, created by the unequal distribution of natural resources may be currently unavoidable, but I believe it is safe to say that the path toward virtue should lead toward nations having some understanding of global citizenship.

The challenge, for Broadie, when linking *phronesis* to the cause of the statesman, is that since there is no specific logical plan for the *politikos* to follow, he must rely on the words and actions of citizens to create a collective “good” that is determined by his decisions based on *phronesis*. Therefore, “charting the relations of practical and political wisdom is a topic in itself,” one that Broadie attempts to navigate with regard to what we know and what Aristotle theorized (Broadie, 1991, 204). Aristotle assumes that the *phronimos* and the *politikos* have the same “disposition” yet vary in definition (Broadie, 1991, 204). *Phronesis* wants what is best for the community and the statesman can revel in the idea of a perfect society in which everyone is happy and all laws passed are for the greater good. However, *phronesis* enters the complicated arena in which people must decide what the aim toward the greater good is, even if said good cannot be reached. There will be times when politicians fail, there will be times when the entire community is not happy—this is the nature of politics as we know it. Therefore, how does one blend practical and political wisdom? Is it possible? The statesman must understand the “management of households and states” while the *phronimos* is concerned only with his “own” good (Broadie, 1991, 204). Therefore, the *politikos* can use his own experience to suggest to the public what is best, but he must compromise his own values if it is not the best decision for the *politikos*. Furthermore, there might not always be a practically wise choice for the politician, but rather a politically wise one that benefits the public. In that case, it is a dual solution—politically wise for the *polis* and practically wise for the *politikos*.

Broadie goes on to elaborate that right-action in itself is the end of action, yet asks “who is to judge?” (Broadie, 1991, 209). The act of production is a good action, and when one completes a good action one is on track for achieving the best end. Aristotle does not suggest that the typical statesman is someone filled with *phronesis*; rather, he is someone who tows the line, attempting to make everyone happy. Although it is challenging to appease oneself as well as the

general public, the *politikos* must always attempt to blend the actions of the background with decisions in the foreground. Therefore, the *politikos*, who by definition possesses *phronesis*, will create a society that is beneficial to the *polis* and the *politikos*.

Subsection 3. Conclusion

So how does the *politikos* go about setting up an environment in which virtue flourishes? Broadie claims that there are a number of conditions that must be presumed:

Such an expectation would assume, of course, that the available agents are indeed *such as to* act according to the *orthos logos*. And (also of course) the project of trying to develop such personalities makes sense only if the property of *being such as to* is more determinate (anyway in advance) than the property of *actually acting in accordance with the orthos logos*. The first must be determinate enough to set a recognizable approachable goal for the *politikos*. (Broadie, 1991, 61)

So the *politikos* (and similarly the military commander) has a burden, as Broadie sees it, to have the goal in mind of making others virtuous. I want to deny this claim, since it would seem to me that this isn't a concern for the *politikos*. The *politikos* has a much simpler task, as I have been arguing, in that there is no need to have this particular end in mind. The task is to be virtuous. Being virtuous includes actions that bring about an environment in which virtue is encouraged and rewarded in others. The only difference between a true *politikos* and a typical citizen is their task! By setting an example for others, the virtuous *politikos* naturally creates an environment conducive to virtuousness in others (in the same way that *eudaimonia* will, as a by-product of virtuousness, be available). It follows that *eudaimonia* will elude anyone who views *eudaimonia* as an end in itself, without due regard for the requirements of living virtuously, while one who chooses virtue as an end in itself will naturally experience *eudaimonia* as a consequence of his choice. Therefore, the burden is on the ethical student to use the environment to her advantage to become excellent herself. This idea becomes increasingly important as my argument develops.

Broadie is positioned to claim that an agent must have the virtues of character and the virtues of intellect in order to have full virtue in him- or her- self

(Broadie, 1991, 69). This is a fairly common line of argument and I don't deny that it may be true, but there does seem to be something to be said for considering the agent who has full access to the character virtues and a well-developed *phronesis* to be a good person. Perhaps one might deny such a person access to the title of *eudaimon* or *politikos*, but he or she can certainly be said to be good (enough). I will take this point a step further and say that, given our purpose (to find what soldierly virtue, or ethical soldiering, looks like), we needn't be concerned with all the intellectual virtues and can move forward with virtue simpliciter by requiring only the character virtues and *phronesis*.

That still leave some confusion as to what excellence of character is. Aristotle approaches problems from a myriad of directions, all the while chipping away at the heart of a matter until some clarity is found. Broadie helps via the dialectic about the question of excellence by examining a number of terms that seem to lie at the heart of virtue in the *NE*. Namely, *orthos logos*, *prohairesis* and the mean (Broadie, 1991, 74).

Excellence... is a state concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by a logos and in the way in which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the 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*, 1106b36)⁹⁸

Broadie thinks there needs to be something said about each key aspect of this definition, since each element is loaded.

Broadie begins by looking at a specific virtue (courage), but any virtue from any reasonable virtue list will do as an example. She claims that a virtue of character "is the property of being such as to respond well or appropriately to a certain sort of situation," (Broadie, 1991) but denies that such a response is necessarily excellent. Her argument rests on the idea that it is virtuous excellence only if it separates the agent from others, the common people, who do what is normally expected of them. In other words, if it's easy, it isn't virtue.⁹⁹ Therefore, a virtuous response has two distinct qualities. First, the response is, in fact,

⁹⁸ This is Broadie's translation of excellence and deviates slightly from the Irwin translation used elsewhere in this work.

⁹⁹ Until one achieves exemplar status, in which case being virtuous is simply done without much effort at all.

appropriate to the circumstances; second, the response is one that might normally be avoided by someone who lacks the right disposition. The virtuous agent's disposition is such that it responds exactly as reason dictates (since, from earlier arguments, we know that our desires are aligned with reason).

Broadie's conclusion is that one can build one's virtue list from those emotions and traits-of-being that might block one from acting appropriately in a given situation. Excellence, then, isn't hitting the correct mean regarding courage in a particular situation. It is hitting the correct mean regarding courage in a particular situation while also hitting the correct mean for all other character virtues in a particular situation. Obviously one's choice of virtue list is of paramount importance here since some virtue lists could contain virtues that are contradictory.

Now, Aristotle does claim that excellence is a state in relation to a feeling (NE, 1105b19). Given the dialectic to this point, we are at the stage of reason "combining with desire." In other words, on the path to virtue, reason and feelings must coincide. I believe this is what is necessary to achieve the mean. Broadie, on the other hand, is more interested in what she sees as appropriate responses. She recognises that hers is a dangerous game since it puts her on a path leading to universal rules. That said, there is one magic rule that many have claimed to be entirely circular. The one rule is that the appropriate action/feeling is the action/feeling that the *phronimos*¹⁰⁰ would have. To my mind, this rule isn't so circular. Modern interlocutors might be aware of the phrase from Christianity, "what would Jesus do?" which is meant to provide guidance to an agent facing a moral dilemma. Long before the age of Christianity, Aristotle used the same concept, asking "what would the *phronimos*; the virtuous person do?" I think it is relatively safe to assume that Aristotle believed his students would have a concept of virtue such that, when faced with an ethical dilemma, they could imagine what a virtuous agent would do, given what he had taught them about virtue.

To be clearer, the good Christian facing a moral dilemma might ask themselves "what would Jesus do?" This is a fairly meaningless statement for

¹⁰⁰ Broadie has started to use "the man of practical wisdom" (literally the *phronimos*) in this section to consider the question of *right action*. Up to this point, we have been using the term "virtuous agent", as in "it is virtuous if it is what the virtuous agent would do/feel/think." I'm happy to say that these two ways of describing the "definer of virtue" are synonymous enough that a lengthy investigation into the sudden change isn't worth too much effort at this point.

someone wholly unfamiliar with the teachings Jesus or Christian moral concepts. But for the Christian, they have been taught through a variety of parables, examples, and directives how Jesus acted in a great number of situations. They have further been inundated with Christian principles, which many would map onto Jesus if he were taking an action. Further, the belief that Jesus would act purely out of goodness means that thinking about what Jesus would do isn't polluted by thoughts of self-interest or poor faith in humanity. In the Christian's mind, Jesus' actions would be purely good, and therefore if one contemplates an action from the perspective of what they imagine someone uncorrupted by the practicalities of life and self-interest would do, they can make a decision that hopefully emulates this purity. Now, imagine that instead of Christianity, the students of Aristotle instead had a lifetime of inundation regarding virtue. To ask them "what would the virtuous person do?" does not give rise to a circularity problem.

Here is a thought experiment that extends the discussion to the situation of the warfighter: If I enter into a training environment with the goal of developing virtue, the first stage requires that my tutor provide me with a number of emotionally-charged stories about virtuous people doing virtuous things, reinforcing the stories with a dialogue that elevates virtuous people to the level of the heroic. Once I have been conditioned to admire these characters, I can then be given tasks that require difficult moral decision-making but, at this point, I am told by my tutor what I should do. Once I have been conditioned to do virtuous things under instruction, and having developed a love for virtuous people, I can imagine what a virtuous agent "looks like." Then, when faced with an ethical dilemma, one method of enacting *phronesis* might be to imagine what that hypothetical virtuous agent would do given the particularity of my situation by asking myself, what would the virtuous person do? Therefore, the virtuous warfighter, given all the particularities of his or her task, if properly trained and empowered, can imagine what soldierly virtue "looks like" (by asking him- or herself, what would the virtuous warfighter do?) and can make decisions accordingly!

Section III. Alternate Views of "Practical Wisdom"

Aristotle isn't the only one to conceptualize the Good. In addition to the

substantial body of work on the Good in philosophy, the concept of the Good has been examined in literature and history. These advances in examination of the Good have changed the structure of society and our understanding of the relationship between the individual and his or her *psyche*, as well as our understanding of the relation between the individual and the community. Considering the tenets of Aristotle's philosophy, published in a variety of ancient texts and analysed by modern scholars, it becomes essential to identify where there are diverging points of view and where some of Aristotle's arguments fall apart. I will discuss some alternate viewpoints in order to place the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* within the contemporary debate about the Good.

One might argue that there are many factors that determine one's ability to achieve and sustain the good life; however, as society and people are malleable entities, so, too, is the good life. Aristotle saw this as the attaining of "small g" goods (small goods which are generally insufficient by themselves to bring *eudaimonia* to fruition), but there are some theories that claim that it is only these small goods that are within reach. And it seems that much of one's worldly knowledge about happiness revolves around small goods. But people who attempt to live by the standard of the "small g" goods need only attempt to understand themselves in a limited way in order to successfully apply certain practices within society – their understanding does not rise to the level of the demandingness one finds in virtue ethics.

Aristotle's definition of the good life requires one to have the ability to understand one's place in society and to achieve one's fullest moral potential; there is no emphasis on money or other small goods. Instead the emphasis is on excellence and the manifestation of self-assurance, as well as intellectual and emotional prosperity. The good life guides one towards *eudaimonia* and virtue. However, some might claim that one reading of Aristotle shows that he requires one to have sufficient access to the small "g" goods in order for one to truly pursue virtue.¹⁰¹ According to Aristotle's good life, to achieve *eudaimonia*, you must think about what you really need and act upon that, which might only be possible if one is freed from thinking about basic survival, or even simple luxuries. That said, while physical manifestations of wealth may make you happy

¹⁰¹ As exemplified by, say, the virtue of generosity or magnanimity, which require one to have money or subsistence to give in the first place.

momentarily – objects come and go—you only have one rational self. What happiness you achieve internally will be with you forever, whereas, when you have learned to determine what virtue requires of you, “small goods” lose much of their meaning.

Phronesis is something like the ability to understand how to make good choices and to know why these choices are inherently good. Without *phronesis*, the moral good life is unattainable; however, the projected good life can be circumnavigated, which, as noted in critiques of Aristotle’s philosophy, can be garnered by anyone in the public realm.

Out of the issues described above come arguments against the basic principles of Aristotle’s stance on *phronesis*. First, it is argued, Aristotle believes that *phronesis* requires a goodness of character. Therefore, since not everyone has a good character, not everyone possesses *phronesis*. Further, Aristotle’s critics try to show that there are claims in his philosophy that allow for even the most vicious agent to have some manner of *phronesis*, since it seems reasonable to assume that everyone has sufficient reasoning power to understand the difference between good and bad choices and, to know when they are making a choice that is not virtuous.

Many virtue ethicists believe that the Good emerges over time, which suggests that they assume people have enough understanding of what is “good” to make moral decisions that lead to the Good. Similarly, through reformation of character, they claim it is possible for the depraved to increase their knowledge of what is Good and thus, become more virtuous. This is cause for concern as we will soon see.

Many critics, like Williams, object to Aristotle’s, “doctrine of the mean.”

Aristotle’s...views on [virtue] are bound up with one of the most celebrated and least useful parts of his system, the doctrine of the mean, according to which every virtue of character lies between two correlative faults or vices..., which consist respectively of the excess and the deficiency of something of which the virtue represents the right amount. The theory oscillates between an unhelpful analytical model (which Aristotle himself does not consistently follow) and a substantively depressing doctrine in favour of moderation. The doctrine of the Mean is better forgotten (Williams, 1985, 36).

Complications in this doctrine emerge when one must determine what is the “right time” or “right place” or “how much” of something is worthy. Aristotle’s use of *phronesis* in relation to the doctrine of the mean seems to offer very little information about what these virtues are and how to properly gauge them in a way that would be satisfying to system-builders or ethics tutors.

According to Russell there is a problem of too many virtues and thus an internal conflict where one must determine which virtue outweighs another (Russell, 2008a, 329). Some virtues, therefore, must be judged not only for value and use, but for their ability to offer one a way to determine and choose the virtue that is more important and critical for a given time and place. This suggests to Russell that practical wisdom is fluid and, for one to be both “practical” and have “wisdom,” one must be able to expand beyond Aristotle’s definition of *phronesis* in order to determine the best course of action, especially if more than one course of action makes sense. According to Russell, what Aristotle failed to account for was the possibility of a variety of choices due to the particularity-of-circumstance, or due to personal preference, or character, that would enable individuals to be more than in possession of practical wisdom but also to understand how to practically apply virtue. I think this objection simply misunderstands Aristotle. *Phronesis* is exactly the mechanism by which narrowing the choices regarding right-action is done. It is practical in that it is what is needed to be virtuous in practice, not what is needed to be expedient.

Russell promotes the exploration of the task of virtue ethicists who attempt to distinguish “ought” from what is “right.” This separates Aristotle’s virtuous person from the modern person who can distinguish between what should be done and the technically “right” thing to do (Russell, 2008b, 301). Here, the right action cannot always be defined by what the person who has practical wisdom would do, for each action develops out of particular set of circumstances. Contra Aristotle, Russell claims that what one should do does not always imply the right-action. Therefore, what one is taught is right may not apply in all situations. He suggests that “ought” can imply “can,” which operates by persuasion of efforts, ideas, and thoughts, not the ultimate decision making process.

According to Kamtekar, sometimes one can be overly virtuous, which Aristotle did not account for in his discussion of *phronesis* (Kamtekar, 2010, 147). For example, if one is honest “to a fault,” he or she could hurt someone else’s

feelings. In that case, to what extent is the virtuous behaviour (honesty) appropriate? Who makes that determination? Does the virtuous person negate the virtuous characteristic in the particular circumstance? If this is true, then Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* and how the person of good character will always act in the "right" is negated by the fact that what one deems "right" is not always good. Therefore, the consequences of action must be acknowledged each time the opportunity arises; *phronesis* operates as a misleading quality if utilized alone without taking into account the human psychological aspect. But Kamtekar's argument also fails to fully understand the role *phronesis* plays in Aristotle's philosophy. A phronetic agent cannot be "honest to a fault" because that would pull her away from the mean. *Phronesis* is, as I've stated before, the mechanism that assists in targeting the appropriate mean in the particularity-of-circumstance. Therefore, one will be as honest as is most appropriate to the situation, which is exactly what virtue is all about.

Psychologists try to gauge whether or not practical wisdom should be applied at all. According to Schwartz and Sharpe—who are supporters of practical wisdom—given the way society develops, it is becoming harder and harder to implement practical wisdom in the workplace and one's home life (Schwartz and Sharpe, 2005, 377). They suggest we re-invent the way people do business in order to accommodate all the Aristotelian virtues into everyday life; however, Aristotle believes that the person who has cultivated a high standard of practical wisdom is truly virtuous and is living the happiest life possible, does this mean that the person who only cultivates one virtue, excellently, has a bad character and poor life? No, it suggests that it is possible to attain varying degrees of practical wisdom and, therefore, it is not necessary to reconstruct society to mimic the Aristotelian way. We can simply encourage the development of positive attributes by focusing on our strengths (Schwartz and Sharpe, 2005, 377). Aristotle never applauds the person who is exceptional in one thing, but mediocre in another. In his view one must always strive to expand one's full potential. This relates to decision-making, as well. One might be right but it should not be taken due to time or place. For example, telling a white lie. To an outsider, this could be wrong, but honesty might not be the best policy if it's going to hurt someone's feelings. By taking feelings into account, someone telling a white lie could be deemed to have practical wisdom. However, according to

Aristotle, the person telling the white lie is dishonest, not entirely virtuous, and thus, does not exhibit practical wisdom (Schwartz and Sharpe, 2005, 378). According to Schwartz and Sharpe *phronesis* is a fluid concept that blends with positive psychology. To define it strictly in Aristotelian terms makes it too far removed from present day experience. But this perspective fails to take into account the moral psychology put forth by Aristotle. The *eudaimonia* attained by the virtuous agent isn't piecemeal, and virtues cannot be practised in a mutually exclusive way. The most courageous woman on Earth might still be a vicious agent and the most generous man on Earth might still be a vicious agent. It isn't any one virtue that makes one virtuous. It is a unity of the virtues, combined with *phronesis*, that allows one to achieve the kind of happiness, fulfilment, and well-being that Aristotle had in mind.

According to Gartner, there are schisms in Aristotle's presentation of *phronesis*. If *phronesis* is supposed to bring about ultimate happiness, why is the necessary action component not present in all of Aristotle's texts? For example, complete, natural virtue, along with contemplative action (which is not a virtue of character), comprise Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* (Gartner, 2013, 1). Therefore, how can *phronesis* be applied when the definition excludes the necessary steps for its application? Has this problem emerged over time or is this a complication due to the developments of our present day? Therefore, virtues of thought and virtues of character must be analysed to understand if full happiness is achieved.

The dichotomy continues in Green's work where he analyses practical wisdom in conjunction with the judicial system (Green, 2016, 91-121). For example, if someone is convicted of murder, but up until the crime the murderer had led a virtuous life, should he be punished using an eye-for-an-eye judgement, or should he be given a second chance, with an appeal to *ethos*? This should be easy enough to answer, since one who seeks virtue should always take responsibility for their actions. But what if this situation came about because one was faced with a dilemma between two (or more) virtues? The ability to distinguish between two necessary virtues is relevant in today's society. However, we cannot always apply what we believe about how we, as a society, should operate. This opposition between the virtues is why we need laws and the judicial system in the first place. To be tried by a "jury of one's peers" (assuming

we are all on a path to virtue and can imagine what the virtuous exemplar would do), for if there was a right answer to every criminal justice question, we would not need the judicial system (Gartner, 2013, 1). Yet to know that the courts sometimes fail both plaintiffs and defendants, suggests that there is a flaw in the concept of practical wisdom, for the ability to see and act on grey morality, rather than black and white morality does not provide comfort in every situation. Therefore, how can practical wisdom be a thriving concept in society when the decisions it garners do not help create ultimate societal happiness?

I think Gartner's question is easily answered. Quite simply, few people on any given jury truly practise virtue. Aristotle does not assume that people are born with innate virtues, but that they must be developed, learned, inculcated, etc. That is the purpose of this thesis: to show that if a large-scale implementation of virtue education (specifically in the soldiery) were to become the norm in a society, then the overall effect would be an increase in persons and leaders in a constant state of creating an environment conducive to virtue. The system of virtue education, once it reaches a critical mass, would become self-sustaining and self-regulating (to an extent).

According to D'Souza, "the virtuous agent acts virtuously because she recognizes the goodness of the act itself" (D'Souza, 2017, 68). This further complicates the philosophy of practical wisdom because it is something that can be acknowledged yet not honoured in daily life. Even one with poor character can see the goodness in an act and complete said act, yet it does not mean they have achieved the state of *phronesis*, but rather, that they know how to manipulate the system. The interpretive nature of D'Souza's phrase denies that *phronesis* can be achieved and implemented, but claims rather, that under the guise of understanding practical wisdom, anyone can apply its tenets (D'Souza, 2017, 69). "Truly virtuous action must be in accord with correct reason" (D'Souza, 2017, 70) as explored in Aristotle's own analysis of the process:

But for actions in accord with the virtues to be done temperately or justly it does not suffice that they themselves [the actions] have the right qualities. Rather the agent must also be in the right state when he does them. First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state. (D'Souza, 2017, 70)

To have *phronesis* and to be truly virtuous then means to be free of the human flaws that encourage one to think and act beyond Aristotle's philosophical views. It is a process, not associated with impromptu decision-making that permeates modern society. My work does not assume that Aristotle's "deliberation" is a vast and tedious process, rather it is simply the careful application of reason structured by the phronetic mechanisms that guide one toward the correct set of virtuous means.

