

THE ROLE OF THE *PATHE* IN ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF VIRTUE

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For my mother

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	4
ABSTRACT.....	6
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	7
2 KOSMAN’S ACCOUNT OF BEING PROPERLY AFFECTED .....	14
2.1 A Problem for Aristotle’s Conception of Virtue .....	14
2.2 Kosman’s Solution.....	18
The Virtue Argument .....	19
The Feeling Argument.....	22
3 AN ARISTOTELIAN ACCOUNT OF THE <i>PATHÊ</i> .....	26
3.1 The General Nature of the <i>Pathe</i> .....	26
3.2 Emotions as Species of the <i>Pathe</i> .....	28
3.3 The Cognitive Element Involved in Emotion.....	28
3.4 The Feeling Element in Emotion.....	31
3.5 A Defense of <i>Phantasia</i> as the Relevant Cognitive Component in Aristotelian Emotion.....	34
3.6 Aristotle’s Psychology of Action.....	41
4 CONTROLLING EMOTIONS .....	45
4.1 A Return to Kosman’s View.....	45
4.2 A New Proposal.....	48
5 CONCLUSION.....	56
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	58
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .....	59

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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In this thesis, I undertake an investigation into the nature of Aristotle's conception of virtue in light of the relevance given to the *pathe* in his account. The centrality of the *pathe* in Aristotle's conception of virtue raises several issues. Commentator L.A. Kosman raises a problem for Aristotle's conception of virtue, namely that the *pathe* that are the manifestations of virtue are not chosen. This creates a tension for Aristotle's account since virtue is supposed to be something that involves choice. Closely related to this problem is the question of how Aristotle might be able to say that the *pathe* or emotions are under the control of an agent. In order to more adequately address some of these problems, I offer an Aristotelian analysis of emotion along with some commentary on the role played by the *pathe* in his psychology of action. Utilizing these accounts, I suggest that Aristotle is equipped to address these problems. Specifically, I argue that Aristotle is prepared to offer an account of emotions in which they are under an agent's control.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the nature of the relation between the *pathê* (emotions or passions) and actions in the context of Aristotle's concept of virtue. Ultimately, I argue that being properly affected, or having the right emotion, minimally requires the ability of an agent to alter her emotions and, further, that Aristotle is equipped with the conceptual machinery to advance such a proposal. My defense of this proposal as a plausible Aristotelian account relies on an account of Aristotle's psychology of action and a considered view of Aristotle's account of the emotions generally. I argue that Aristotelian emotions, taken as intentional states of an agent that have at least narrow cognitive content, are the kinds of states we can control and that this view helps clarify the role of the *pathê* in the virtuous agent.

The need for the advancement of such a proposal is motivated by the following two considerations. The first is the exegetical task of explicating a central concept of Aristotle's ethical theory about which he offers little analysis, namely, the specific role and nature of the passions in the context of virtue and virtuous action. The second consideration is to remedy a widely accepted proposal regarding the relation between actions and passions provided by L.A. Kosman in his paper "Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's Ethics."<sup>1</sup> In this paper, Kosman notes an apparent tension in Aristotle's concept of virtue as a *hexis prohairetikê*, namely that the *pathê* that play a central role in virtue are not chosen whereas the virtues they partly constitute are. His solution to this problem depends on his characterization of the relation between passions and actions, an account which I intend to show is at odds with Aristotle's psychology of action and also one that we should not accept given an analysis of Aristotle's views on emotions generally. While I do not wish to provide an account of being

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<sup>1</sup> Kosman 1980.

properly affected that resolves the tension originally noted by Kosman, I do wish to examine the motivation behind some of the issues regarding passions and emotions in order to argue for how we might at least be able to say that emotions are under an agent's control if not directly chosen.

The importance of being properly affected in Aristotle's ethical treatises may not be immediately obvious on an initial reading of the texts. This is not to say that Aristotle makes little mention of passions and their involvement in virtue, quite the opposite. Aristotle is abundantly clear that the ethical theory developed in both the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* centers on the concept of virtue (*arête*) and its manifestation in the actions *and* passions (*pathê*) of agents. I will speak of the *pathos* both as a general concept in the Aristotelian corpus and as it relates specifically to virtue and virtuous action. Broadly speaking, the *pathê* are ways in which something can be affected or changed and the manifestations of these alterations. The *pathê* include experiencing emotions or having certain desires.

Aristotle refers to both passions and actions in the formal definition of virtue in *EN*.II.

*EN* II.6.1106<sup>b</sup>35-1107<sup>a</sup>6: Excellence, then, is a state concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the person 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.

Again, at *EN* III.1.1109<sup>b</sup>30, he asserts "excellence is concerned with *passions and actions*." We have little reason, then, to doubt that there is more to virtue, for Aristotle, than the performance of certain actions. But we might still wonder what the relation is between passions and actions and