According to Price, virtue and *phronesis* are inherently intertwined and, therefore, all the credit cannot be given to *phronesis* as a means to an end (Price, 2012, 1-8). For example, the agent needs a good character to understand what means to an end is wanted and then an understanding of how to achieve that end. This suggests that the concept of *phronesis* can be mimicked by anyone who has witnessed a practically wise act; yet how can we distinguish between the person who has actually achieved this level of moral understanding versus the one who understands the right path yet does not devote his life to this type of operation (Price, 2012, 2)? Therefore, if virtue, *logos*, and *phronesis* are intertwined and someone of good character needs to understand all three in order to complete the proper decision-making process, what weight is given to one over the others? Aristotle's texts give no definitive answer; instead, *phronesis* is defined in relation to other characteristics. The agent must calculate the best way to achieve the best end for him, not necessarily the best end in general, which defies the ultimate goal of *eudaimonia* for *phronesis*. Price digresses:

We read in the *De Anima* [DA], 'Whether one shall do this thing or do that thing it is the work of reasoning to decide. And such reason necessarily implies the power of measurement by a single standard; for what one pursues is the greater good' (III.11 434a7-9). What Aristotle means here by 'measurement by a single standard' (*heni metrein*) is not clear: it can hardly mean a universal standard that applies in every context; it might mean a single standard relevant to the present context, or (more realistically still) a single standard for each comparison that has to be made on the way towards a final arbitration. (Price, 2012, 2)

This suggests that the goal of *eudaimonia* is unattainable and, therefore, even if happiness is desired in every situation, there is a different type of happiness needed in each situation, given the variations in human action and behaviour.

In conclusion, critical opposition to Aristotle's idea of *phronesis* emerges due to contemporary factors and the presumed ability to understand deeper psychological developments in a time far removed from that of Aristotle. It is assumed that although *phronesis* might be an effective trait to possess, it is not practical in application. The aforementioned scholars and writers explore how *phronesis* can be referenced and qualified on a case-by-case basis, which, as a divergence from the end-all-be-all considerations presented by Aristotle, cannot effectively operate as a standard of morality or a basis for judgement of character, especially in contemporary world. Therefore, Aristotle's critics conclude that by understanding the limitations of *phronesis*, one is able to poke holes in the mind-set of the ancient Greeks and how and why they followed the teachings of Aristotle and how the concept of ethics has changed over time.

A deeper reading of the *NE* can easily refute each of the critical objections cited above. *Phronesis* is a powerful tool, but without the character virtues in place, right-action may not be achievable, or at the very least achievable only by accident. Therefore a failure to understand the unity of the character virtues as a necessary component of *phronesis* and virtue as a whole is going to lead to misplaced criticism of any of the individual mechanisms. Frankly, Aristotle is well-placed to manage these objections even without significant "interpretation" of his system. That is not to say that there aren't issues, only that the issues are not nearly as disastrous as his critics believe them to be.

Section IV. Virtue for the Warfighter

Now that I have shown the importance of Aristotle's philosophy for my own work and countered the arguments of some of his critics, I think it wise to lay out what elements of virtue are crucial for the warfighter. Simply put, soldierly virtue and ethical soldiering will hinge on four elements. The first is excellence of character and function. This element of virtue is supported by the exegesis above. The translation of *virtue* as moral excellence, in addition to being a correct translation, fits the psychology of a warfighter. If an exemplar were to make it clear to warfighters that to seek virtue makes them better warfighters, better

human beings, and elevated agents, then the rapid inculcation of virtue would easily occur. Although I have not provided sufficient argument for the claim that moral excellence is synonymous with maximized moral potential, and cannot develop that argument here without going too far afield, I find this idea to be true.

The second element is the centrality and utmost importance of *phronesis* in practicing virtue. This element is most significant and will be comprehensively addressed in the chapter on that trait.

The third element is that of the *politike technē* since warfighters are the ones who will create the environments that lead to virtue for both other warfighters and the civilians they serve. As students of virtue seeking exemplar status, warfighters have a unique authority to lead others. Part of this authority comes from the raw capacity to inflict suffering and death with a small degree of impunity. However, over time, assuming these recommendations about developing soldierly virtue are taken seriously, the number of virtuous warfighters will reach critical mass such that within the role of the warfighter virtue will become self-sustaining, allowing warfighters to focus on acting as exemplars for everyone, warfighter and civilian alike.

The fourth element is the unity of the virtues. Warfighters must be properly inculcated with a well-reasoned, well-designed, universalizable virtue list that is practised as a whole, not in segments. The unity of the virtues must be practised simultaneously with the development of *phronesis*, and is, in fact inseparable from *phronesis*. As the character virtues develop, so does *phronesis*. And as *phronesis* develops, so do the virtues. For example, you would never praise someone as virtuous simply because they are brave, generous, and witty; instead you would praise someone for being brave, generous, witty, magnanimous, properly bashful, and all the other virtues (of whichever list was used), in the proper proportion, and exercised at the proper time, given a particularity-of-circumstance.

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In conclusion, I have presented the analyses of W. Ross, T. Irwin, R. Crisp, C.C.W. Taylor, and J. Barnes, all of whom offer different introductory views of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Each analysis presents an interesting and varied perspective with enough of a reasonable amount of agreement to allow one to glean some core ideas. Having given these scholars a place to state their case, I

engaged with Sarah Broadie's *Ethics with Aristotle* to add depth to the introductory interpretations and to further introduce the single most important concept in virtue: *phronesis*. Finally, I engaged with critics of Aristotelian ethics and provided a defence for a theory of virtue that will be used to develop my concept of soldierly virtue. The next chapter will examine *phronesis* in depth and place it at the centre of the concept of virtue. I will show how the warfighter will benefit from this phronetic development of virtue to choose the right-action in any particularity-of-circumstance. Following this, I will consider Nancy Sherman's take on Stoic virtue and argue that the Aristotelian-based system of virtue is more effective for training competent warfighters.

Chapter 5

Phronesis

Section I. The Argument for *Phronesis*

Today, *phronesis* is commonly translated as practical wisdom, understood as wisdom about practical matters regarding one's well-being. Early European Aristotelians translated *phronesis* as prudence, a term which has since taken on a deeply religious significance, or a more colloquial common-language term for any good decision (moral or non-moral, well-deliberated or not deliberated, purposeful or accidental). Rather than opt for either of these translations, which might mislead the reader, I prefer to keep the Greek term and provide arguments to show that *phronesis* is not simply one intellectual virtue among others, but is, rather, a virtue that shares traits with both the virtues of the rational and the non-rational aspects of one's being. As I understand the term, *phronesis* involves:

- i. a clear understanding of what is important in life, what matters, is worthwhile, or valuable in the world;
- ii. the ability to assess any situation, in light of (i); being able to identify which aspects of a situation are morally relevant; and thereby discern an appropriate response and decision to act accordingly; and
- iii. the ability to know how to follow through on one's decision.

Thus, *phronesis* is a virtue of the "rational part of the *psyche*" insofar as it involves (i) and (ii). It is specifically a virtue of the calculative rather than the scientific part of the *psyche* (NE, 1139a11-15). *Phronesis* is the ability to "deliberate well" (NE, 1140a25-28) about "how to live well," but is not concerned with matters requiring specialist knowledge (*techne*) that are morally neutral. Intellectual virtues such as *euboulia* (sound deliberation) (NE, 1142b1-30), *sunesis* (understanding) (NE, 1143a1-15), and *gnome* (equitable judgement) (NE, 1143a20-35) are involved in the ability to deliberate well, but these are all separate and distinct from *phronesis*. Insofar as *phronesis* involves (iii) as well as (i) and (ii), it involves being motivated by right desires (NE, 1139a21-31) and choosing the course of action to be followed. *Phronesis* is the impetus that initiates action in circumstances where there is a moral stimulus.

I consider *phronesis* to be a special virtue in that it behaves as an

intellectual virtue (having no vice of excess but rather various levels of attainment), but it also behaves like a character virtue, in that it is a necessary requirement for the exercise of the character virtues and the recognition of virtuous-action-causing circumstances in the world. *Phronesis* is inherently part of each character virtue, inseparable. It is the rigorously developed moral intuition of an agent who is properly morally developed.

In order to place my understanding of *phronesis* in context, I will outline Aristotle's concept of *phronesis*, show the similarities to my perception thereof, and indicate how my concept of *phronesis* differs from his. I will follow that with an in-depth discussion of John McDowell's understanding of *phronesis*. Finally I will argue for the importance of my own nuanced interpretation of *phronesis* for virtue in general and for soldierly virtue in particular.¹⁰²

Section II. Aristotle's *Phronesis*

Because I use a broadly-Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* as a foundation, I believe it is of value to provide an expanded interpretation of *phronesis* (alongside Broadie) as it is presented in the *NE* Book VI (*NE*, 1140a25-1145a12). In general, I either extend or augment what Aristotle has written, or take the Aristotelian account in a slightly different direction. I intend to present a view that shows where those divergences originate and why they matter.

We are briefly introduced to *phronesis* early in the *NE* (*NE*, 1107a1), but the language here is loose (Broadie, 1991, 80; *NE*, 1138b26). It isn't until Book VI that Aristotle gives any clear discussion of the concept. While *phronesis* is given its full due during Aristotle's discussion of the intellectual virtues, it is important to recognise that *phronesis* was introduced in the books on character virtue (unlike any other intellectual virtue) and this is because *phronesis* is inseparable from the character virtues. *Phronesis* is unlike the intellectual virtues such as *techne* which can be developed independently of the character virtues and its fellow intellectual virtues. While *phronesis* is necessary for the character virtues to flourish, the intellectual virtues are independent yet related (except in some cases of *techne* which are often used in examples illustrating what the character virtues are not). But given that, Aristotle considers *phronesis* to be a virtue of the rational *psyche*

¹⁰² One and the same thing!

(by implication indicative of intellectual virtues), unlike the character virtues described earlier (both in the *NE* and in this work).

In order to understand Aristotle on *phronesis*, it is necessary to summarize the intellectual virtues and work out how *phronesis* relates to the remaining intellectual virtues (*sophia, episteme, nous, and techne*)¹⁰³. By looking at how *phronesis* interacts with its fellow intellectual virtues, and using what has already been discussed regarding how it interacts with the character virtues, it will become clear why I claim *phronesis* is a special virtue.

The virtues of the *psyche* come in two flavours, the virtues of the non-rational part of the *psyche* and the virtues of the rational part of the *psyche* (*NE*, 1139a5). These are the character virtues, which have already been discussed at length, and the intellectual virtues, which belong to those parts of the *psyche* infused with reason. This is further divided into virtues that relate to the study of things that could not be otherwise and those that could be otherwise (*NE*, 1139a8). The scientific part of the *psyche* presides over those things that could not be otherwise (for example: knowledge about the past), and that part of the *psyche* cannot produce action. Action has its roots in deliberation. Deliberation is what Aristotle describes as rationally calculating, and one cannot rationally calculate what could not be otherwise. This makes deliberation an activity belonging to that part of the rational *psyche* separate from the scientific.

Deliberation is the origin of decision. “Now virtue of character is a state that decides; and decision is deliberative desire” (*NE*, 1139a23). Decision is the origin of action. “The principle of an action - the source of motion, not the goal - is decision” (*NE*, 1139a32). “If, then, the decision is excellent, the reason must be true and the desire correct, so that what reason asserts is what desire pursues” (*NE*, 1139a24). One might say that deliberation is the tie that binds; virtue is the excellence of action born from good decisions which are born from reason. Thus good deliberation brings about good decisions, which in turn bring about good action.

What does not bring about action is sense perception: “there are three [capacities] in the soul - sense perception, understanding, desire - that control

¹⁰³ The virtue list reserved for character virtues is open for this work, but since the intellectual virtues are less varied and seem to encompass the necessary aspects of the rational *psyche*, I would argue the intellectual virtue list is reasonably complete and can be taken as containing the traits needed for Aristotle’s theory.

action and truth. Of these three, sense perception is clearly not the principle of action” (NE, 1139a18), which would seem to put sense perception into a category of input without output. Without some other mechanism, sense perception would effectively be completely passive. As will be seen in my arguments for *phronesis* that follow, I often use examples using sense perception to illuminate the points I’m making. This seems to put me in conflict with Aristotle, since he describes *phronesis* as deliberative. This isn’t as big a problem for me as it might seem. *Phronesis* is not sense perception (we might say that whatever mechanism intuition excites is the true perceiver), but is instead a state of being in which the disposition to sense the right things is brought about. In other words, *phronesis* is to sense perception¹⁰⁴ what the part of the mind that translates visual perception into thought is to sight. One can see now that my understanding of *phronesis* is not so distant from Aristotle’s conception of *phronesis*.

Goals help to activate desire. “That is why decision requires understanding and thought, and also a state of character; for acting well or badly requires both thought and character” [...] “every producer in his production aims at some [further] goal, and the unqualified goal is not the product, which is only the [qualified] goal of some [production], and aims at some [further] goal” (NE, 1139a35-1139b2). This is why having the right goal or end (*eudaimonia* ultimately, but also the fine and noble) is so fundamental to virtue. One might say that *eudaimonia* is the consequent end, but that virtue is the goal. “[An unqualified goal is] what we achieve in action, since acting well is the goal, and the desire is for the goal” (NE, 1139b3).

Phronesis belongs to practical intellect, here identified as the part of the *psyche* that has beliefs. Moral virtue, by contrast even strict virtue, belongs to the “character” part of the *psyche*. Given that Aristotle also describes this part as the seat of natural virtue, a state found in non-rational creatures, he evidently has in mind the non-rational, passionate part. Thus the ensuing claims that virtue cannot exist without *phronesis* and, with *logos*, should be taken – as they often are – to mean simply that genuine virtue is dependent on *phronesis*. “Strict” virtue, like natural virtue, is an excellent condition of the non-rational capacities for passions, in which they tend to be in a mean between extremes; the difference is that strict

¹⁰⁴ Specifically the sense perception of morally relevant stimuli.

virtue only occurs in a *psyche* that also possesses *phronesis* (Moss, 2011, 204).

To summarise, the rationally calculating part of the *psyche* is the origin of action, but is reliant on the character virtues to provide the correct desires and motivations that are constituent to acting rightly. “Virtue makes the goal right” (NE, 1144a7). As we will soon discover, *phronesis* is a trait of the rationally calculating part of the *psyche* (the part that contemplates those things which could be otherwise).

In addition to *phronesis*, the other intellectual virtues are craft, scientific knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Aristotle finds it relevant to point out that belief and supposition are assuredly not virtues (NE, 1139b16). One might surmise that Aristotle does not see beliefs and suppositions as being excellences, even if they happen to be aspects of the rational *psyche*.

Knowledge and craft are easy enough to understand by looking at their objects, but Aristotle believes that since the object of *phronesis* is human beings, one must study what a human being with *phronesis* (the *phronimos*) is like. This is similar to one way in which Aristotle defines virtue (by mirroring what the virtuous exemplar is like).

Aristotle defines *phronesis* as deliberation on living well (NE, 1140a31). That is to say, it is deliberation on living well in general, not merely on being healthy or strong. This is tied inextricably to good deliberation, such that we could go a step further with Aristotle’s definition by saying that *phronesis* is being able to deliberate well (correctly) about matters of the Good. He says this kind of deliberation must be about the practicalities of life, therefore we do not deliberate about things that cannot be otherwise. *Phronesis*, and indeed good deliberation, is not a science or a craft:

...if we cannot deliberate about things that are by necessity; it follows that prudence¹⁰⁵ is not a science nor yet a craft knowledge. It is not science, because what is available in action admits of being otherwise; and it is not craft knowledge, because action and production belong to different kinds. (NE, 1140b)

If it is not a science or a craft, then, according to Aristotle, it must be something else: the state of grasping the truth concerning action. Therefore *phronesis*

¹⁰⁵ Irwin uses the term “prudence” as a translation for *phronesis*, which is not uncommon. Given that Aristotle so rigorously denies that *sophia* and *phronesis* are alike, I think it is a better synonym than “practical wisdom”.

seems to hold little relation to the first two intellectual virtues. It's less true for the last two, wisdom and understanding.

Science might be the grasping of truth about universals, and craft might be grasping the truth about products, but *phronesis* is the grasping of truth about actions¹⁰⁶. To say that *phronesis* is only about knowledge of principles will not work. In fact, he states that *phronesis* isn't about knowledge of principles at all, that comes from someplace else. Rather, *phronesis* entails the application of principles to discern a course of action according to particular circumstances. Whilst wisdom (*Sophia*) encompasses the knowledge of principles and theoretical understanding there-of, *phronesis* requires a greater depth of effort. Aristotle claims that wisdom is the understanding of natural facts and *phronesis* is the deliberation about human actions (NE, 1141a17).

The ability to study what is good for other human beings is not necessarily *phronesis*, but it is closely related. Since *phronesis* is about human action, the *phronimos* will be able to contemplate what is true and good for other humans to be doing (NE, 1140b10). When the *phronimos* takes action to create circumstances conducive for other humans to exercise their developing *phronesis*, I use the term "*politikos*." The *politikos* is the *phronimos* who deliberates for the good of others. This extension of Aristotle's reasoning shows how the *phronimos* may develop their *phronesis* to the degree such that, in addition to their service to humanity by practicing *phronesis* in their individual capacities (in other words aligning their personal actions toward the Good), they may also be of service by creating an environment conducive to successful phronetic training. Depending on where one is in one's virtue development, it can be argued that the one closer to being a *politikos* fits the role of virtuous exemplar to a greater degree than the *phronimos*.

Now the question is: What aspects of Aristotle's account of *phronesis* clash with my own account? While I have tried to include the major divergences between our accounts in my presentation so far, there are some aspects of Aristotle's concept of *phronesis*, starting with Chapter 8 of Book VI of the *NE*, that I feel compelled to reject. The greatest divergence is that I deny that *phronesis* is

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle discusses what might be called "bad deliberation" (1142b20), allowing that one can deliberate, but not deliberate well, since one might not be correct in one's deliberations (if we remember the quote about correct desires and true reasoning). Therefore it's reasonable to assume one can deliberate toward vicious ends. This just wouldn't be *phronesis* as such.

strictly an intellectual virtue. I will argue in the next section that *phronesis* is a special virtue belonging neither to the character virtues nor to the intellectual virtues exclusively. That said, I have a number of more minor concerns that are much easier to consider here. Firstly, I disagree with the idea that there are many different kinds of *phronesis*. Secondly, I deny that *phronesis* can only be concerned about the good of the *phronimos*. Thirdly, I find a degree of inconsistency in the idea that *phronesis* is a trait only available to the aged.

Aristotle identifies the following “kinds” of *phronesis*: political science; the science of the individual (which he claims is the dominant conception); household science; and legislative and judicial sciences (NE, 1141b33). I don’t take a very strong exception to this aspect of the text, since it’s quite obvious Aristotle is trying to capture what he sees as the popular understanding. It seems he is trying to capture various ways in which ordinary people might describe circumstances or tasks. That said, he gives a great deal of weight to individual deliberative effort, and seems to endorse that as the primary definition. As I have described *phronesis*, this one virtue covers all of these aspects without qualification. This may seem a niggling objection, but when I describe the *politikos*, I want to ensure that it is understood that I mean a virtuous person who exhibits *phronesis* in an advanced state. Not that an earlier stage of *phronesis* is itself different. One might say that the stage at which the *phronimos* is able to deliberate successfully about the good of everyone is the point at which they become the *politikos*.

This leads to my second major divergence. I disagree with what I believe is a restrictive selfishness described by Aristotle when one contemplates the good for oneself. My point rests on a truly uncharitable interpretation, but one I think needs to be discussed and then set aside before it can get in the way of my argument. Given that I have seen this mentioned in some of the works by Aristotelian scholars presented earlier, a flat denial seems necessary. The selfishness (to be uncharitable) is hinted at by Aristotle in the following statement:

The one who knows about himself, and spends his time on his own concerns seems to be prudent, while politicians seem to be too active. Hence Euripides says, ‘Surely I cannot be prudent, since I could have been inactive, numbered among all the many in the army, and have equal share... For those who go too far are too active...’ For people seek what is good for themselves and suppose this [inactivity] is the right action [to achieve their good.] (NE, 1142a)

This seems to imply that one cannot be both a practitioner of *politike techne* and a *phronimos* at the same time. Yet we have already seen that when studying the *phronimos* we find virtue in exemplars that deliberate about the good of others. We could, of course, assume that when Aristotle suggests that politicians are too active he is referring to the practitioners of *politike techne* (an occupation) rather than the *politikos* (an exemplar). His suggestion that people should “seek what is good for themselves” may refer to the *phronimos*, or even the student of virtue, who is predisposed toward attaining the Good and would, as such, consider the good for themselves to be efforts made toward this pursuit. This pursuit is subjective and deliberative such that attaining the good for oneself is the pursuit of virtue. While the pursuit of virtue is the good for oneself, it is contingent on deliberating about the good for others and engendering an environment conducive to their virtue.

Finally, Aristotle claims that there are no phronetic youth. This is because knowledge of particulars comes with experience, and without much experience of the correct knowledge of universals and particulars one might be prone to errors (NE, 1142a13). Further, deliberation is hard, far too difficult for the inexperienced. And finally, youthful students of virtue have no conviction. Irwin attempts to rescue this aspect of Aristotle’s argument by claiming there is some debate about the ordering of the *NE* and that these statements are out of character for the rest of Book VI (Irwin, 1985, xiv). I am inclined to agree that these notes don’t belong in this part of the discussion. Even so, I still wish to deny the validity of the arguments provided. As I understand it, *phronesis* is developed alongside the character virtues, growing in stages from childhood onward, reaching its apex with adult flourishing. Also, for me *phronesis* is the virtue upon which all the character virtues rely. If these claims are true, then *phronesis* has to be present, at least in its earliest stages, long before the character virtues have been fully habituated. I will stipulate that the grand virtuous exemplar, the true master of virtue, is a high unattainable ideal (and therefore “hard” to achieve), so claiming that *phronesis* is too difficult to learn early on calls into question whether virtue can be learned at all at this grand level. However, I believe that virtue is available to the young students of virtue, although perfect *phronesis*, just like any other perfect virtue, is something that develops through practice, so can only come

about by means of significant worldly experience.

After getting off the Aristotelian train in Chapter 8 of Book VI, I am, with only a slight hesitation, ready to climb back aboard. Aristotle has already discussed deliberation as it applies to all the virtues that contemplate that which could be otherwise, but he returns to the idea here, specific to *phronesis*. Good deliberation, that kind which leads to virtuous action, is, he says, correct/true (NE, 1142b9). He denies that good deliberation can come about by being knowledgeable about universals, or by being a remarkably good guesser, but requires correct knowledge of particulars. Belief has no value for good deliberation according to Aristotle, but I take issue with that claim since part of the way desires are developed is through the belief that if one seeks to be like the virtuous exemplar, then one will have a good life. Since the desire-building stage of moral development happens before the phronetic, the student of virtue isn't able to rely on deliberation (or perhaps more accurately good deliberation) toward the good life. Deliberation is the source of decisions, and decisions rely on the goals sought by desire. Therefore one who is reasoning toward a goal must take into account that their goal is based on a belief. That aside, the deliberation, in order to be good, must be correct. Accidental correctness simply isn't acceptable for good deliberation (NE, 1142b25). It might be desirable when compared to the alternative of being incorrect, but is insufficient for *phronesis*.

Perhaps one of the most important concepts to grasp regarding deliberation, specifically as it applies to soldierly virtue, is that time is not a factor in determining whether deliberation is good or not:

Further, one person may deliberate a long time before reaching the right thing to do, while another reaches it very quickly. Nor, then, is the first condition enough for good deliberation; good deliberation is correctness that accords with what is beneficial, about the right thing, in the right way, and at the right time. (NE, 1142b27)

Aristotle thereby clears the way to deny any claim that the act of deliberation in combat is a fairy tale because there is no time for it. Deliberation is about rationally calculating toward a good decision, and so long as one has been properly attuned to the moral patterns, regardless of the given circumstance, there is no reason why an immediate decision couldn't be good or right, in any imaginable scenario.

Aristotle claims that, like *phronesis*, understanding and comprehension are aspects of the *psyche* concerned with particulars. Comprehension seems to be about learning, one must comprehend before one can understand.

“Comprehension consists in the application of belief to judge someone else’s remarks on a question that concerns prudence” (NE, 1143b20). This empowers the tutor of virtue to correctly guide the development of the student. Further, it grants one the capacity to deliberate right-action from another’s point of view.

What is more interesting, regarding comprehension and understanding, is that Aristotle grants them a perceptual component. I will argue that *phronesis* includes a well-developed disposition to “see” moral stimuli. Aristotle supports this view by claiming that understanding is the ability to sense that which is true regarding particulars. Since understanding is constitutive of *phronesis*, can I not claim that understanding as it applies to *phronesis* is the ability to “see” what is true regarding choices of actions?¹⁰⁷ If Aristotle takes understanding to be something like the perception of particulars in order to grasp universals (NE, 1143b9), then one might say that *phronesis* is the perception of particularities-of-circumstance to grasp right-actions. As I understand him, Aristotle does not want to claim this is like sense perception (the perception of special objects) in the strictest sense, but it does imply that he might have no quarrel with my following arguments.

While discussing the concept of cleverness or the capacity to do actions that promote a goal, Aristotle calls *phronesis* “this eye of the soul.” It was this line that originally got me thinking about *phronesis* as a disposition to sense moral stimuli correctly which I then tied to the notion of intuition.

Aristotle takes the time to return to the character virtues and notes how they interact with *phronesis*. It is here that he opens the door for a discussion regarding natural virtue (this might be a way of describing moral intuition, at least as far as *phronesis* is concerned, when it is observed to function naturally toward the good). Different virtues come more naturally to different people. That said, these virtues and intuition aren’t good. They are related but insufficient. It is

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle says it is the ability to perceive what is last among objects, using the analogy of recognizing a shape as a triangle, which is the last choice one must make about a shape that is in fact a triangle (NE, 1142a25). I interpret this “last-ness” to be something like “the last in a series of choices before alighting on the right choice”. I have chosen to use, instead, “choosing what is best” over “choosing what is last”, though I take them to mean practically the same thing.

through the development of the virtues proper¹⁰⁸ alongside *phronesis* that grants one access to virtue:

What we have said, then, makes it clear that we cannot be fully good without prudence, or prudent without virtue of character. And in this way we can also solve the dialectical argument that someone might use to show that the virtues are separated from one another. (NE, 1144b32-34)

To conclude with Aristotle, my arguments for *phronesis* are broadly Aristotelian. Where we differ or disagree are mostly in matters concerning the significance of certain statements he makes and my interpretation of particular passages (especially when those passages disagree internally). Regardless, Aristotle's virtue of *phronesis* and my understanding of *phronesis* are close enough that unless explicitly stated, those elements of *phronesis* that are not mentioned and are non-contradictory should be able to carry forward without issue.

Section III. McDowell on Aristotle and *Phronesis*

McDowell claims that in the *NE*, Aristotle outlines what it takes for the virtuous person to exercise *phronesis*. Loosely summed up, *phronesis* is an intellectual virtue focused on the moral realm and the ethically virtuous person is one whose acts are based on *phronesis*. Virtues are something that we, as rational animals, can learn to acquire and develop with a view to bettering ourselves. In this chapter, I'll present John McDowell's account of *phronesis* and explain how the conception of the virtuous person which the account generates can further one's understanding. Here I will analyse only the most significant of those works that elucidate his understanding of the nature of *phronesis*. I will note here up front, that this is an exegesis on McDowell's work, and not an endorsement or denial. I may on occasion mention where I differ, or where I see Aristotle and McDowell unaligned, but generally, this is meant to provide a scholarly viewpoint by a trusted and respected Aristotelian. It is most useful for me as an example of how one can take Aristotle's work forward and attempt to make sense of his seeming contradictions.

¹⁰⁸ Or more specifically the virtues together, supporting the doctrine of the unity of the virtues.

The main theory that underpins McDowell's philosophy is Representationalism, which he addresses in depth in *Mind and World* (McDowell, 1994 - henceforth MW). Representationalism is a thesis about how perceptual experience works, including how the content of experiences can become the content of our beliefs. In brief, it purports to explain how we gain information about the world from what we perceive of it. But in McDowell's work Representationalism is pushed further. His notion of Representationalism explains how, in our concept-laden world, we come to understand languages, learn moral codes, and much more. According to McDowell's wider understanding of Representationalism we can learn to recognise moral concepts only by habituation and from within a particular moral practice. Here Moral Realism meets a brand of cultural relativism, with a dash of Wittgensteinian philosophy for flavour, such that the concepts that act as the building blocks of all language and thought can only be learnt within a community, through communal practice, and made sense of within that community.

The question then becomes: Is there any room left for Moral Realism in such a theory? For the Moral Realist, values are already part of the fabric of the world. Moreover, if one is also a Cognitivist (as McDowell is), moral statements are also propositional. That is, they have truth conditions which are also genuinely part of the world. In 'Non-Cognitivism and Rule Following' (McDowell, 1994, 141-162) McDowell looks at what kind of metaphysics Moral Realism requires, and whether that metaphysical stance is one worth endorsing. Here the problem is: If I learnt to recognise right from wrong through a particular moral practice, what reason do I have to suppose that there is some metaphysical grounding for my values? Furthermore, if I disagree with the values of someone brought up with another practice, who is to call anyone right and another wrong? Would we not simply be talking past one another?

In the face of these questions, however, Moral Realism is retained and developed in at least two lines of McDowell's thought, found especially in his "Two Sorts of Naturalism" (McDowell, 1998a, 141-162) and "Might there be External Reasons?" (McDowell, 1995, 68-85). The first line of thought is that there is some objectively correct way to be raised morally, such that Reasons Externalism holds. This means that, in theory at least, someone's entire value set could be mistaken. An agent might have reason to favour a certain action over

the alternatives and yet not recognise that reason as holding for them, due to having had the wrong kind of moral upbringing. Moreover, McDowell considers his moral realism to be a kind of Non-Naturalism wherein learning to recognise moral values is part of our “second” nature, something additional to the basic “form” of being a human being. It is part of the natural world, then, to acquire moral values, just not in the way that other Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists (e.g. Anscombe, 1958; and Foot, 2001) would have it, since they argue that valuing is part of our “first nature” or the human “form” (meaning, roughly, the way in which we are “designed”, fit for a given purpose).

Understanding that there is an objectively correct way to raise a human being morally, and knowing that if a person is not raised correctly his or her perception of right and wrong will be distorted, can provide us with an explanation for the so-called puzzle of *akrasia*, or as McDowell normally refers to it, “incontinence”. The puzzle concerns how two moral agents with apparently the same perception of an ethically demanding situation could opt for different actions. That is, one opts for the morally right action while the *akratic* agent chooses to act based on a prudential or otherwise non-moral reason. McDowell’s answer, in short, is that the *akratic* agent and the fully virtuous agent do not in fact see things the same way. While the fully-virtuous agent would clearly see which action they have the best moral reason to take, and do so forsaking other interests, the *akratic* person, by comparison, has their interests point them elsewhere. This indicates that the moral values they have been raised to recognise are not yet as salient to them so as to present themselves as the only permissible choice, and motivate them to take it. Hence, contrary to how things seem with this case, the *akratic* and the fully virtuous moral agent do not in fact read the situation in the same way. We will look at this in further detail later on.

A final and key point on how we chose to act morally involves the contentious issue of how far deliberation plays a role, and what, if anything, this might say about how the virtuous agent selects a moral action from amongst alternative candidates. Feeding into his answer to this is McDowell’s commitment to Moral Particularism: wherein the ‘right thing to do’ cannot be understood independently of the context surrounding that particular moral decision, such that any moral rules could not apply generally in the same case, but rather exist as a kind of guide to how to read each and every situation as to determine what it

demands of us, morally speaking. This, again, is very much intertwined with McDowell's understanding of *phronesis* as essentially an exercise of moral perception. Any notion of moral deliberation at hand here, then, will take place within this picture of how we differentiate the right-actions from those which are less morally favourable (or hold only for non-moral, e.g. prudential reasons) by perceiving them as so. We will discuss this view throughout, and look particularly at the role of deliberation within it in some further depth in Subsection 3. We begin, however, with an exposition of McDowell's Representationalism, as a backdrop to most, if not all aspects of his take on Aristotelian *phronesis*.

Subsection 1. Representationalism

Representationalists about perceptual experience think of visual experiences (or any perceptual experience) as mental states with representational content. In other words, they provide us with some information about how things are in the world (or at least within the perceiving subject's particular portion of space-time). The content is normally thought of as propositional: giving us, in whatever form, some objects and properties such that we can know what we are surrounded by and how it is, or at least how it looks. Propositional experience content is then truth-apt: it can be evaluated for accuracy against the actual state of affairs it aims to represent; in a word, it has to be capable of misrepresenting the world.

For McDowell, the representational content of experience is also always conceptually structured (MW, 1994, 46-66). Moreover, it has to be this way. The slogan is that experience mediates mind and world: the world is concept-laden, or fully "conceptualisable," meaning that it is readily available to be understood by intelligent, perceiving beings. We need only learn what these concepts are, through repeated demonstration by exemplars and then practicing using them for ourselves. These concepts we then apply in our own utterances, as the building blocks of the thoughts those utterances express. On such a picture, it makes good sense to think of the mental states that get us from world to mind, of which perception is the prime example, to be conceptual through and through. It presents us with a neat picture of how we get our information about the world, and how it becomes the content of our beliefs, including those we communicate, about the world. How does Representationalism help us accommodate, if not

facilitate, a certain understanding of *phronesis*? McDowell's Representationalism is clearly the backdrop to his interpretation of Aristotle: in particular, concerning the way in which we are raised to recognise moral concepts by perceiving them. For the individual who has had the right kind of moral upbringing, this is my virtuous exemplar, the right-action in a given ethical situation will be salient to them, or the right moral concepts will stand out to them. As such, they will represent the world a certain way: via a perceptual experience with a certain cognitive, truth-apt content, followed up by the relevant belief about what to do, which has that very same propositional content. That particular experience and belief content will be true when it represents what the situation does indeed demand, as a correct moral inculcation dictates. A Representationalist understanding of how perceptual experience functions, alongside its relation to beliefs and language, then, underpins McDowell's interpretation of *phronesis* as essentially an exercise in moral perception (for which he finds textual evidence in Aristotle (NE, 1143a 23-30). In essence: the virtuous agent exercises their *phronesis* in accordance with how they have been raised, such that they pick up on the right kind of concepts as a determination of what an ethical situation demands. Furthermore, it gives us a picture on which the habituation of virtues is something like concept-learning, a theme we will turn to next.

Subsection 2. Enculturation into an ethical life

The virtuous moral agent, according to McDowell's reading of Aristotle, has their intellectual states of character (and particularly, for our purposes, those concerned with morality) set up by habituation. McDowell has several ways of describing our moral education. In *Mind and World*, his term of choice is the German word "*Bildung*," which is supposedly deeper in meaning than education, by pointing to the way that being taught can shape a person, literally changing their character in doing so. We will stick to English terms here, but this line of thought is helpful for understanding the kind of moral education that McDowell has in mind.

Once again, several different ideas are at play here. Firstly, there is a commitment to Moral Exemplarism: the thesis that our best way of learning to differentiate right from wrong is by seeing what our moral exemplars do and imitating them until it is something we, more naturally, start to do ourselves. This

is a sensible understanding of how moral habituation within a moral practice (what McDowell sometimes calls a “way of life”) can function. Exemplars will be those with exceptional *phronesis*, qua perceptual knowledge of what ethical situations demand. Moral exemplars are then well-positioned to pass this knowledge on. A correct moral education on this picture would be something like learning to read ethical situations as the exemplars do. As mentioned in Section 1, enculturation into an ethical life, which always takes place within a given moral practice, will involve acquiring the moral concepts which, when deployed, amount to an understanding of ‘the right thing to do’. Moral concepts themselves might be thought of as the particular virtues, such as having the desire to be generous others in need. Although which of these we attend to will vary between situations, there is no great separation between the virtues according to McDowell, but rather they are in unity (McDowell, 1998a, 58-59). McDowell’s commitment to the Unity of the Virtues is very much tied in with his understanding of *eudaimonia*, and the role it plays in moral development.

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Eudaimonia, normally loosely translated as ‘well-being’ or ‘happiness’ (although it is supposed to capture much more) is, across any version of Aristotelian virtue ethics, the end of moral actions. On Aristotle’s conception of nature (see e.g. the *Physics* as well as the *NE*), everything has its *telos* (purpose), something its very design makes it fit for achievement, such that naturally, all going well, it will tend in that direction. This goes for every organism, from the most basic forms of plant life to humans as the highest example of rational animals. The unique human capacity for reasoning, or intellectual virtue, is our excellence: it stands out as what we should be doing and, more strongly, will do, in virtue of the kind of organisms we are. Given that we are embedded in a social and political life, we will learn to exercise our reason in a way that is virtuous, which simply means that it will always be directed towards *eudaimonia*.

There is room for dispute here over whether we ought to carry out certain virtues for their own sake, with the view to achieving *eudaimonia* by exercising those virtues – something you get on the version of Aristotelian virtue naturalism expounded by e.g. (Anscombe, 1958; and Foot, 2001) – or, alternatively, if every exercise of a virtue is itself part of what it is to achieve *eudaimonia*. In some work, McDowell, much as I do, favours the second kind of reading, but goes back to

Eudaimonism (the idea that virtue is about seeking *eudaimonia* rather than being for its own sake) from rather quickly. It will then be of interest that much of what follows is written from the perspective of a *Eudaimonist*. As he states in “Some issues in Aristotle’s Moral Psychology” (McDowell, 1998b, 122), *eudaimonia* is “self-sufficient,” meaning that it is always undertaken for its own sake. In this respect, he compares it to Kant’s Categorical Imperative. *Eudaimonia* cannot be broken down any further, nor should it be instrumental to any other end, but it is, as the slogan goes “an end in itself.” As McDowell puts it (McDowell, 1998a, 26): through the “intrinsic characterisation of an action,” in acting with *phronesis* we already demonstrate a case of “doing well” i.e. choosing an action of the sake of *eudaimonia* is already a case of *eudaimonia*.

One point of controversy when it comes to interpreting the role *eudaimonia* plays in Aristotle’s ethics, as discussed in “The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle’s Ethics,” concerns whether Aristotle meant this as a normative thesis or, as an indicative thesis too. McDowell takes it this way: whereby *eudaimonia* is in fact the end of all of our moral actions; not just that it ought to be. In other words, not only should one pursue *eudaimonia*, but if one is trying to be a good person, then one already is pursuing *eudaimonia*. On the other side of the fence, as quoted by McDowell, is Anthony Kenny (Kenny, 1996), who takes Aristotle to mean that this is our ideal, but not the current state of affairs. As McDowell glosses it, an argument against the indicative thesis could run as follows: *eudaimonia* cannot be the end of all of our actions when we take so many of our actions for reasons besides *eudaimonia*. Take, for example, the *akratic* agent: they see what is right to do, supposedly, but choose to take another option for non-moral reasons. So they, for example, do not act with *eudaimonia* as their end.

McDowell’s response is to restrict what counts as an action. To do so, he makes a distinction between action proper, and so-called mere voluntary behaviour. Voluntary behaviour is performed by all animals, rational or otherwise (so this includes nonhumans, babies, anyone without a proper moral upbringing). Voluntary behaviour can only count as “*praxis*,” action in the more restricted sense, when undertaken as a constituent means to *eudaimonia* (McDowell, 1998a, 6). This looks at first like a cheap way out, in saying that all action is undertaken for the sake of *eudaimonia* because anything that counts as an action is constituent of *eudaimonia* (recall that for McDowell, to be for the sake of

eudaimonia and to be an instance of *eudaimonia* amount to the same thing). However, given that for McDowell, acting as a constituent means to *eudaimonia* is acting rationally, or exercising *phronesis*, we can see that what separates actions from mere voluntary behaviour is (at least in part) the rationality of their agent, whereby rationality is a requirement for agency. The *akratic* agent, for example, does not act so to speak, because they do not exercise rationality, *phronesis*, or have *eudaimonia* as their end (all of which essentially, for McDowell, amount to the same thing). What causes this difference between the moral perceptions of the *akratic* agent and the virtuous exemplar, then, is that something went amiss in the former's moral upbringing. It is because of some lack thereof that the *akratic* agent fails to be sufficiently moved by the moral reasons available to them, choosing prudential or otherwise non-moral concerns instead as a guide to which action they take. This highlights for us how a moral education is always revisable: there is often more learning to be done.

This is very achievable, McDowell tells us, especially in "Some Issues in Aristotle's Moral Psychology" (McDowell, 1998b, 107-128). He gives us, by way of analogy, the so-called "Neurathian reflection" picture. Neurath gave us the analogy of a mariner repairing his boat as it floats, rather than taking it back to shore to fix it before sailing out on it again (Neurath, 1921, 191). The idea is that whilst remaining within a moral practice, something as social and political animals we are always surrounded by, we can nonetheless make changes to our moral education. We can even do this by ourselves. We can improve our moral outlook piecemeal through internal reflection, adjusting which values we can recognise as constituent of "doing well" as we go along. As an idea that post-dates Aristotle, McDowell admits that this would look is anachronistic as an interpretation of what he meant. It is better taken rather as a helpful conception that is not foreign to Aristotle's thinking, but favourable to his theory.

So our moral education within a practice lies behind both a way of answering the puzzle of the *akratic* agent and our answer to the sceptic who doubts that *eudaimonia* can be the end to all of our actions (by restricting what counts as an action). There is another way, however, in which the sceptic could be taken, which is still in want of answering: How can all of our divergent ends at once be for the same, single purpose, *eudaimonia*? McDowell tells us that *eudaimonia* is the final aim of all of our actions, undertaken for its own sake; but it

has sub-aims which partake in *eudaimonia*, and these are the ends which we do not share (our individual aims). As McDowell explains it, the difference between those individual aims and the over-arching aim of *eudaimonia* is only one of the level of specificity at hand. His explanation of this goes back to his particular conception of moral reasons; so let us give that some individual airtime next.

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McDowell is a Reasons Externalist, meaning he is committed to an Anti-Humean picture of what counts as a reason for us to act morally. On the Humean picture, also known as Reasons Internalism – more recently defended by Bernard Williams (Williams, 1981, 101-113) – any moral reason we have for acting must be connected to some desire that the agent has, otherwise they would be unmotivated to act on it. So nothing outside of my desire set, or at the very least a rational deliberation over my desire set, would provide me with a reason to act. McDowell argues against this picture on several grounds (McDowell, 1998a). In essence, the idea is that having a moral reason is a matter of being aware of a fact, rather than a desire. The fact itself should be motivating, but can only be so to those who are indeed aware of it.

Becoming aware of moral facts is something we have to be taught, by way of habituation in the way we have outlined previously. Thus having a desire is something that comes after having already recognised that we have a moral reason to act. We will desire to carry out that action because we are motivated to do so, and we are motivated when we have been properly raised to see a particular action, given what the situation concerned demands, as constituent of *eudaimonia*. Desire follows motivation, then, not the other way around, as the Humean picture would have it (McDowell here quotes Thomas Nagel, who shares his view on pp. 29-30)¹⁰⁹.

So much for Reasons Externalism: what has this got to do with the way in which *eudaimonia* operates on different levels of specificity? When someone acts morally, they do what any human, qua rational animal, should do in their circumstances. Now as far as McDowell is concerned, saying that we should do x means simply that we have a reason for doing x. At this level of generality, we all act for the same kind of reason whenever we act morally: because it is what that

¹⁰⁹ Nagel, Thomas (1970). *The Possibility of Altruism*. Oxford Clarendon Press.

situation normatively demands of us. Moreover, given that moral reasons are objective facts, there is a right way to perceive things morally: by perceiving these facts as reasons and those facts as not. Yet which actions we have reason to carry out, which facts hold for us, is particular to the ethical situation concerned. Hence we have the level of specificity we want at play too, for moral reasons to be sensitive to our divergent “ends.” They look divergent at this level of specificity, but really they hold as constituent of the same purpose, namely towards “doing well” or virtue.

So far, we have explained how McDowell understands the Aristotelian notion of habituation as a moral education towards becoming a virtuous agent, whereby they select actions for the sake of, which thereby partake in, virtue. For the virtuous moral agent, the reasons that favour a particular course of action are perceptually salient to them in ethical situations. Put simply, whichever action in that context is most conducive to virtue will be the one that stands out as the course of action they have the best reason to take. One might still think, however, that there is some gap between the agent’s moral perception and their actual carrying out of that action. We need to pay attention, then, to the role of deliberation in Aristotelian ethics, again from a McDowellian viewpoint. This is precisely the topic we turn to next.

Subsection 3. The Role of Deliberation

What does the virtuous agent do when they select the best (and only) course of action in an ethical situation? Is there some gap between their reading of the situation and their choosing to act accordingly (i.e. on the moral concepts made salient to them by their very perception of the situation)? What might bridge that ‘gap between thought and action’, as McDowell calls it (McDowell, 2009, 44). Filling it with some process of deliberation looks like an obvious answer: we read a situation, weigh up our options and come up with the best one by some method of selection. Is this really something that the fully virtuous agent, the ideal moral exemplar, needs to do? Should they not act almost habitually, knowing right from wrong to the extent of not even needing to consider those candidate actions which are less favourable to realizing virtue?

Surprisingly, this is not the debate that McDowell actually engages in here. Instead, he makes the case for a certain conception of deliberation (McDowell,

2009, 41-59). His opponent is a view which would go along with a kind of concern I just raised: a view on which the fully virtuous agent has something like a blueprint for what right-action amounts to 'with a view to doing well', something like performing that action most conducive/constitutive to virtue. The idea is then that the virtuous agent will correctly apply this blueprint in any given ethical situation, out of habit, as they have been raised to recognise how to fit certain actions to certain types of situations. This kind of matching process then supersedes any need for a deliberation process.

What are McDowell's worries about such a view? For one, this would have to be extracted from some kind of psychological state which applies the blueprint each time. For the very same reasons (of a Wittgensteinian flavour) that he is sceptical of the possibility of rule following, McDowell is sceptical that any such psychological state could exist. Moreover, and perhaps first and foremost, McDowell is worried that on the Blueprint View, there is a universal conception of "doing well" at play, one that can be explained in a way that is independent of any particular moral context. This would entail a commitment to Moral Generalism: the thesis that there can be rules about what is morally right and wrong which apply generally or hold in any given ethical situation in the same way.

McDowell is explicit that Aristotle cannot be committed to any such thesis, although some might take him to be if, for example, they thought that what it takes to be virtuous would mean the same thing, and so apply the same way in every ethical context. See, for instance, McDowell's discussion of why for Aristotle, rationality does not require 'consistency' in the modern sense in "Virtue and Reason" (McDowell, 1998a). Also in *The Engaged Intellect* (2009), McDowell references several places at which Aristotle commits himself to Moral Particularism, the antithesis to Moral Generalism at *NE* 1094b11-27 and 1109b12-23 (McDowell, 2009, 44). Thus we need to pay careful attention to what a commitment to Moral Particularism entails, something we shall take care of next.

Subsection 4. Moral Particularism

According to Moral Particularism, no moral principle could hold generally but, at best, our commonly held conceptions of moral right and wrong apply differently in different situations, as the inevitable variance in contextual factors

demands. McDowell's endorsement of such a view has its roots in the arguments Wittgenstein made in his *Philosophical Investigations* about the incoherence of the notion of universal rule-following. In essence, the worry is that even if we think we are applying a rule correctly, at every stage of its "application," there will always be room for us to continually question that rule-following assumption. That is (at least in part) because each time we ask if the rule is being correctly applied, according to the argument, we ask a different question to the original one. There is no consistent meta-rule for how to carry out rule-following, and no psychological mechanism in place to keep us in check. Rather, there is always room to reinterpret the rule we thought we were following. The same applies to Moral Generalism, according to McDowell, of which the Blueprint View would be one version. As far as McDowell is concerned, we cannot make sense of a moral principle holding generally, but only in application to specific contexts.

A more robust interpretation of McDowell on rule-following can be found in Lang's article (Lang, 2001). He argues that rule-following considerations that imply particularism do not imply particularism for all forms of rule-following. Aristotle felt that every situational action was particular, but that motivations were general (be virtuous by exercising virtue on a mean, etc.). I take Lang's meaning regarding McDowell's arguments on rule-following as a whole, but it is best for my purposes to assume that McDowell purposefully leads us down a particularist's path, since it is Aristotle's vision we are meant to be interpreting. That said, appealing to Wittgenstein is, for Lang on McDowell, an overshoot and is worthy of a deeper look at another time.

So McDowell suggests that in the place of a blueprint for "doing well," we should leave room for deliberation in ethical situations; deliberation over which action best fits our conception of 'doing well', given what the situation at hand demands. The conception of deliberation he thinks will work here is rather specific. It cannot involve a kind of "thinking that starts from a proposed end and, when successful, arrives at something the agent can simply do with a view to that end – a project which [they] can put into effect without further thought" (McDowell, 2009, 41). If this were so, then the end we have in mind "casts a favourable light on some act only across that gap, bridged only by using intellect" (McDowell, 2009, 41). His worry here is that although this schema is well-suited to instrumental thinking, whereby we take some action x not for the sake of x

itself, but for some other end, *y*, it does not fit the kind of reasoning that *phronesis* involves. Recall that on McDowell's understanding, *eudaimonia* should be an end in itself (or "self-sufficient") such that taking an action for the sake of it is already taking part in virtue. So moral reasoning cannot be instrumental in the above sense. McDowell's answer is that the intellect should not so much bridge the gap between thought and action as give us reason to have that action in view in the first place. Put in McDowell's own terms, we do not need to slot in place a decision over which action amounts to doing well, the content of which we cannot make sense of within his framework. That is because the substantive ethical content that we need to get us from thought to action is already in place at the thought level, as the product of the right kind of moral education, prior to any deliberation.

This returns us to McDowell's Representationalism, the very perception of the right course of action in an ethical situation, qua something that the only the properly raised, virtuous agent will be sensitive to, already has cognitive content (as all perceptual experiences do). So the perfect moral exemplar will, out of habit, do away with any other considerations, and that will be as much deliberation as is needed. The cognitive content of their recognition of right from wrong, qua a moral perceptual experience, then just needs translating into a belief about how to act.

This is easily done, when both the experience and the belief based upon it have propositional content. As McDowell puts it (MW, 1994), having a perceptual belief is just taking one's experience "at face value" such that accepting its content as true. Recall also that, in being conceptual through and through, and thus answerable to truth-conditions, this cognitively-backed kind of agency will then count as rational. Hence a remarkable consequence of this view is that rationality does not require 'consistency', or at least, not in the rule-following sense. We would do well to take a closer look at what McDowell means by this then, as we shall do next.

Subsection 5. Consistency

As discussed in the previous section, McDowell adopts Wittgenstein's scepticism about rule following, at best, even when we think we are applying general principles, carrying on as we intended to, at every stage the very rule that

we consider ourselves to be applying can be reinterpreted such that we end up quite far-removed from applying our initial rule. On McDowell's picture that decisions over how to act should be considered contextually. The same motivation guides which act we select each time, not a universal principle, but a conception of well-being that once learnt, we come to recognise in different possible actions as they are presented to us, as part of the situation at hand. The idea is that there is rationality to our method for ethical decision-making anyway: because moral perception is cognitive, it is assessable for truth. This assumes that there is a standard against which we can check it for correctness. If this be true, McDowell might need to keep his version of Aristotelianism a Moral Realist one. Moreover, McDowell can tie his notion of ethical rationality to sensitivity to reasons, as many other authors have done (see e.g. Broome, 2013; and Williams, 1981). He hints at doing so in "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" (McDowell, 1978). In this essay, McDowell argues against Philippa Foot's contention that all moral requirements are hypothetical (Foot, 2001) (just like the "instrumental" reasoning discussed in the last section, where an action is undertaken for an end other than itself). The point on which he agrees with Foot, however, is in saying that if one fails to see that they have reason to act, this does not necessarily make them irrational. This goes back to the case of the *akratic* agent. As McDowell describes it, having moral reason for performing some action involves an awareness of a fact: the awareness being our honed moral perception, and the fact being some cognitive proposition which tells us what 'doing well' in that given context amounts to. The virtuous exemplar will have access to that experiential content, something which the *akratic* agent lacks: not due to their irrationality, but due to a failure in their moral upbringing. The *akratic* agent can always be taught to see that they have moral reason to act, but it will take something like a reversal of their (wrong-headed) moral education, and hence an overhaul of their values, to show them that what constitutes doing well and what does not. As McDowell puts it:

If that perceptual capacity is possessed and exercised, it yields non-hypothetical reasons for acting. Now the lack of perceptual capacity, and failure to exercise it shows no irrationality. (McDowell, 1978, 13)

Meanwhile, what is rational is that they have at least had some moral education such that they act towards some end. On McDowell's picture, acting rationally just is acting virtuously: a thought we encountered earlier in Subsection 2 when distinguishing *praxis*, or action proper, from voluntary behaviour. Only rational animals are capable of *praxis* and, moreover, it will be only those rational animals who have had the right kind of moral education, something which allows them to act rationally recognise those actions which are perceptually salient in an ethical situation, because they are conducive to, constituent of virtue. Rationality, then, is already tied in with the very notion of what it means to act morally, and indeed, to be an agent (in McDowell's restricted sense, that is) at all.

Subsection 6. Conclusion

McDowell's reading of Aristotelian *phronesis* needs to be understood against a background of various theses which he has defended across his works. Most prominently, it is set against his wider view of how perception, like beliefs, are propositionally and conceptually structured because the world is readily conceptualisable. Herein one can slot moral concepts into the world. However, they are not part of our final ontology in the Kantian sense of being 'things in themselves' (see his accusation in Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following of how non-cognitivists, who say there are no metaphysically real values answering to our moral statements, wrongly assume metaphysics just like this). Rather, moral values belong to our culture, how we are brought up to see the world. Although this 'second nature' is derived from it, it is independent of our 'first' nature, it is not part of the very "form" of human beings. Hence, with a nod to Anscombe and Foot, McDowell takes Aristotle to be a Non-naturalistic kind of Moral Realist about the metaphysics of our values. Importantly, values are moral concepts, and so our habituation within a moral practice into becoming a virtuous exemplar will be a breed of concept-acquisition. Although which moral concepts an agent has depends upon the nature of their moral upbringing, there is an objectively right way for this to be done. Hence, in addition to the world being readily conceptualisable in the first place, we retain a sense of value objectivity, even though correctly perceiving those values requires us having a certain perspective. Which perspective we are raised with delimits which portion of reality is available

to us, and so how we read certain ethical situations will be inevitably tied to the moral practice we were educated within. As McDowell writes:

A coherent conception of excellence locates its possessor in what is, at least for them, a world of facts ...relative to their 'relevant corner of the world,' 'dimly lit' by their 'conception of excellence.' From *The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's ethics*, (McDowell, 1998a, 21)

Moreover, our moral education sets what will motivate us, which is just another way of saying that it determines what we find counting as a moral reason for us to act. This shows us how, as we discussed in Subsection 2, McDowell understands moral reasons as firmly of the externalist kind. Moreover, as our discussion of how he deals with the puzzle of the *akratic* agent revealed, for McDowell, we cannot be motivated unless we already recognise a moral reason for us to act (as opposed to the Reasons Internalist picture on which motivation is antecedent to an agent having reason to act). On the McDowellian-Aristotelian picture, it is in learning to recognise moral reasons (through acquiring moral concepts) that we learn to be motivated by them. See the final section of *Incontinence and Practical Wisdom in Aristotle*, "The attractions of a virtuous life are real, but available only from within a commitment to that life" (McDowell, 2009, 76).

The nature of our moral education, i.e. whether it is correctly carried out, as we have seen throughout, is key to understanding many concepts within McDowell's version of Aristotle's ethical theory. Moreover, it is behind his answer to the puzzle of the *akratic* agent: they do not in fact perceive the ethical situation in the same way as the moral exemplar does, and the difference is in how they have been morally raised (as explained in Subsection 2). Without a proper moral upbringing, we fail to recognise moral reasons and so will of course fail to be motivated by them.

So there you have McDowell's understanding of *phronesis*: it is a learned, perceptual and hence conceptual capacity. As part of our second nature, the phenomenon is real enough, but not part of the natural world in the way that others would have it. Yet for all its nuance, what we get with McDowell is a picture which retains the key elements of Aristotelian ethics, namely those which

are so crucial to understanding Aristotle that many virtue ethicists would confer on them: Moral Realism for one, and Reasons Externalism for another (McDowell, 1998a).

Yet so many more of McDowell's own ideas, influenced by the likes of Wittgenstein and Kant, also feature in his interpretation too and in many ways enrich what Aristotle gave us. The resultant picture is no doubt complicated, but nonetheless we end up with an ethical theory within a worldview that is both thoroughly Aristotelian and has so much else packed in that it takes on a life of its own. Overall, the clever interplay of the various elements McDowell brings into Aristotle's work make it all hang together rather nicely, such that his works are a read so intricate that once understood, it is hard to resist being convinced by them.

For the work to follow, I carry forward a handful of McDowell's arguments without much modification. Namely, I find his thoughts on Representationalism, Moral Realism, and Reasons Externalism useful to an advanced understanding of Aristotle in a modern context. I also hold that his view on the perceptual concept of *phronesis* perfectly aligned with my own, though I admittedly take it considerably further than he does in these works. I deny *Eudaimonism* for the many reasons I have stated previously, namely that virtue is for its own sake and that *eudaimonia* is merely a (pleasant) consequence of a virtuous life. I also find his concept of actions troubling, but not within the scope of this work to address. That all said, what follows is the conception of *phronesis* necessary for soldierly virtue (and in fact all virtue) and the heart of my argument.

Section IV. *Phronesis* and the Warfighter

In this section I expand the definition of *phronesis* given in earlier chapters and offer an account of *phronesis* which contends that it is the central building block of virtue ethics. My account leads to identifying the advantage, or more precisely, the necessity of encouraging the development of *phronesis* in the military. It is extremely important to note that while my final account of *phronesis* is broadly Aristotelian in origin and flavour, ultimately it is a move beyond the term as it is used in the *NE*.¹¹⁰ It is linked closely with McDowell's conception,

¹¹⁰ My move away from Aristotle is based on the idea that 1) I am not using his virtue list strictly, and 2) a couple thousand years of scholarship have developed our understanding of his work and possible areas he might have gotten it wrong (gasp).

and shares much in common with his own definition. While my more developed account makes the value of *phronesis* evident for students of virtue, my ultimate concern is the effect of *phronesis* for warfighters.

My key claims in this section are the following:

- 1) *Phronesis* is a special virtue, a virtue that does not admit of the mean like character virtues, but is necessary for good character in a way quite different from the other traditional intellectual virtues.
- 2) *Phronesis* is a developed state of sensitivity to moral considerations in the world. It is in many ways analogous to other conceptualisations and their objects and is related to moral intuition.
- 3) The *phronetic* agent understands pertinent moral information (hereafter termed “moral stimuli”) and so knows how to identify right-making features and act virtuously in any given particularity-of-circumstance.

In Chapter 1 I briefly discussed *phronesis* as a state of sensitivity and intuition that provides one with the wisdom to perceive the truth of what the right thing to do is in a certain particularity-of-circumstance (the right-action). My definition of *phronesis* is such that there should be little contention with Aristotelian scholarship (though not free of it), and should integrate with most modern conceptions of virtue without too much trouble. That said, there may be occasions in which the nuances of the terminology will need to be addressed.

Subsection 1. *Phronesis* as a special virtue

Phronesis is a special virtue upon which the character virtues depend. If one finds truth in the unity of the virtues, as I do, then this claim may seem trivial (since all virtues are dependent on each other). All the same, it is essential to recognise *phronesis* as a virtuous state as well as a virtuous characteristic. One might say that character virtues are in a state of constant flux as one attempts to hit the mean in every circumstance, but with *phronesis*, there is no vice of excess and therefore it is “always on” at its fullest capacity. In Aristotle’s account,

phronesis is complex and a necessary condition for the development of a virtuous character (NE, 1144b32).

One way to think of *phronesis* is as a kind of bridging virtue, connecting the concepts of character virtue and intellectual virtue, leading to complete virtue. What I mean by this is that, writ large, the virtues of character are described as being wholly separate from the intellectual virtues in the *NE*, and as such, there is little interaction between them in the literature.¹¹¹ Yet they are still excellences of the individual and required for becoming a virtuous exemplar, so there must be some link between them.

According to Broadie, *phronesis* is the exception to the rules regarding intellectual virtues in several ways (Broadie, 1991, 77). However, I hold that *phronesis* transcends both intellectual and character virtues, and so refer to it as a special virtue. The *phronimos* develops character virtues in their endeavour to attain *orthos logos*. One must be cognizant of *phronesis* while habituating the character virtues. Thus, *phronesis* is a virtue which is separate from the character virtues (does not admit to the mean), at the same time, being necessary in order for the character virtues to be whole and complete. Yet it is attained through study rather than habituation. In this way *phronesis* occupies a conceptual space in between the two types of virtue, bridging the gap between them. In other words, *phronesis* makes one acutely aware that the intellectual virtues are necessary for good character, even if only in lesser degrees. This is one reason to consider *phronesis* a special virtue.¹¹²

Obviously *phronesis* is not a character virtue; Aristotle says so himself. There is no vice of excess for *phronesis*; it does not admit of a point between too much and not enough. That is not to say that one cannot have a higher or lower degree of *phronesis*. In fact, *phronesis* increases as one's character becomes more and more virtuous (i.e. more like the virtuous exemplar). In short, *phronesis* admits of degrees, but not the doctrine of the mean. Aristotle does not claim that the set of intellectual virtues, of which *phronesis* is a member in the *NE*, are subject to the mean, but given the unique connection *phronesis* has to the

¹¹¹ The intellectual and character virtues are seen as separate and distinct, except for a comment at the end of Aristotle's focus on *phronesis*: "This is how we come to give temperance its name, because we think that it preserves prudence" (NE, 1140b12).

¹¹² This concept of the "bridge" between the character virtues and the intellectual virtues helps explain why *phronesis* is a necessary topic of conversation in any dialectic about character virtue, while at the same time allowing me to set aside the remainder of the intellectual virtues for future consideration.

character virtues, it's a point worth noting.

I describe these degrees using something I call *primacy stages*. The primacy stages in the development of *phronesis* are:

- Deference
- Habituation
- Intuition
- Attainment of the state of the *phronimos* (virtue of the self)
- Attainment of the state of the *politikos* (virtue for others).

Each of these primacy stages aim for a good, but not necessarily the ultimate (or greater) Good (Broadie, 1991, 183). One might say that for a particular set of circumstances, such as a warfighter crossing an open field in combat, there is a single right-action required. A warfighter, whose actions are determined by basic untrained intuition, might think the action that will lead to excellence is his crossing the field quickly, exactly as he was ordered to do by his commanding officer (this is the primacy of **moral deference**). Such a warfighter believes that the good he seeks is freedom from punishment (for disobedience), combined with being “freed” from making difficult decisions. But a different warfighter, who has begun to be habituated to the virtues and has a motivation toward *eudaimonia*, might think that she must act bravely, but not rashly, while crossing the field, occasionally taking cover if necessary (this is the primacy of **habituation** to the character virtues and **intuition**). This second individual believes that the most appropriate virtue under the circumstances is bravery, and that acting bravely will lead to a good life. Next, the *phronimos* is the one who does not see a dilemma about what to do, since his *phronesis* is such that only one possible action makes any rational sense to pursue, the right-action. This third warfighter believes that the only right-action is to ensure that he and his comrades accomplish the task virtuously, having taken into consideration all the relevant moral stimuli (the primacy of the **phronimos**). Finally, we have a warfighter who is on the path to becoming an exemplar of the virtues and has a deep understanding of how they all work together. This warfighter thinks that while she must cross the field virtuously, she must also be aware of her comrades and their ability to cross the

field virtuously. She might need to sacrifice some of her *matériel*¹¹³ to her comrades, if they are low on ammunition or equipment, in order that they might all complete the task honourably and virtuously (the primacy of the *politikos*). This example of the four warfighters of course simplifies the degrees of *phronesis* at work, but hopefully provides at least a dim illumination of the fact that there are degrees. The initial stages in the development of *phronesis* require a will toward the fine and adherence to the guidance of a virtuous exemplar; meanwhile the *phronimos* is able to act autonomously having successfully developed her or his sense of moral intuition to such a high degree that the best course of action, right-action, becomes obvious.

Neither being clever nor suffering from a weak will but overcoming it, is a primacy stage. Aristotle contrasts *phronesis* with cleverness (*deinotes*), which is the ability to discover and carry out the means necessary to achieve a given end, whatever it may be. This is opposed to *phronesis* in that *phronesis* only shows the virtuous means to achieve a goal. The *phronimos* possesses this quality of cleverness, but the wicked and unscrupulous can also have it (NE, 144a23-29). *Phronesis* is also contrasted with *akrasia*, the overcoming of a weakness of will toward right-action. Instead they are complications that agents must overcome as they develop *phronesis*. These complications are such that they might mislead a tutor of virtue to assume that a student has successfully achieved *phronesis*, when, in fact, the student is only clever or has simply overcome a weak will – so, tutors, beware!

In my example of warfighters crossing a field, none can conceivably have too much *phronesis*. One either has no access to the moral stimuli (or does not know it when one sees it), has limited access to the moral stimuli (showing some degree of virtue), or has full access to the moral stimuli. Further, as an agent develops virtue, she or he becomes better at aiming for the ultimate Good. Both access to the moral stimuli and aiming for the proper Good must be in place in order for an agent to deliberately choose the right-action. As an agent's virtue develops, she or he must become increasingly aware of the moral stimuli that call for particular virtues and become aware of the point between extremes that virtue must target. Therefore, one can see that an agent's *phronesis* must develop

¹¹³ A common term in military jargon for arms and equipment.

alongside her or his character virtues or the agent will never gain access to the moral stimuli necessary to practise virtue in the first place.

One might claim that *phronesis* is an essential part of “complete virtue” (*kuria arête*), although it is not necessary, at least in its entirety, for “inferior” forms of virtue like “natural virtue” and “habitual virtue” (NE, VI xiii, 1144b1-17 and 1144b33-1145a2; VII viii, 1151a17-19). The *phronimos* requires adequate development of all the virtues, and possession of each virtue “in its complete form” (*kuria arête*), but in order to get those virtues to a complete form, some level of *phronesis* must be available (NE, VI xiii, 1144b33-1145a2). In other words, *phronesis* develops alongside character virtues and perhaps could be understood to be what is actually being studied during habituation. The character virtues are being habituated, but the student is studying the world whenever the tutor makes a claim about the right-action in the same way that a student of painting is studying the whole of his art when being told to paint a happy little tree in the corner of the canvas. *Phronesis* is, therefore, a special virtue in that it is both a part and separate from both categories of virtue (intellectual and character).

Broadie claims that “excellence of character, or moral virtue, exists in order to make possible the effective exercise of the *orthos logos*”. Achieving the *orthos logos* requires correct judgment, “the ability to discriminate correctly through feeling and through action” (Broadie, 1991, 77). The *orthos logos* is deliberate, it cannot be accidentally achieved and still be good. One must deliberately choose the correct action toward the Good based on one’s virtuous character. One possible interpretation of this view is that *phronesis* is neither a character virtue nor, strictly speaking, an intellectual virtue. So, *phronesis* is a special virtue because it is necessary for the correct execution of one’s virtuous character and, as mentioned earlier, has no vice of excess. One might say, that by its very nature, *phronesis* is always used at its maximal capacity.

One must be careful not to equate *phronesis* with virtue, they are not synonymous. *Phronesis* is a key constituent of fully realised virtue; one who is perfectly phronetic will be perfectly virtuous given my definition as laid out. This makes *phronesis* different from the other virtues, in that one who has any of the other virtues in their most complete form is not by nature automatically virtuous.

One way in which *phronesis* is different from the character virtues is that

the degree to which it has been developed is a determining factor for how easily one is able to attain the character virtues. For instance, habituation to generosity may include a tutor pointing out when it is appropriate to share one's goods or means of subsistence. The student, when with the tutor, is happy to comply, but, when alone, doesn't recognize when he should be generous. In this case, a little *phronesis* would give the student a chance to recognize the circumstances where generosity is appropriate, even when the tutor is not present. In short, if one is able to practise when the tutor isn't present, then one has many more opportunities to become virtuous. Whereas the character virtues are regarded as the mean between the vices of excess and deficiency, *phronesis* occurs in varying degrees and can as such only be regarded as either sufficiently or deficiently developed. I do not intend to give a detailed account of the moral psychology I have in mind for virtue development, but the following argument introduces some concepts that, while quasi-Aristotelian, are mostly my own view. Here, I am very specifically focusing on the interaction between *phronesis* and the character virtues during moral development.

Allow me to stipulate that for any given character virtue, there are three levels of attainment. First is the establishment of a desire or motivation toward the Good in a given way (perhaps through the observation of a virtuous exemplar); for instance, the desire to be courageous or generous. Second is the habituation to the virtuous disposition one is seeking to develop through training. And third is the ability to perceive the world in such a way as to understand when this individual virtue is called for, and to what degree, and consequently to make the appropriate choice about how to act. This third stage I call the phronetic stage of development. While I have argued that virtues must be developed in tandem,¹¹⁴ for illustrative purposes I believe a consideration of individual virtue development will be helpful. So, a virtue is first desired, then trained for, and finally chosen. In this first stage, a student of virtue is given access to a virtuous exemplar, perhaps through stories, books, or a role model. The student is given reinforcement to believe that the actions of the exemplar are good, and that being like the exemplar will lead to a good life. The second stage is analogous to the habituation stage of development. The student of virtue is taught what actions are

¹¹⁴ I understand this claim to be contentious to some, but since this isn't an argument for moral development as such, I will save my comments on that digression for another time.

good and what actions are bad, and also how to go about choosing which actions to perform, in the right proportion, at the right time. The student need not understand the intricacy of virtue, he or she must simply do as instructed until being virtuous becomes second nature. Finally, the student is given access to study and learns why relevant (virtuous) actions are to be chosen. Once all the virtues are desired and been habituated to – and remember, each has an associated phronetic component – individual virtues can be used in conjunction with each other, as best as possible, until such time as the student of virtue has developed well enough to know the correct proportion of each virtue necessary in any given circumstances. In other words, in the final stage, the student of virtue has a sufficiently developed state of *phronesis* to be considered a *phronimos*, enabling her to perceive which virtues are required and choose the appropriate action toward the Good.

It is during the second and third stages that *phronesis*, as it applies to each individual virtue, is iteratively developed. In the habituation stage, *phronesis* is external (embodied in a tutor or exemplar); in the phronetic stage, it is developed through one's own deliberation and recognition. In addition, *phronesis* acts as the mechanism by which an agent is able to balance the character virtues, especially when they are in conflict in a particular circumstance.

My claim here holds: *Phronesis* is a special virtue such that it is fully integrated into the character virtues and develops at the same time they do. The deliberation required is only available to those who have some concept of the virtues and a strong desire to be good. It develops slowly and in stages, reaching full capacity in tandem with the virtues it supports.

Subsection 2. *Phronesis* as Advanced Moral Intuition and the Perceptive Mechanism of Moral Stimuli¹¹⁵

I maintain and have argued that *phronesis* is a state of being which enables an agent to become acutely aware of moral considerations in her or his circumstances, and to deliberately choose the right-action necessary to achieve

¹¹⁵ See appendix III for a few notes on moral intuition. There are many ways to think about (and argue about) moral intuition which threatens to derail the flow of my argument, so it is included simply to allow an interlocutor to see at least one exegesis of the debate.

the good life.¹¹⁶ This awareness is a sensitivity open to the perception of moral stimuli. Moral stimuli are those features present to an agent that must be taken into consideration in order to make a decision in pursuit of the Good. Another way of saying this is that *phronesis* is the disposition to perceive and evaluate the moral stimuli constitutive of a given situation that then illuminates the right-action, which is the only possible right-action in that situation.

If moral intuition is the mechanism that issues the reaction to moral stimuli, then *phronesis* is the rational extension of this mechanism. *Phronesis* takes in moral stimuli, evaluates it toward the goal of achieving the Good, and issues a “recommendation” of right-action that, when combined with one’s moral motivations, initiates right-action. This claim proposes that moral intuition is somewhat - very somewhat – analogous to sensation or emotion in that it has the ability to recognize the truth of a particularity–of-circumstance, based on the environment and what the agent is experiencing, which then leads to reaction and action, without the agent necessarily being immediately aware of why. I also propose that *phronesis* can be wilfully developed to a greater or lesser degree (perhaps through an element of moral luck).

Phronesis acts as a kind of pattern perception, a mental faculty that takes physical perceptions as they “enter” the rational *psyche* and looks for the moral stimuli (both immediate and removed), then the phronetic agent deliberates on the correct course of action given that stimuli. This pattern perception is such that as one becomes more aware of moral stimuli with practice, one becomes increasingly aware of minute or removed stimuli. Once sufficiently developed, the capacity is such that one can’t “unsee” the stimuli even if one wished to.

Imagine a chessboard in which the interlocutors are embroiled in a heated game. For one, each move requires the careful calculation of each and every possible move. This calculation must take into account every possible counter-move, and the moves that will follow until the game is finished. This must be calculated after every move. For the other, they have a mastery of the game such that when they look at the board, they see a pattern. If the queen is on QB6, and the king is castled, then there are only six possible moves that will move the game forward toward a win, and only one of those will lead to winning the game

¹¹⁶ The “good life” refers to a life of contentment in the knowledge that one’s actions are directed toward the greater good, the Good, in favour of humanitarian well-being as opposed to selfish self-advancement.

the quickest. The *phronimos* is such that they see the pattern of moral stimuli in the world and may see several actions that are permissible, but only one of those moves is truly right-action, and therefore, virtuous.

My second claim, that *phronesis* is a developed moral sensitivity related to moral intuition, provides a much needed dimension to the Aristotelian picture. To further develop this view I will explain what it means to understand the moral stimuli one is encountering.

Phronesis does much more than simply perceive the moral stimuli. As it develops, the constituent understanding of what the stimuli means sharpens. In order for this to make sense, one has to understand that *phronesis* (or for that matter moral intuition) is not a physical sensory organ. It is the mental mechanism that is excited by the sensory information we collect from our environment. This mechanism is both informed by the senses and informs the *psyche* about appropriate actions. So, *phronesis* is about more than just having a trained eye.

The colloquialism “a trained eye” suggests that it is the eye that is taught to perceive differently, whereas, in reality, it is the *psyche* that is trained to recognise patterns and deviance. This is similar to what the tutor does when training a student of virtue: the tutor trains the student to recognize and understand moral stimuli, which “updates” the student’s intuition. The ability to motivate action through decision-making is present in nearly all human beings. The *phronimos*, then, is one who is able to recognise the pattern of required action in every situation and issue a deliberation¹¹⁷. Since the agent is already motivated to be virtuous during the desire-formation stage of his or her training, having the ability to “see” what action is needed in a particular situation provides the input required to choose the *orthos logos*. As an agent’s *phronesis* develops, she or he gets better at recognising pattern complexity and taking various points of view into consideration. Eventually, patterns manifest with nothing more than a glance. The perfectly virtuous exemplar knows exactly what is called for, without error and with nearly no perceptible time lag.

Therefore understanding the moral stimuli and appropriate right action is unique to *phronesis* when compared with moral intuition. An agent governed by

¹¹⁷ It has been brought to my attention that this is almost exactly how people talk nowadays about reasons-responsiveness, i.e. Fischer and Ravizza’s ideas on the subject. This might be an interesting future collaborative topic.

moral intuition acts either on rule or on a whim, based on what could occasionally be irrational belief. The patterns of stimuli are hidden to the one who relies on intuition because he or she is incapable of evaluating the right course of action using the particulars of the circumstances.

Remember, *phronesis* is the mechanism regarding moral actions. One does not use *phronesis* to decide which shirt to wear in the morning. The perfect *phronimos* may still face morally neutral or arbitrary dilemmas regularly. Also, *phronesis* can get stuck on tragic dilemmas in which there is no right-action. In those cases, decisions are usually arbitrary or rely on non-moral issuers of action, such as cleverness or deference.

Subsection 3. Soldierly *phronesis*

The question now is: does *phronesis* improve warfighting when compared to the military status quo? It is a truism that war is chaos; but more than that, in wartime prediction based on moral stimuli is now usually shoddy and almost universally unreliable. On the other hand, future warfighters with phronetic dispositions will be able to make good judgments about a combat situation in real time. Further, if strategic information is available through orders or battle plans, the warfighter will be able to make decisions based on more information than is available to the one who originally issued the order or drafted the battle plan.¹¹⁸

The military implications of access to the phronetic level of understanding seem obvious, but, for the sake of clarity, I will explain. In addition to having all of the typical requirements while off-duty as a civilian, a warfighter is often found in situations in which formulaic rules-based ethics are not only inappropriate, but disastrous. In the conditions that arise during combat, one must usually make decisions without the luxury of time or full information. Currently, this problem is solved by investing the majority of decision-making in a single leader or chain of command, but this is a mistake. Of course, leadership is still valuable and I am not arguing against it. However, I am arguing that every agent on the battlefield should be trained to manage moral stimuli in real time, even when that might run counter to decisions made by non-present commanders. In other words, moral deference to a squad leader who is on the ground with the warfighter might be

¹¹⁸ They will simply have more information at their disposal: both the original mission/battle plan objective and access to the moral stimuli in the moment.

appropriate, but that decision will be based on the warfighter deliberately choosing to defer because it is the right-action for that set of circumstances. For example, when a phronetic warfighter encounters a situation which will have no impact on her regiment, she may safely make an autonomous decision without thought of deference. In contrast, should the situation place her regiment at risk, it may be more appropriate to defer to a commander who is present and holds the rank which makes him ultimately responsible for the welfare of the regiment. In this case, so long as one chooses to defer rationally and with full knowledge, avoids moral blindness, and acts virtuously, then the deference is of a different kind than what is commonly expected in military doctrine.

Further, a sound moral education and well-developed *phronesis* will reduce the mental fatigue that results from the horrors of war. This reduction in fatigue is partly due to the reduction in the warfighters moral conflict over dilemmas faced in combat. With *phronesis*, the warfighter will be better able to perceive the moral stimuli and issue a deliberation that leads to virtuous action toward the ultimate Good. Even in what looks like a no-win situation there will still always be one right-action that will best achieve the Good, even if that action is one of self-sacrifice or doing nothing. In the case of tragic dilemmas, in which the choice of actions is arbitrarily vicious, the right-action might simply be to take some action (doing nothing being an action) rather than hesitate. This will have the added effect of speeding up decision-making since the warfighter will seldom experience internal turmoil or hesitation based on a fear of making the wrong call. But do not mistake what I am saying here: a good warfighter will always be able to make tough decisions in combat so long as the prerequisites of virtue are fulfilled. In the case of combat, this may mean killing an enemy, and killing the enemy in this case is the virtuous thing to do. But since it can never be virtuous to kill an innocent or betray a friend (since that would be an act of injustice, exciting the virtue of, for example, righteous indignation), it also would mean that it is a horribly vicious thing to betray an ally or slaughter an innocent bystander or non-combatant. Since *phronesis* is about the truth of the moral circumstances, even when his moral integrity is most at risk, the phronetic agent will be able to make the kind of decisions that ultimately and decisively win wars.

Phronesis then is the ability to see the right-action required by a given set of circumstances, even in the vast chaos of war. The phronetic warfighter is best

able to judge the virtuous action in a given situation, especially when their world is in chaos; and in fact, a phronetic civilian whose world has been turned upside down (natural disaster, horrifying injury, being the victim of a crime, etc.) will be equally well-placed.

Section V. Conclusion

I've argued that *phronesis* holds a particularly important role in virtue ethics, and have expanded on the Aristotelian conception of *phronesis* via three avenues. First I argued that *phronesis* is a special virtue that also bridges the divide between character and intellectual virtues. Second, I argued that *phronesis* is the rational extension of one's naturally occurring and inculcated moral intuition. Further, it is a disposition to be aware of moral stimuli and understand the implications of the stimuli. Third, I have justified the trait of *phronesis* for the warfighter in such a way that no alteration in the *phronesis* of a civilian is required.

What does all of this mean for my project? Are there any substantive differences between what virtue requires of a civilian agent versus what virtue requires of a warfighter? I have shown that a warfighter is just as well-served by personal and political excellence as the civilian is, and in exactly the same ways. Nothing in Aristotle's concept of virtue in any way differentiates between these two classes of people. This shows that my key claim that the virtue of the warfighter is exactly the same as the virtue of the civilian is sound.

Chapter 6

The Stoic Account of Virtue in Nancy Sherman's *Stoic Warriors*

In this chapter I will analyse Nancy Sherman's position in her book, *Stoic Warriors* and position her efforts in the debate regarding proper ethics for the soldiery. I will open with an introduction to the case study involving (then) Lieutenant Colonel James Stockdale, with a nod to Ward Carroll's memoir *Punk's War*. These case studies are Sherman's vehicle for introducing a modern "moderate Stoicism"¹¹⁹, a concept she hopes to develop into a powerful tool for those seeking soldierly virtue. Following that, I will present and analyse Sherman's interpretation of Stoic virtue in the early part of her book. This will include her position on some of the problems warfighters face and how her revisionary Stoicism hopes to solve those problems. I will only be considering her revisions, since they attempt to target modern life and make adjustments that ancient orthodox Stoicism might otherwise have trouble with. While, I generally support her claims as rigorous and having merit, I will show that Stoicism is unable to provide an ethical picture of what western militaries generally might find to be a path toward a good life. Due to its limited scope, Stoicism, even in this milder form, is not a good virtue system, whether that be for warfighters or anyone else. For warfighters, Stoicism is not a sufficient ethical theory to replace the default American military ethic. As such, Stoicism must be laid aside and an Aristotelian-based set of virtue ethics must be adopted.

Section I. A modern Stoic virtue ethic for warfighters

One might look at *Stoic Warriors* and see three separate projects underway. On one level, it is an interpretive work on ancient Stoic philosophy, on another, it is an introduction to Stoicism for those with little or no background in Stoic tradition, and finally, it is a work of applied ethics with the intention to provide guidance to a beleaguered western military at war.

The book is hybrid in content, taking seriously both military matters and Stoic theory. But also it is hybrid in methodology. It adopts the standard method of philosophers-

¹¹⁹ A term she seems to borrow from Seneca, to whom she often references. The similarities between Sherman and Seneca are surely interesting, but will not be discussed in much detail here outside of Sherman's own comments.

namely, analysis of text and argument-but also the method of ethnographers who collect stories and anecdotes (Sherman, 2005, xi).

For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the latter two projects (namely, answering if this is a good introduction to a useful Stoicism and whether it is a viable applied military philosophy such that this is what soldierly virtue should look like). I am simply assuming that Sherman's interpretation of Stoic philosophy is rigorous and well-grounded.

Sherman's preface includes a number of comments regarding her interest in bringing Stoic theory to bear on military matters. She claims that being able to "suck it up" is a necessity to modern warfighters "as [modern] war turns uglier and deadlier" (Sherman, 2005, i). This is made all the more poignant by recent research showing an increase in cases of post-traumatic stress disorder and an inability to treat the disorder as US warfighters return from conflicts in the Middle East. She hopes that access to Stoic doctrine will provide some psychological defence for warfighters and empower baffled commanders. Using Just War terminology, Sherman emphasises that the focus in *Stoic Warriors* is *jus in bello* (Sherman, 2005, ii). Since that is the overall focus of my work here, the usefulness of looking at *Stoic Warriors* is undeniable.

James Stockdale's tale regarding his trials as a prisoner of war (hereafter "POW") in Vietnam is the initial case study of the first chapter (Sherman, 2005, 1-6). Stockdale is renowned for his use of Stoic principles to endure the better part of a decade of torture, imprisonment, and loss. Further, he used these principles to lead and assist his fellow POWs to survive and retain some sense of hope. Sherman uses the Stockdale story to launch an argument for Stoicism as a path to valuable military traits such as self-control, discipline, agency, and resolve (or a "stiff upper lip," as Sherman puts it) (Sherman, 2005, 1). Of course she rightly sees Stockdale's distilled views as barely scratching the surface of Stoic doctrine as a system. She argues that warfighters must learn to achieve a higher moral ideal while at the same time reducing their common vulnerability. She claims that Stoicism may hold some of the keys to making this happen, but a more extensive study of the doctrine is necessary to tease those useful aspects out. She will

recommend “mild Stoicism¹²⁰” (Sherman, 2005, 13), which helps clear away some of the more idealised aspects of orthodox Stoicism and make Stoic morality something one can more practically achieve, at least in some part, and in any case work toward in a noticeable way.

Any reasonable conception of morality requires that we hitch our wagon to high stars. But none ought to require that we be merciless in our punishment of ourselves or others when we fall short of the highest standards. A “zero-defect” policy (such as the one the military has promoted in recent years) is simply unreasonable. [...] In the course of examining Stoic and military themes, I argue for a brand of Stoicism that is moderate and mild. In the view of such a Stoicism, the task for the individual, whether civilian or military, youth or adult, is to temper control with forgiveness, soldierly strength with tolerance for human frailty. A healthy Stoicism of this sort, if we can successfully reconstruct such a thing, would push us to self-mastery, but never at the cost of self-renunciation or excessive self-punishment (Sherman, 2005, 13).

What she means here is that she will introduce orthodox Stoicism without necessarily advocating for it in full. Then, she will comment on areas of the doctrine that require certain levels of ideal perfection, note parts of the doctrine that are immediately useful to non-ideal, reasonable people, then “argue that the conception has its roots in a number of key Stoic texts that we shall explore in depth” (Sherman, 2005, 13), and proscribe a mild Stoicism as a virtue ethic for warfighters. In this way, Sherman’s project is not entirely unlike my own. Orthodox Stoicism would place extreme demands on the agent whilst a milder form of Stoicism would be less demanding. Whilst Stoicism may be useful in some military applications, it seems to be more valuable as a doctrine in cases where an agent has been exposed to the atrocities of war and seeks a way to process the trauma. This is opposed to showing a system of ethics that guides them toward right-action, moral responsibility, and moral autonomy. My argument, that *phronesis* training makes for a more effective warfighter than any other system, would result in the agent suffering less psychological trauma due to a high-credence confidence in their own actions and an understanding that right-

¹²⁰ Sherman is very fluid with her use of mild and moderate. Both uses seem to imply a systematic divergence from orthodox Stoicism in some ways, but could also be understood as something like a waypoint on the path to the Stoic sage of orthodox Stoicism. Comparable to the development of virtue in the Aristotelian student i.e.: the development of *phronesis* in stages.

action can on occasion cause harms that a warfighter would rather not cause. This will need less psychological work, if any, in order to bridge the schism between the agent at war as opposed to the agent in civilian life.

The Stockdale story is an interesting case study on mild Stoicism in practice (Sherman, 2005, 6). Stockdale was not a scholar *per se*, but had studied Epictetus independently for quite some time both before and during the war in Vietnam. On one hand, his study was far from rigorous or doctrinal. He was certainly not a trained philosopher. On the other, perhaps much like Marcus Aurelius, his ability to put Stoic doctrine into practice was remarkable. Further, the sheer magnitude of the circumstances one faces while at war poignantly highlight points where Stoicism is most valuable and points where it is in need of revision. Sherman's analysis warns that "an appreciation of the Stoic texts must always be critical and wary of the Stoic tendency to both over-idealise human strength and minimise human vulnerability" (Sherman, 2005, 2).

As a side note, one aspect of Stockdale's account introduces denial of moral deference. Other human beings are externals and therefore are *indifferents*. One cannot confer virtue, nor can one accept another's vice. During an interview with Sherman, Stockdale quotes Epictetus:

A man's master is he who is able to confer or remove whatever that man seeks or shuns. Whoever then would be free, let him wish nothing, let him decline nothing, which depends on others; else he must necessarily be a slave (Sherman, 2005, 6).

While the concepts and arguments surrounding moral deference are not part of Sherman's focus, I appreciate Stockdale's point. As such, I just want to draw attention to this statement and allow it to sit for now.

In addition to Stockdale's story, Sherman also introduces the book, *Punk's War*, by Ward Carroll (Sherman, 2005, 6). Carroll's story is more comical (and therefore more prone to creative license) than Stoic, but it introduces a few concepts that Sherman finds important, especially in regard to questions on identity. The protagonist characters in *Punk's War* often exhibit a strength of character that Sherman finds appealing. While the story doesn't do as much work as Stockdale's, it does provide support throughout the book for Sherman's

argument that Stoicism appeals to the military mind-set¹²¹ (Sherman, 2005, 2). I will occasionally refer to these two case studies throughout this chapter to provide a unique reference point for the portion of Sherman's project that is applied philosophy.

The case studies are meant to highlight and exemplify the kinds of extreme situations where a warfighter might find Stoicism particularly useful. While Sherman does occasionally conclude that mild Stoicism can be useful outside of military contexts, her project here is to show how in extreme cases, Stoicism can guide and protect the moral virtue of a warfighter and in so doing, can protect the psyche as well. The case studies provide extreme scenarios in which this has been empirically (or at least anecdotally) true. She will continue to use case studies throughout the argument to provide exemplary conditions in which what she argues for has been fruitful. I believe the case studies do even more work than that. By providing examples that "speak" to warfighters, Sherman is inviting readers into the philosophy via familiar pathways. As a work of applied ethics, this is methodologically important.

The introduction to Stoic principles begins in earnest with this statement:

Epictetus's project is to show that our opinions, desires, and emotions are within our power in the sense that we can monitor our attitudes and reactions to the circumstances that befall us. They are 'up to us' in a way that the external events themselves are not (Sherman, 2005, 3).

It is here that we see Sherman's argument begin to take form. This is especially observable in the brief examples she uses to exemplify certain soldierly external events (such as reacting to friendly fire or KIA¹²² notifications). She says, "We undermine our own autonomy and dignity if we make material and external things responsible for our happiness" (Sherman, 2005, 3). This warning anchors Stoic ethics and allows for a detailed examination of how such an ethical system could be useful for the warfighter.

An uncharitable and misunderstood position one might take upon a

¹²¹ To wit, Sherman says in regard to her time teaching at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, "When we arrived at Epictetus, many officers and students alike felt they had come home."

¹²² Killed in Action. In military jargon, it is considered bad form to say "killed in action", this has led to the use of the form "keiaiyai" that has come detached from the acronym in a protective way. KIA notification duty is not only traumatic for the family as can be expected, but lastingly burdensome for the warfighter assigned the duty of notifier. There are reported cases of warfighters who have committed suicide after being assigned notification duty.

cursory introduction to Stoicism is that it is a detachment that breeds idleness and foregoes human interaction in lieu of protecting one's well-being, becoming stagnant and cold. Stoic ethics is not complacency or retreat to safety, but instead a path toward virtue through self-empowerment. It urges one to face challenges and take risks in order to expand one's circle of autonomy. "We must learn where our mastery begins, but also where it ends" (Sherman, 2005, 3). She claims that in order for a Stoic to be virtuous, one must live and interact, but most importantly one must also realise what is within one's control and what is indifferent.

This brief introduction to the philosophically nuanced argument she wishes to make sets the stage for her efforts to define a kind of Stoicism that will benefit warfighters and make them more resilient and virtuous, both in and out of extreme circumstances.

Among those things that are within one's own control are emotions (Sherman, 2005, 9). The Stoic doctrine argues that an emotional reaction is nothing more than an opinion about the world attached to an impression about that opinion (*phantasia*) immediately followed by another opinion regarding a course of action. Sherman uses the example of fear, which will be given a more detailed look later in the chapter, but for purposes of example I provide a small taste here.

An event is observed by a person who then cognates an opinion (in this case, danger) followed by yet another opinion about a course of action (let's say, running away). In this way, the Stoics claim that having an opinion about an impression is to assent. "To assent is, in a sense, to endorse an appearance and its practical import for behavior" (Sherman, 2005, 9). In other words, what we perceive must be examined by our rational faculty, which then must decide whether the perception is true or false. In the case of a true perception, our rational faculty must then proscribe a course of action, while in the case of a false perception; we must abstain from a course of action based on that false perception.

How is this like and differing from the Aristotelian account? In Aristotle, first there is sense perception, which excites a desire. In the case of the sense perception of something dangerous, the Aristotelian, depending on his or her task, might have the desire to save themselves, save others, or face the danger

(perhaps for one of the aforementioned reasons). *Phronesis* is applied, which includes the recognition of a pattern of behaviour consistent with what the virtuous exemplar might do and the deliberation of the appropriate mean. This process then issues an action (and if properly developed, this will be right-action). The biggest difference is that *phronesis* is a more complete tool than the Stoic opinion doctrine. It also provides an answer for what action is needed when the impression is true, unlike the Stoicism described by Sherman.

Emotions, according to Stoicism, are false impressions about the world. They are a kind of sense perception that relay information to our rational faculty. One must remember that for the Stoics, sense perceptions can be true or false, much like what we see versus what we know to be true about optical illusions. Therefore it is within one's control to assent to or dissent from that sense perception as true or false based on reason. Once it has been demonstrated to me that an optical illusion is not as it appears, I have the cognitive faculty to look at it and know that what I am currently sensing is false. The Stoics teach that all emotions are like optical illusions. If emotions are always false, then one should never assent to them. In the Stoic account, virtue is within one's control. To be virtuous, one must believe true things and deny false ones. Therefore believing in emotions is vicious.

Sherman takes us on the journey through this orthodox Stoic doctrine that holds that emotions are a kind of perception, and this kind of perception is always false. If acted upon, emotions become the cause to an assent to false opinions in the same way that acting upon an optical illusion (running toward a mirage in the desert) will lead to false opinions (my thirst will soon be quenched), when we know full well that it is a mirage. Since these are false opinions about good and evil, assenting to an emotion is vicious because the belief is false (regardless of consequence or accident). Therefore, even if one ends up accidentally doing what might be considered the right thing to do in a given circumstance, it was an act of chance, not of choice and can therefore not be virtuous. This is not to say that emotions do not happen or should be suppressed, it means that for the orthodox Stoic, emotions are recognised as false and beyond one's control; therefore indifferent (*adiaphora*). Again, using the optical illusion analogy, it isn't that you shouldn't look at optical illusions or that one can ever train oneself to see optical illusions without the illusion, it simply that one should never act upon an optical

illusion, because you know you that what you see is false. This basically means that one cannot be concerned about matters outside the *psyche*, outside of one's control. Instead one must approach those matters indifferently due to one's lack of power over them. In saying that emotions are beyond one's control, it is important to note that the response to said emotions is within one's control. The term "indifferent" is technically rigorous for all levels of Stoicism. It is specifically the negation of those things within your control (your own mind and virtue). If it is external to the mind or virtue (such as other people or false opinions), it is an indifferent (Sherman, 2005, 10). That is not to say that indifferents aren't important in one way or another. Sherman introduces us to the concept of preferred and dispreferred indifferents later. Anything beyond the mind is an indifferent. There are indeed goods and evils, but for each individual, these are internal. Virtuous good is the assent to true perceptions followed by appropriate actions autonomously dictated by the individual, vicious evil is the negation (all assents to false beliefs or actions that are inappropriate to one's virtue)¹²³. Everything beyond this limited scope is an indifferent. For orthodox Stoicism, this includes every possible externality, including luck or chance. It includes everything "out in the world" including those things that elicit an emotion. Fear, therefore, is a false opinion (vice) about a danger (indifferent) out in the world.

It is this introductory account of indifferents that so strongly appeals to the military mind-set. To be able to detach from one's emotions is a common desire for warfighters in order to avoid the emotional consequences of hard decisions. Decision-making is a process which should include rational deliberation and consideration of all influencing factors rather than an emotional reaction (note Sherman's use of Aristotelian elements here). Whilst the emotional response should be weighed as part of the process, it must be acknowledged that the emotional reaction isn't true. In the context of war, it may be necessary to violate one's principles in pursuit of the goal of the war. In such situations mild Stoicism may be useful in identifying the actions taken borne out of the necessity to fulfil one's duty as a warfighter as indifferents and beyond one's control.

In addition to making the distinction between virtues and vices and those

¹²³ It will be useful to note here that Stoicism does not provide us a mechanism by which to make good decisions. It only helps us make virtuous or vicious decisions. By their definition, these have no externality. While Aristotle gave us *phronesis*, Stoicism has no similar concept that grants us the ability to make good decisions about *indifferents*.

things within and not within one's control, Sherman argues that understanding indifferents is the key to reaching for the perfectionism of the Stoic sage, an idealised being of perfect virtue and tranquillity (Sherman, 2005, 11). This is a being very similar to our "virtuous exemplar" from earlier chapters. It is the key phrase "reaching" that is doing the work. Sherman claims that if we are constantly reaching for the ideal, then by design, we will follow the path towards virtue. There is no assumption of ever attaining the ideal, only in being headed in the right direction. This metaphorical claim is indeed intuitively true and aligns nicely with our grander project. We imagine a goal, and strive to reach it. Even if the goal is never achieved, the progress made toward the goal is still positive. Virtue lies in the action in pursuit of the end and the striving toward the goal. Whilst achieving the goal would be good, it is not the ultimate motivation. The virtue is in the means not the end. This helps me define Stoic virtue as a true virtue ethics system on par with the Aristotelian, but truly distinct and different.

It is, in fact, the "faltering" of the warfighter pursuing virtue that leads to future success. The focus on continuous challenge and the expansion of autonomy is possibly the best one can hope for given that the sage is so far away. As Epictetus says, "For those who are engaged in the greatest of contests must not shrink back, but must be prepared to endure the blows" (Epictetus, 1994).

The argument, then, is that one need not worry overly much about being a sage, so long as one continually challenges oneself towards the goal of sagehood. In other words, it is good to continuously challenge oneself and expand one's sphere of autonomy and virtue, but in the face of failure or mistake, it is irrational to "be merciless in our punishment of ourselves or others when we fall short" (Sherman, 2005, 12). I imagine Sherman's dialectic taking a distinctly Aristotelian-style direction, a balance between control and forgiveness, as well as soldierly strength versus tolerance for human weakness. While it isn't explicit, the commentary on idealised Stoic doctrine and mild Stoicism throughout the work hedges against extremes. This will become more apparent, I think, later in this chapter when we look at Sherman's arguments in their expanded form.

Before moving forward, I will address a very short review of *Stoic Warriors* written by James Thorne from the University of Manchester. I bring this review to light because up to this point I have not challenged any of Sherman's

interpretations of the Stoic doctrine. Dr Thorne's comments strike at her interpretation. In his review of *Stoic Warriors*, Thorne asks "why would a Stoic be a soldier?" (Thorne, 2007, 121). One could say that this question could be levelled at both Sherman's project and my own. He claims that Sherman has associated too many Stoic traits with military life. His view is that the very things that define Stoicism would make it impossible for someone of Stoic mind to seek a military life. This turns on two arguments. For one, the profession of arms is wrought with two fundamentally uncontrollable externals, firstly the chain of command, and secondly, the enemy. To Thorne, no Stoic would desire anything beyond his or her control. Therefore, no Stoic would seek a life of soldiering. His second contention is versus the more general desirability for "Stoics in the ranks" by military strategists. This is due to the idea that by not seeking externals, then a warfighter cannot seek victory or mission accomplishment. To this end, he hopes to pre-empt one from using the example of Marcus Aurelius and his military lifestyle. He claims that one could use an analogy from the comments in *The Meditations* by Aurelius to deny Stoic virtue as compatible with military thinking. The paraphrased argument goes thus; the common man might ask how he may sleep with a woman he desires, the philosopher might ask how he may not desire to sleep with her. By analogy, Thorne's characterization claims that if a warfighter was to aspire to philosophy, then he or she might ask "how may I stop desiring to carry out my mission?" (Thorne, 2007, 121).

I believe Sherman is well-positioned to reply to these counter-arguments. Initially, Sherman expressly states that she is providing breadth in which Stoicism can move. By definition, this requires allowing contradictory or overly idealised concepts to flounder or drop off during the dialectic. If Sherman had claimed that her project was to provide a purely philosophical analysis of Stoicism, I could see being less forgiving, but given her project, I believe that only egregious errors in interpretation need be addressed at length.

Secondly, to counter Thorne's first claim we can look to Epictetus who claims it is the duty of the virtuous to protect their friends and their country.

When, therefore, it is our duty to share the danger of a friend or of our country, we ought not to consult the oracle whether we will share it with them or not. For, though the diviner should forewarn you that the victims are unfavorable, this means no more

than that either death or mutilation or exile is portended. But we have reason within us, and it directs, even with these hazards, to the greater diviner, the Pythian god, who cast out of the temple the person who gave no assistance to his friend while another was murdering him (Epictetus, 1994).

Sherman need not even rely on Epictetus for this argument, as she has already challenged the idealised tension within Stoic doctrine. Her project is to provide a basis of virtue for warfighters, not to claim victory for orthodox Stoicism. Even without being overly charitable, it is quite easy to see that the moderate Stoicism introduced in her work is well-suited to the military mind, at least on the surface. Therefore she has achieved at least two of her goals. She has suitably provided enough of an introduction to Stoicism to allow a newcomer to begin to understand the ethical doctrine in some small sense. Secondly, she has provided several key examples of imperfect Stoics succeeding in their goals and being good warfighters. This applied ethic is sufficient for one who wishes to see how a particular philosophical ideal fits within the professional setting in which they stand. Thorne's analogy also fails. I am, on the one hand, sympathetic to Thorne's project. It does feel as if some liberties have been taken with orthodox Stoicism, but without a more substantive counterargument, he does not challenge Sherman's view within the framework of her project. The sage has many duties to his or her communities and the duties of friendship is a preferred indifferent. In the absence of vice, it would be irrational to choose a dispreferred indifferent over a preferred indifferent. To assume that a Stoic could not prefer select indifferents is simply false. The whole of war is an indifferent. One's virtue remains intact so long as one assents and acts correctly. Sherman handles all of these arguments earlier in the work.

That said, I do find an interesting question comes out of his concern for the desires of military strategists. As has already been discussed, virtue, in any form, does not seem overly compatible with military command and control as it is known today. Virtue is about personal excellence and autonomy. Concepts that do not seem to lend themselves well to being commanded by any other than the exemplar or the sage.

In conclusion of part 1 of this chapter, Sherman is opening up an argument for using Stoic doctrine to develop soldierly virtue and resilience. The argument

began with a case study examining the techniques used by James Stockdale during his time as a prisoner of war in Northern Vietnam in the late 1960s. Stockdale used techniques he had learned through reading the works of the Stoic, Epictetus, to control his *psyche* and rational faculties while under extreme duress. He was further able to guide a number of junior warfighters toward resilience in the face of torture and imprisonment. Sherman uses this case study to introduce a re-imagined Stoicism, moderate Stoicism, as a method for warfighters to acquire a sense of virtue in the face of the horrors of war. Using the Stockdale example, she provides an account of virtue that, on the surface, appeals to warfighters due to its many traits commonly thought to be valuable. In the next section, I will look at the example of Stoic virtue as Sherman presents it. It will become apparent where the theory loses ground when applied beyond the specific circumstances given.

Section II. Fear

In this section, I will present Sherman's example of fear, in the chapter on "Fear and Resilience", to examine how her account of virtue, and by inference, the Stoic account of virtue, plays out. Fear and the corresponding courage necessary to react appropriately to fear is important for warfighters regardless of time period or interpretation. The task a warfighter undertakes is inherently dangerous, and there is a natural aversion to danger, so it seems logical that there must be some mechanism to motivate action in dangerous times. Sherman presents a case for Stoicism managing how one reacts to fear through seeking to "be like the sage". For this reason, I believe her arguments in this chapter will be telling regarding the overall account of virtue she hopes to make a case for.

Sherman makes the claim that the Stoic sage will not feel fear. This astonishing claim rides on an account of emotions as irrational as is Stoic doctrine (Sherman, 2005, 101). Instead of fear, the sage will use his or her reason to exercise caution (*eulabeia*¹²⁴) "that is, a calm, well-reasoned feeling of aversion against doing anything that would lead to or promote a vicious character" (Sherman, 2005, 107). As Sherman argues, this "caution would be an abstract aversion to the possibility of future vice, but experienced precisely on

¹²⁴ *Eulabeia* denotes godly reverence in classic texts and the biblical context.

those occasions that give rise to fear in others.” In other words, it isn’t a “fear” as is commonly understood that is projected at dangers in the world, but instead an introspective armour “against temptation in those circumstances where others do succumb to fear.”

Along with Seneca, Sherman is aware that the ideal sage is, unfortunately, legendary. Thus, she returns to her argument for mild Stoicism as an account of virtue for warfighters. She holds that mild Stoicism is a sufficient to guide to actions and helps control emotions for warfighters. In short, Sherman argues in favour of the ideal state as a paragon, but in much the same way that gold ore can never achieve chemical purity, human beings are not capable of achieving Stoic sagehood. I understand her arguments as making a statement along the lines of this: So long as a warfighter continues to reach for the attainment of the goal of Stoic sagehood, then that warfighter will achieve a kind of virtue that is sufficient even in one’s soldierly duties. Therefore mild Stoic virtue is the applied ethic that provides pragmatic content from theoretical orthodox Stoic virtue. If Stoic virtue were to turn out to be the correct account of virtue, I would agree with this claim.

One should definitely see the similarities now between the sage of Stoic myth and the exemplar of Aristotle’s. One might think of these entities as moving targets. They are unattainable by design. As soon as one where to get close, it would move away again, in order to further challenge one’s reason and virtue. Theoretically I think we can imagine a point at which there is no longer a moving target (for instance, once every human being was fully virtuous), but I think we can only know what that might look like when we are already very close to the exemplar/sage state as it is perceived.

Throughout the book, Sherman often takes the words of Seneca to be the voice of Stoicism, while recognising that Seneca’s account of the Stoic doctrine is heavily subdued in comparison to Greek orthodoxy (Sherman, 2005, 118). Again, I have no intention of questioning Sherman’s interpretation of these ancient works and happily grant in full her scholarship. More of interest is her proposed working model for an applied system and an appraisal of this account of virtue’s correctness.

The Stoics elaborated a detailed taxonomy of virtue, dividing virtue into four main types: wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation. Wisdom is subdivided into good sense, good calculation, quick-wittedness, discretion, and resourcefulness. Justice is subdivided into piety, honesty, equity, and fair dealing. Courage is subdivided into endurance, confidence, high-mindedness, cheerfulness, and industriousness. Moderation is subdivided into good discipline, seemliness, modesty, and self-control. Similarly, the Stoics divide vice into foolishness, injustice, cowardice, intemperance, and the rest. The Stoics further maintained that the virtues are inter-entailing and constitute a unity: to have one is to have them all. They held that the same virtuous mind is wise, just, courageous, and moderate. Thus, the virtuous person is disposed in a certain way with respect to each of the individual virtues. To support their doctrine of the unity of virtue, the Stoics offered an analogy: just as someone is both a poet and an orator and a general but is still one individual, so too the virtues are unified but apply to different spheres of action. (Stephens, 2003)

Sherman considers Stoic virtue at length, arguing that virtue is more than a composite of traits. In order to master virtue, one needed self-control, discipline, mental endurance, a sense of their own human agency, and “a stiff upper lip” but also one needed an understanding of internal and external goods, a willingness to take risks and accept challenges, and the ability to bounce back from failures. These are all key features of virtue that are needed in varying degrees in order to wear the badge of the sage. As it is true that we can only achieve sagehood in theory, I take her as saying that if we are to endure the external indifferents, we must learn to control the internal goods and evils, which is well within one’s power. She wisely assures the student of virtue that no one has reached the perfect virtue of the Stoic sage, but that should never stop one from trying. This should sound very familiar by now for both our accounts.

Another way of saying this, to use some of her earlier analogies, is to say that the sage is a point in the distance that one must seek to model oneself after. One may not be a sage, but on Sherman’s account, one can be like the sage. This is especially important as we continue to examine Sherman’s account of fear and the proposed guidance for the military student of virtue.

The sage is not immune to the environment, nor is he or she insensate. Instead, the sage understands that fear is an emotional reaction to perceived or

imagined danger to something out in the world. Since it is the Stoic position that emotions are misinformation, then to prescriptively react to emotional distress “has no role in the truly virtuous action of the wise person” (Sherman, 2005, 106). An example from Stockdale’s case study is certainly useful. The story goes that as Stockdale parachuted into hostile territory, rather than panic or grow anxious, he set his resolve stating “Five years down there at least. I’m leaving the world of technology and entering the world of Epictetus” (Sherman, 2005, 1). It can be certain that Stockdale felt fear when he felt the impact from the weapon that disabled his aircraft, fear as he jettisoned away from his plummeting war machine, fear as he slowly and inevitably fell well behind enemy lines far from friends and allies. The key to Stockdale’s successful Stoicism is that he did not assent to these emotions and panic, instead he set his resolve to endure what was to come, for he had no control over it.

Instead of fear, the sage develops a “good-emotion” of *eulabeia*, which Sherman defines as caution or well-reasoned shrinking. Caution replaces fear with an experience of “calm, equable, smooth and fully rational or ‘consistent’” feelings (Sherman, 2005, 106). This requires a bit of unpacking. For the Stoics, fear is misinformation for several reasons. First, the “target” of fear is something external, and therefore neither good nor evil. Harm is only an indifferent when it comes from externals, though we can definitely agree that harm is always dispreferred. Second, fear is not well-reasoned. It is purely reactive and perceptual. It is a sense, somewhat like one’s sense of smell, only in the case of emotions, always false. Therefore, reacting to fear is assenting to the emotion that what it is sensing is a real evil. This is counter-intuitive in many ways, since it certainly seems common for people to believe that harm is bad and should be avoided. That is precisely why the Stoic doctrine is powerful. If it can be reasoned that fear is always false, then ridding oneself of fear seems closer to one’s grasp.

If caution, in Sherman’s interpretation, is the replacement for fear, then caution must have something about it that is like fear, but that rids the Stoic of the baggage that comes with traditional fear. Since the two difficulties with fear are a false target and misinformation, caution manages these difficulties in stride. Firstly, the target of caution is the self, it recognises dangers to one’s virtue such as recognition of situations in which others might succumb to fear. This is a switch that forces the rational faculty to fully engage with the environment in order

to avoid succumbing, and yet still be able to respond appropriately. Secondly, by having the rational faculty fully engaged, one only assents to those perceptions that are true, namely that the danger is not a true evil and outside of our control. One can then evaluate the weight of indifferents and choose, rationally, a course of action that brings about the most preferred result. The argument then is that one who reacts to fear is being irrational because fear does not provide reliable information. It is a reactionary emotion. Instead of irrational fear, a sage must exercise well-reasoned caution, which allows him or her to see that indifferent things cannot threaten virtue and respond in such a way that does not compromise consistency (Sherman, 2005, 106).

Assuming a warfighter can come to terms with these arguments (something I do not think is unreasonable to assume), Sherman fully recognises that the emotion of *eulabeia* is something only fully possessed by the Stoic sage (Sherman, 2005, 106). The two arguments, while compelling, have a particular failing then. Specifically, since the student of virtue still needs to be able to prescriptively take action against those things which threaten harm, admittedly an indifferent, what tool does the warfighter use to manage situations which evoke fear? Fortunately, Seneca has some advice for the student of virtue on this.

Imagine this thought experiment. Take a person who, in their youth, romanticised the idea of becoming a warfighter and developed an unrealistic fantasy about the nobility of fighting for a cause. Later, when exposed to the extreme violence and dangers of actual warfare, this person, through knowledge and understanding, discovers that warfare is fraught with danger and is hardly romantic. If one were truly capable of transforming their tastes, one such as this might even go on to truly despise warfare. But a deeper look at this analogy shows that an experienced warfighter need NOT despise warfare, even when full appreciation of the complexity becomes manifest. One simply recognises that it is a poor example of nobility, and that the attainment of peace will be nobler. One may still experience feelings when one fantasises about fighting for a cause, but to speak to others as if warfare was pleasant, or worse, to react to combat in an unseemly way, would be unwise (and wrong). This is my interpretation of Seneca (or more specifically, Sherman's) account of how a student of virtue must learn to deal with emotions (in this case, fear).

If Sherman is correct, then moderate Stoic emotional control is similar. If I, on my path to becoming a sage, internalise the depth of the distinction between virtue and indifferents, then it is reasonable that I will make better decisions about how I react to the environment and threats to my virtue. That does not mean that I am necessarily immune to the feeling of fear. I simply go forward from that feeling, acting as if I am fearless. In other words, I habituate myself to respond to fear rationally rather than react to it. Although I may experience fear, I recognise this as an emotional response and choose to behave rationally rather than being governed by that fear. Another example might be a warfighter who is sensitive to noise. He might experience the sound of gunfire as an imminent threat causing his flight response to be activated and thus causing him to attempt to escape from it or flee. In a combat situation, flight may often prove to be the most dangerous course of action. As he grows accustomed to the sound of gunfire, he becomes habituated to override the flight response. The fact remains that he still perceives the gunfire as an imminent threat. Only now, he has submitted that dysfunction to a kind of rational scrutiny. In other words, he no longer assents to the false sensation. Fear is the perception, but it is irrational and assenting to it is vicious, so he submits his fear to rational scrutiny and in time comes to navigate the world in such a way that his perception of fear no longer threatens his virtue, but he is still sensitive to the world and can make decisions when certain indifferents are threatened or threatening.

In support of this claim, Sherman's interpretation of the orthodox Stoic doctrine is thus, fear is irrational and vicious, "the point is to show [...] that the truly virtuous and wise can act without the vulnerabilities of ordinary emotions, and those of us who are not wise can still act like sages by not indulging our emotions" (Sherman, 2005, 106). So one might see Sherman's argument taking a form like this:

- 1) Reacting to an irrational emotion is vicious.
- 2) Vice is a true evil (which the virtuous will wish to avoid).
- 3) Not reacting to emotion is neither vicious nor virtuous.
- 4) Therefore, not reacting to fear is preferred over reacting to fear, and is virtuous.

Only the sage escapes fear entirely, but it is within the means of the mild Stoic to choose not to be vicious. I find this argument to be very good, but it hangs on

some threads that are worth examining.

What is important here is the reference that we “act like a sage” by “not indulging our emotions.” In the same way that a student of Aristotelian virtue will mimic the virtuous exemplar during the habituation phase of their training, the Stoic student must mimic the sage. This, I think, is the correct way to look at it. Unfortunately, in discussing Seneca’s approach, the move is made toward “acting fearless,” which seems to be a move in the wrong direction. I return to her example of reaching for something. When one reaches for a target, they are inherently moving toward that object. This is very different from someone who is pretending to be reaching for something, or worse, pretending to have attained it. While this may be a simple semantic move, if one seeks a virtue for warfighters that is correct, then it should be hoped that the road by which virtue is attained has a firm reality to it.

Sherman’s statement is much deeper than just acting out some small aspect of the sage. Sherman is arguing that acting like the sage means acting virtuously in as many respects as one can manage. Since having virtue requires having a unity of the virtues, one who acts like the sage must engage all of one’s reason to ensure one is assenting or dissenting in every way necessary. The sage has tools the student does not, such as good emotions, which guide his or her reactions to threats (either to virtue or indifferents). But that does not make the idealised sage incomprehensible.

This all said, I can easily imagine a student very new to Stoicism who is not yet comfortable wrapping their mind around virtue as it is written. This student might, in these very early stages, choose to pick particular virtue features (in this case, appropriate responses to externals that involve threat) and choose to emulate that one thing. This would only be wholly troubling if this student felt committed to acting in an incomplete way. Acting fearlessly, to paraphrase Seneca (Sherman, 2005, 103), is to show no outward fear, even in the face of great danger or horror. I think that there is more to this than acting, which it seems assumes an observer of some kind. In other words, Seneca seems to be advocating saving face only. To be a good Stoic, one acts based on reasons. And for those acts to be virtuous, those reasons must be firmly rooted in the realm of those things which we can control. One does not control those entities in the world that might invoke a fear emotion, nor those who would observe one’s

reactions in those circumstances. However, Stoic doctrine holds that one is able to control one's responses to emotions and therefore it follows that one is able to control one's response to fear which is essentially an emotional construct.

In summary, this section has examined Sherman's (and her interpretation of Seneca's) specific argument for mild Stoicism as it applies to fear. The pure doctrine of the orthodox Stoic does not lend itself well to the soldierly life, she argues (Sherman, 2005, 107). Perhaps because the very act of becoming a warfighter, unless by conscription, requires one to take a stance based on an indifferent. Therefore, having a more moderate Stoicism surely would broaden the appeal and grant warfighters access to a philosophical system that is useful across the many specific aspects of their professional life. I find the arguments to be compelling and successful in her given task, namely that of finding an applied ethic that appeals to the military mind-set. In the next section, I will present an argument for why Sherman's mild Stoicism, though good, is not the correct account of virtue for the warfighter.

Section III. My interpretation of Aristotle versus Sherman's Stoics.

I have charitably presented Stoic virtue as interpreted by Nancy Sherman as a compelling alternative to the virtue previously advocated. I will now present three contentions I have with the account of Stoicism as presented. In order to establish these contentions, I must compare the requirements of virtue from both perspectives, [mild] Stoic and my reinterpretation of the Aristotelian. While I find Sherman's work to be interesting, I do not find this account of virtue to be the correct account for warfighters.

In order for a virtue system to be right for a group, it must be conceivable and practicable. My first contention with Stoic virtue is that it is very difficult to conceive considering the many strict requirements, emotional stunting, and lack of tools for managing indifferents. Aristotelian-based virtue is much easier to get one's head wrapped around and many see elements of virtue guiding their own life. In Stoic ethics, one must attempt to look at the world as inconsequential to living a good life. In Aristotelian ethics, one is allowed to experience joy, sorrow, anger, and pride (among others). As human beings, people have emotions which act as sense perception. To not use those sensations to react to the world is the same as asking someone to voluntarily blind them self. If I were to present to a

warfighter with a system that was robust, useful, and easily trained (at least in small part) and also a system that required them to learn to turn off the reactive part of their soul, to believe that every joy, love, burst of anger, or overwhelming feeling of compassion was false, I think it goes without saying which one the warfighter is more likely to identify with and find practicable. Aristotelian ethics (and his exemplar) is significantly easier to imagine and mimic until the right habits have been built. Therefore it is superior to Stoicism as a soldierly virtue.

A system of ethics should be able to align with the good life, guiding the practitioner toward that worthy goal. My second contention with Stoic virtue is that in its account of good and evil, it does not rightly target those things which are commonly considered important, namely, other people and our relationship to them. People are considered to be indifferents and therefore can never affect our virtue. This seems incorrect and differs greatly from what is commonly held to be the target of good and evil. In Aristotle's account, while virtue is fully subjective and introspective, nearly all of the virtues require interaction with other human beings. As it can reasonably be inferred that human beings need companionship and support from others, and ethical system should be able to address how one interacts with those people, as well as enemies, acquaintances, and human beings in abstract. My virtue system is superior to Stoicism in leading the student toward a good life, whether that person be a warfighter or not. Further, the Aristotelian drive toward excellence accounts handily for how a warfighter might take to soldiering and do so well. The account of preferred and dispreferred indifferents simply does not hold the normative power that Aristotelian virtue displays when managing relationships and duties.

My third contention with Stoic virtue is that it does not seem to account for acting rightly. Instead, this form of virtue seems to be only concerned with protection of the *psyche* from introspective harms to one's autonomy. This does not account for how one should act in the company of others, or even when alone. Aristotle's account is supremely focused on *right action* regardless of the circumstances. A well-established student of Aristotelian virtue is going to have the confidence to act as is appropriate to the situation based on his or her phronetic deliberation and alignment of virtues along the doctrine of the mean. In short, Aristotelian virtue provides guidance on acting rightly while navigating the world of humanity while Stoicism does not. Stoic virtue allows for many acts that

are commonly viewed as true evils, even while protecting one's virtue, especially in the management of consequences and interactions with others. Further, this Stoicism designed specifically for warfighters does not handle situations outside of combat nearly as well as it does within. This is not a problem the Aristotelian account suffers.

In conclusion, this section establishes that Aristotelian virtue is the correct form of virtue for warfighters, even in comparison to a purpose-built mild Stoic virtue designed specifically for warfighters. I have given mild Stoicism a generous presentation and fully recognise its value, but have shown that it cannot achieve the same normative power that an Aristotelian account is capable of achieving. I have also proved that Stoicism does not sufficiently guide right action and is wholly selfish in its account of what is good and evil. When compared to Aristotelian *phronesis*, Stoic virtue cannot compare equitably in its ability to recognise the salient facts about the world that guide actions. Therefore I must conclude that my reinterpretation of Aristotelian-based virtue is what soldierly virtue should look like.

Chapter 7

What is Soldierly Virtue?

Soldierly virtue is, ultimately, virtue. I have used the perspective of the soldiery to describe a form of virtue that would work for everyone, from the warfighter, to the parent, to the world leader. It is not without cause that I have chosen this path, because there are unique elements of the soldierly perspective that lend themselves well to this thesis. Further, there are very real problems with military ethics in the modern era, and a move toward virtue within the armed forces would solve a great many, if not all, of these. Finally, there are further unique elements of military training and indoctrination that lend themselves well to inculcating virtue into the heart and mind of the warfighter.

Given that it may conceivably be right to wage war, soldierly virtue will ensure that the soldiery of nations will conduct themselves in such a way as to minimize the propagation of vice and to create an environment in which one's fellow human beings can achieve a *eudaimonic* life. In this work, I have shown that soldierly virtue will be a rigorous virtue ethic rooted principally in *phronesis*. Soldierly virtue, with a virtue set that conforms to a phronetic account and that is dialectically sound, will ensure that warfighters act rightly given their functional mantle and the moral pattern of their circumstances. Most importantly, warfighters operating within a virtue framework will have the mental resilience and strong ethical foundation to make decisions with a sense of responsibility currently considered detrimental to modern war efforts. The dissolution of incompatible ethical systems that one must follow while at war replaced by a system that easily transitions from civilian to military circumstances may be exactly the tools that solve the difficulties warfighters face upon returning to civilian life after a period of conflict.

The investigation presented here began with an introduction to the phenomenon of incompatible ethical systems used in war, sometimes manifesting as a belief that ethics during wartime is irrelevant or grounded incorrectly (for instance, ethics based on personal survival, the immutability of mission accomplishment, or based on the sub-humanization of the enemy). The most prevalent and well-studied of these systems is the system of *in bello* Just War Theory ethics. Further, the recognition that the tradition of having an

alternate wartime ethic was shown to have an alternative in ancient Greek tradition, in which the ethics of an agent were equally applicable to wartime and peacetime conditions.

It is with that thought in mind that I presented a claim that an account of virtue ethics could be made that successfully applies in both types of circumstances. While I have argued from an ideal position, I have concluded that a pragmatically viable starting point can be discovered now that a target has been set. That target being doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons, in every circumstance.

Any investigation regarding military ethics requires one address the realities of modern military life. As such, it was necessary for me to address at length the commonly held belief that a warfighter was morally obligated to defer to those officers assigned over him or her. At every turn in building this work, interlocutors have asked the same question, “but how can you have an Army that doesn’t follow orders?” This question is rooted in an extremely broken tradition easily 5000 years old or older. The belief that human beings must become hive-minded in order to fight for their causes is simply false. We find proof of this in the modern U.S. military doctrine that allows the ranking individual on the ground to take action in the absence of orders from higher headquarters. What makes a squad leader different from a commander in this situation? The short answer is nothing, but in greater context it usually has to do with knowledge and perspective. Commanders are entrusted with knowledge and perspective, and then choose to withhold that from lower echelons. This creates a false impression that commanders are better able to lead than their troops. I hope that throughout this thesis I have made it clear why the current traditions are broken. In a world in which the duties of the warfighter include moral responsibility, the current traditions have outlived their usefulness.

I have argued that moral deference is perhaps the most damaging ethical tradition the warfighter, and in fact anyone who seeks to be a good person, has ever followed. Even in the case of malice, at least one is taking a moral stance. Those that morally defer are tepid and thoughtless. They fail to take responsibility for their actions, and cannot be trusted to take actions outside of deference. If they do take an action, their actions may or may not be vicious and neither they nor anyone else will know. They will only have their perceptions of the

consequences to judge by. Further, they fail at fulfilling their function, for they act without reason.

I argue that to truly fulfil one's function, one must know full well what they must do in a situation. This requires accuracy, adroitness, and aptness. In other words, one must know the correct action, how it will lead to the Good, and the consequences of the action. These alone do not entail virtue. That requires knowledge not just of the action, but also the motivation of the action.

In short, I present the argument that moral deference is wrong and the practice should be abandoned. This is a hard thesis to argue, given that so many feel strongly regarding the current traditions. There is a comfort in knowing you will not be held responsible for your actions while at war. I would deny you that comfort but offer you a greater one, the confidence to know what to do with the confidence that it is the best possible action you could take.

Theories of authority often use military examples, simply because the militaries of the world follow a millennia old tradition of leadership and rank-and-file. I argue that there is some value in this tradition, though it is in desperate need of updating. I claim that deference on actions related to situations with no moral component is acceptable. In fact, when working toward a common goal, this kind of cooperation is a good way to accomplish major tasks. This is nothing like moral deference. I claim that moral deference always calls into question an individual's autonomy. There is no collective moral task and every individual is responsible for their actions. In a nutshell, authority has its limits.

I have assumed that the investigation of a virtue ethic viable for my purposes would naturally have its roots in the ancient world, given that there is too much modern tradition separating wartime ethics from personal ethics. I have forgone the opportunity to include Plato's efforts, instead focusing first and foremost on Aristotle. Since I have assumed that initially my interlocutors would be well read on Just War Theory, and since Just War Theory is not the subject of the later thesis, I chose to provide two levels of readings of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This was to serve the purpose of positioning the overall thesis, and to educate those interlocutors unaware of the deeper understanding of Aristotelian virtue.

As the commonly nominated founder of virtue ethics, I base my conclusions significantly on the Aristotelian framework. Using a number of

interpretations by respected Aristotelian scholars, I put together a view of virtue that will provide a snapshot of the position virtue ethics holds. This is meant to provide a common language for the deeper reading on the *NE*. I use the unreproachable treatise on Aristotle's ethics by Sarah Broadie to complete the introduction to virtue necessary to state my thesis in earnest. Finally I take into account a number of modern interpretations and a few problems for virtue ethics.

Soldierly virtue requires a rigorous understanding and development of *phronesis*, which I have defined as the state in which one is able to properly evaluate the morally relevant stimuli in a particularity-of-circumstance from the agent's perspective (coined as *moral patterns*) and issue a directive for right-action. I call these moral patterns because they lend themselves to a single right-action (from each agent's perspective). In fact, it is the particularity-of-circumstance that makes each moral pattern a unique perspectival spatial-temporal entity that admits of only a single reasonable response.

It is through the lens of the particularity-of-circumstance that I introduce the nuanced conception of task as used throughout this work. The task being the combination of an agent's roles, duties, and obligations they have taken on or had thrust upon them in this life (such as being a parent, a student or a warfighter). An agent's task necessarily affects the moral pattern of a situation and will be part of the calculus that determines the right-action in any given situation.

In order to properly consider right action in this way, and to correctly find how to reconcile my view with the common military hierarchy view, I take a careful look at moral decision making. Specifically, I look at moral deference and various kinds of moral testimony. I carefully pull apart moral deference into three kinds, educational deference, pure deference, and moral deference. I conclude that moral deference does not satisfactorily allow one to seek virtue or assist in moral decision making. I further conclude that within military contexts, moral deference is problematic and separates an agent from responsibility for their actions. I posit this is a probable cause for the severe emotional and ethical problems a warfighter faces upon reintegration into the civilian setting back home.

I finish the thesis with a look at Stoicism. I assume by now that my readers are convinced that virtue is the way forward for warfighters, but is Aristotle really

the right teacher? Nancy Sherman gives an account of Stoic virtue as it pertains to warfighting. Her target is a system of ethics that protects the fragile human psyche from the horrors of war. It is a valiant and well-considered effort, but it is, I argue, a band-aid. Rather than discarding moral deference, instead it wants one to realize that following orders and otherwise fighting a war is beyond one's individual control, and therefore doesn't make one a bad person. I think this is the wrong way to go about being virtuous and uphold my support for the Aristotelian picture.

Given the work as it stands, there is much that needs to be done if this thesis is ever to be put into practice. The following future research is now necessary. First, and foremost, a method of moral development that takes a student of virtue through the primacy stages of *phronesis* must be considered. Remember that the primacy stages include the habituation of one's virtue list, so development of a virtue list that fits all the necessary parameters is fundamental to this step. *Phronesis* is itself a concept in need of further examination, at least in regard to its development. I am sure I have provided a rigorous enough definition that further research on this matter will be mostly scientific in nature.

The development of one's ethical centre is a lifelong pursuit, so how can we move forward? This requires we keep one tradition the military has long practice, initial entry training (basic training, boot camp, rekrut, etc). I believe that initial entry training, with its harsh environment and stripping and rebuilding of identity is the perfect opportunity to effectively rewrite one's ethical basis. Finding the balance between moral enhancement and brainwashing is certainly necessary, or at least full disclosure before subjects enter training. A study regarding the possibilities here would be worthwhile.

A further study regarding moral deference, or more specifically, when and where moral deference may be required would be another worthy area of inquiry. As I see it, moral deference is the most destructive of the military traditions in practice. It will take a great deal of effort to convince military commander and civilian alike that this mode of thinking is the problem. There are right and wrong ways to defer, and a deep study on where the line lies valuable.

Finally, a re-evaluation of hierarchical military structure is long overdue. The reliance on ancient battle methodology has long since outlived its usefulness. There is some value in this old system, so again, finding a balance

would be helpful. It would be a world we would all love to live in if every individual could be trusted to act ethically, but even in the most ethically rigorous communities, that has yet to be seen. Self-interest is too powerful an instinct to shuffle off so easily. As such, authority is necessary. But such authority should be limited to the proper weight and proportion to make modern warfighting an activity that accomplishes the needed ends without destroying everything it hoped to achieve.

Appendix I

Quick Introduction to Just War Theory

An excerpt from Dr Doribolo of Oregon State University from his personal website

“Just War Theory is the basis on which nations seek to legally and morally justify going to war. Not all nations concern themselves with such justifications (e.g. Nazi Germany). The United States does explicitly recognize Just War Theory as criteria for engaging in war. Thus, the criteria of Just War Theory are a primary basis for discussion and debate about US war actions.

The history of Just War Theory begins in the works of some important philosophers. Augustine (354-430) provides a foundation for Just War Theory in Western literature. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) codified Augustine's reflections into the distinct criteria that remain the basis of Just War Theory as it is used today. The need by a civil society to provide sound justification for going to war is one of the many practical influences that Philosophy has on our lives.

There are two traditional categories of requirements for just wars.

JUS AD BELLUM The conditions required for justly going to war; the right to go to war.

JUST AUTHORITY: The first condition in Just War Theory is Just Authority, also known as Competent Authority. A just war must be initiated by a political authority within a political system that allows distinctions of justice. Dictatorships (i.e. Hitler's Regime) or a deceptive military actions (i.e. the 1968 US bombing of Cambodia) are typically considered as violations of this criterion. The importance of this condition is key. Plainly, we cannot have a genuine process of judging a just war within a system that represses the process of genuine justice. A just war must be initiated by a political authority within a political system that allows distinctions of justice.

JUST CAUSE: This is the central condition for many discussions over the justification of a war. If a Just Cause cannot be shown, many people will reject the call to war. Now, almost all nations and leaders who wage war claim to do so on the basis of a Just Cause. Iraq, for instance, explicitly claimed to have a Just Cause in its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. It is not enough to simply claim to have a Just Cause. We must be able to show that some wrong has been committed by one nation for which war is the proper redress by another. Unprovoked aggression, such as an invasion, fits clearly within the criteria of a Just Cause. Few would deny a nation the right to defend itself against unprovoked attack. The defense of an ally against an aggressor is also generally considered a clear Just Cause.

JUST INTENTION: The Just Intention (or Right Intention) condition in Just War Theory sets a limit to the extent of the war. Even given a Just Authority and a Just cause, it is possible for a warring state to go beyond the bounds of its justification. In the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq, the coalition forces led by the US stopped short of invading and occupying Baghdad. In answer to the criticisms of this action, US military leaders pointed out that the Just Cause and sole objective of the war was to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Having achieved that objective, the limit of the justification for prosecution of the war had been reached and a ceasefire was negotiated. Calls to occupy Iraq, assassinate Saddam Hussein, or use nuclear weapons clearly exceeded the authority of the US and UN action. A just war is limited to the pursuit of the avowed just cause. A just war is limited to the pursuit and securing of the Just Cause.

LAST RESORT: War is morally permissible only when no other means to achieving the Just Cause is possible. This means that the nation considering war has exhausted all potential solutions, including political and diplomatic. This condition seems to mitigate against the national pride that sometimes leads to war as the resort of choice. A nation may have to compromise and negotiate to win solution short of war. But at least, the condition of last resort requires that political and diplomatic approaches to a solution have been fully attempted.

JUS IN BELLO The conditions required for the just conduct of war; the right conduct in war. The criteria provide standards of conduct for nations, armies, and individual soldiers at war. Some people have the idea that in war, anything goes;

"all's fair in love and war." But this is never the case in any war. Armies maintain some standards of lawful vs. criminal behavior. Armies have police, prisons, and courts. It is true that some armies show no legal or moral restraint when it comes to the treatment of the enemy (some are hostile to their own populations), but those are militaries that act contrary to the Just War criteria and usually in violation of the international rule of law. Such states or individuals are often held accountable by domestic or international law. There are, however, many cases where war crimes are not prosecuted or redressed. Just War Theory is a philosophical idea and can be used as the basis of a legal process. We are using the criteria to judge cases of war acts. Here are three of the key criteria for just (or justifiable) behavior in war:

PROPORTIONALITY. The proportionality of the use of force in a war. The degree of allowable force used in the war must be measured against the force required to correct the Just cause and limited by Just Intention (see Jus Ad Bellum).

DISCRIMINATION. The combatants discriminate between combatants and noncombatants. Innocent, nonmilitary people should never be made the target of attacks.

RESPONSIBILITY. A country is not responsible for unexpected side effects of its military activity as long as the following three conditions are met:

- (a) The action must carry the intention to produce good consequences.
- (b) The bad effects were not intended.
- (c) The good of the war must outweigh the damage done by it.

How these criteria are to be interpreted and fulfilled is an issue of ongoing discussion among philosophers, politicians, and military planners. In order for a civil society to maintain itself such that the commission of unjust wars is preventable, there must be and critical discussion by the citizens." (Doribolo, 2001)

Appendix II

Moral Intuition

As it is the case I am arguing that *phronesis* is simply a purposely-developed, advanced state of moral intuition, and so as to curtail any unnecessary focus on the term as used here, I wanted to include a few notes on moral intuition. The only thing I need from my interlocutors is agreement that there are such things as moral intuitions, and therefore my primary argument isn't hurt or helped by these discussions. Still, some notes on moral intuition might be useful.

Moral intuitions might be thought of as a subclass of intuitions, which may just be derived through the same process from which we intuit about non-moral facts. Hence, we can learn a lot about moral intuitions from existing work in the epistemology on intuitions in general¹²⁵, which is where we begin. Thereafter, we will apply these views to moral intuitions in particular, and see how they line up with current debates in metaethics.

Recent discussions about intuitions have focused mainly on 1) their nature and 2) their epistemic role. Regarding 1) we can divide the available views into those which treat intuitions as propositional attitudes i.e. mental states with propositional content, and those which do not. For the latter camp, intuitions might be reduced to feelings, or otherwise states which do not take propositions as their object¹²⁶. In which case, perhaps they might be immune to rational revision by propositional attitudes like belief. More commonly, however, authors opt for explanations of the former type. At which point, the question is: what kind of propositional attitudes are intuitions? Common ways to answer this include (a) thinking of intuitions as beliefs, (b) as dispositions to believe, or (c) as something *sui generis*.

Motivating views of kind (a) is the thought that nothing obviously separates beliefs and intuitions: in both cases, a proposition is made to seem true to us. Hence, thinking of them as one and the same state is both sensible and ontologically parsimonious. Against such a view, one might argue that when we

¹²⁵ For example, Michael Huemer defends a particular view about the role of intuitions in moral theorizing and also writes on the nature of intuitions in general, as a class of *seemings* (Huemer, 2005).

¹²⁶ Strictly speaking, this would include intuitions which are considered *de re*: i.e. to be about objects, rather than propositions, but certain views of propositional content can also take care of these.

are confronted with a logical paradox, for instance, we can find a premise intuitively true whilst disbelieving it. In which case, it looks like our intuitions and beliefs can, at least sometimes, come apart.

On the second kind of explanation (b), intuitions are a kind of disposition: i.e. a propositional attitude that moves us to believe its content. For such views to succeed, they need to explain how intuitions are to be considered separate from other kinds of propositional attitude. For instance: perceptual experiences normally move us to believe their content too; so why do they not also count as dispositions of the same kind as intuitions? Disposing us to believe their content is better thought of as a feature that some propositional attitudes have, rather than being essential to the attitude in and of itself. This can be said, for instance, of intuitions as a *sui generis* class of propositional attitudes.

Popular among this third set of views (c) is the idea that intuitions are 'seeming-states', alongside perceptual experiences, memories, and so on. On the Phenomenal Conservatism: i.e. dogmatism view about seemings – see e.g. (Tucker, 2010) - intuitions can give us defeasible reason to believe their contents in the following sense: *if a subject S has an intuition that P, then unless they know of a defeater on P, they have justification to believe that P.*

Which brings us to discussions of kind 2) on the epistemological role of intuitions. If intuitions can provide us with not just the disposition to, but moreover justification for believing their content, then, like perceptual experiences and memories, they can be epistemic sources that are assessable against the facts for their accuracy and reliability. As noted, however, this justification is defeasible such that, if we recognise good reason to disbelieve its content, a token intuition loses its epistemic clout.

Furthermore, this defeasibility can be made to generalise. There have been arguments made, particularly within Experimental Philosophy, to the effect that our intuitions are unreliable in general. These kind of arguments usually claim that our intuitions are oftentimes influenced by non-truth-tracking factors e.g. motivated by irrational desires. If successful, such arguments can undermine the idea that intuitions play an evidential or justificatory role in belief-formation.

In the context of moral intuitions, parallel arguments would claim that we ought not to give our moral intuitions too much evidential weight, if their sources turn out not to reliably track the truth. However, you are more likely to find people

questioning the source of the content of our moral judgements (Campbell, 2015). Such debates normally occur within Cognitivist views, according to which moral judgements are truth-apt, because they are beliefs with propositional content¹²⁷. What we want to know is whether these arguments can also undermine the epistemic standing of moral intuitions.

In epistemology, an intuition can be the source of a belief or judgement. In metaethics, a moral judgement could be either based on a moral intuition (whether directly or otherwise) or, indeed, could actually look much like what we have described an intuition as so far, the first family of views includes those on which intuitions indirectly inform our moral beliefs by being part of the deliberation process used to reach a judgement (Broome, 2013). On the other hand, a moral judgement might be made by perceptively reading of an ethical situation which, in the good cases at least, requires no interim deliberation (McDowell, 1994). In the latter case, 'moral judgements' look closer to our epistemological notion of intuitions: as a basis for further belief. So some debunking arguments against Moral Realism, i.e. arguments which undermine the truth-tracking reliably of our moral judgements, can also undermine the justificatory role of our moral intuitions, when the target states appear to overlap. Such debunking arguments seek to argue that our moral beliefs are not truth-tracking in the way that other beliefs can be i.e. by accurately reflecting objective facts. For instance, Street has argued that the content of our moral attitudes is shaped by Darwinian forces¹²⁸ (Street, 2005). If Street is right, the apparent reliability of moral intuitions is a result of evolutionary adaptation, rather than a learned cognitive capacity for rightly recognising objective moral facts.

On an opposing view, we can acquire and sharpen our moral intuition - which, when all goes well, will pick up on objective moral facts - not necessarily as part of human nature, but as something closely tied to the kind of moral upbringing we have had (McDowell, 1994). In which case, we can still be Moral Realists, but without thinking of moral facts as natural facts. The tension between McDowell and Street's views of moral intuition stems from a wider debate, normally played out between 'Naturalists' and 'Non-Naturalists', about whether morality should be reduced to, or wholly separated from the natural sciences (or,

¹²⁷ The Moral Realist further claims that such beliefs will sometimes be true.

¹²⁸ Which, Street argues, opens the door for Moral Anti-Realism (Street, 2005).

indeed, something in-between). However, this is not the only kind of metaethical debate that produces opposing views of what moral intuitions are, where they come from, and what role they can play in our moral reasoning.

Different notions of moral intuitions also crop up in other Metaethical debates. For example; between Particularists and Generalists. According to Moral Particularism, what counts as morally right varies between different ethical situations, and so we need to comprehend both the non-moral features of a situation and have an intuitive grasp of their moral significance - e.g. in (McDowell, 2009). Accounts which are Generalist, on the other hand, think of moral principles as universal, whereby the way in which they apply does not vary between contexts. In which case, it looks like our moral intuitions need only read the moral facts of the situation¹²⁹. What we have here is a dispute over which facts inform the content of moral intuitions.

Different views can also arise with respect to what role we think intuitions play in our moral reasoning. As mentioned earlier, we might think that having an intuitive grasp of what a situation morally demands is something like a learned perceptual capacity, and is decisively our way of judging right from wrong (McDowell, 1994). On the other hand, we might see moral intuitions as one factor amongst others that helps us to reach a moral judgement through deliberation (Broome, 2013, Ross, 1930). On this second kind of view, our moral intuitions can help us adjudicate between apparently conflicting moral principles, for instance, in order to decide which gets priority.

As discussed earlier, not everyone thinks of intuitions as propositional attitudes. Likewise, not everyone thinks that moral judgements – which we might sometimes think of as moral intuitions – have propositional content. For the Non-Cognitivist, moral judgements can be content-less expressions of intuitions, or indeed themselves be content-less intuitions. In which case, as for intuitions in general, we might describe moral intuitions as feelings towards an object or scenario which are in no way truth-apt (historically, see Emotivism in (Ayer, 1936) (Stevenson, 1944). On such theories, we can do away with the idea that moral intuitions have a rational basis (e.g. as they could when they were informed by our moral education), let alone thinking that they can serve as an evidential basis

¹²⁹ Although one could argue that a grasp of the non-moral facts will also play a role in coming to understand why e.g. stealing is wrong *in general* (Campbell, 2015).

for further belief about what the right kind of action in a given ethical situation would be.

Moral Intuitions (*qua* moral versions of what epistemologists think of as intuitions) are variously treated as the basis of moral beliefs, kinds of moral judgements themselves, or one factor amongst many in weighing up different epistemic sources during moral deliberation. For the large part, moral intuitions (and intuitions in general) are treated as attitudes with propositional content; in which case, it remains to be explained how are intuitions different to beliefs, if both make their propositional content seem true to us. We also still have no conclusion as to how much evidential weight we should give our intuitions: even if they are apparently reliable, do they really track the truth?

Nonetheless, we can have an optimistic picture on which intuitions are what others would call moral judgements, reached not through a process of deliberation, but by having a honed perceptual capacity to recognise the moral facts of a given situation. This is the kind of picture of moral intuitions that McDowell paints, for example (McDowell, 1994). It looks fine to combine this kind of view with one on which intuitions are a kind of seeming with propositional content, especially as such views also liken intuitions to perceptual experiences. Perhaps, then, we can have immediate justification for believing the content of our moral intuitions until we see a good reason to think otherwise: e.g. if we find out that something went wrong with our moral upbringing, at which point we can work to reshape our values in order to better recognise the objective moral facts.

Appendix III

Educational Deference

Educational deference is to be desired in young students who need to act according to instructions given by a moral exemplar. In this form of deferring, the student learns which behaviours are considered virtuous while cultivating the desire to become a virtuous agent him- or herself. By means of habituation a student will learn to discern right action. Alison Hills and Philip Nickel claim that some agents are incapable of gaining the necessary comprehension of moral stimuli to enable them to understand moral beliefs and although it is preferable that autonomous agents gain understanding of the reasons for a moral belief, it would be better for such incapable agents to defer, although this can be problematic as a rule.

Given your situation, morally worthy action and proper orientation are out of reach. But if you are lucky and you have access to reliable people whom you can trust, you might be able to get moral knowledge and, as a result, do the right thing. Since doing the right thing is very important, you should trust moral testimony from trustworthy and reliable sources and defer to moral experts if you cannot gain moral understanding (Hills, 2009, 123).

However, this can only truly be considered moral in cases of educational deference where the exemplar is a *bona fide* moral exemplar. That said, no matter how useful this activity might be, it is definitely not virtuous. Not everyone is capable of achieving even a semblance of virtue and in those cases should consider moral deference as the next best thing.

[H]aving only these sorts of problems, inability to weigh reasons properly and failure to track particular kinds of reasons, is consistent with meeting the Recognition Requirement [¹³⁰]. One's actions can be morally good even when one overcomes these problems through moral testimony. It is only when one has a more global inability to grasp relevant reasons, or when one refuses to do so, that one cannot act morally well (Nickel, 2001, 264)

¹³⁰ Where the Recognition Requirement states that "morality requires one to act from an understanding of moral claim and therefore to have an understanding of moral claims that are relevant to action" (Nickel, 2001, 257).

Appendix IV

Doxastic Voluntarism

I believe it is impossible for one's mind to have complete and voluntary control over the formation of one's beliefs because one is always¹³¹ in a state that is guided by evidence. The evidence can come from any number of sources, with the most important of belief-forming sources being reason and empirical evidence. But there are also non-rational sources, such as emotion and desire. What doxastic voluntarism implies is that there could be an intention (Feldman, 2001, 85) to believe something and forming the belief is a result of that intention. Here, belief is seen as an act of will, and coming to have a belief is understood as an action. This seems to me wrong-headed.

In other words, I hold that a belief (x) can only exist if there is sufficient evidence for(x). This need for evidence is, however, relative to the agent (some agents may not require a lot of evidence at all¹³²). Therefore, when one believes (x) one does so because one has evidence for (x) and consciously ignoring it would not only be irrational, but psychologically impossible. What can happen is that one may let one's emotions interfere with one's reasoning and thereby ignore reason-based evidence. It is also possible for one to concentrate on specific pieces of evidence at the expense of other, sometimes more substantial, pieces of evidence. (It remains unclear whether the denial of particular elements of evidence could be considered a voluntary action since choice generally involves intention.) One's perception of evidence may also be influenced by one's hopes and dreams, however this is not necessarily a conscious decision, but is, instead, a delusion akin to self-deception.

On the other hand, beliefs may unintentionally colour one's perception (Arpaly, 2003, 12) to the extent that one involuntarily chooses to hold one belief over another. For instance, parents whose son has been deployed to a warzone receive news that there have been several casualties when his battalion was attacked. While there is no definitive evidence that their son is alive, the parents maintain that he is alive, in part, because there is no definitive evidence that he is

¹³¹ Barring truly deviant cases of mental health issues, brainwashing, or otherwise extraordinary examples.

¹³² Immediately it springs to mind the exceptions to this case. It is far too common that one witnesses the complete lack of considerations for the truth held by so many of the voting public. I am interested in the concept of wilful ignorance, but that will need to wait.

dead. This allows them to focus on particular pieces of evidence that support their position. They justify their belief that he survived the attack because they have not been officially informed of his death and because they know that the chaos following the attack might be the reason he has been unable to make contact. This does not mean that they consciously followed their emotions nor that they actively formed an intention to believe their son is alive, decided to believe it, and thus believe it. Rather, they became subject to their emotions in such a way that their perception of the evidence (or lack thereof) was coloured by their emotions.

Even this very brief discussion of doxastic voluntarism offers strong reasons to doubt its validity. That is, it is evident that as long as one is subject to emotion it is impossible to control one's belief formation in such a way as to appropriate an advisor's belief as one's own, especially when an agent does not agree with the advisor. As such, there is no case to be made for moral deference in such instances.

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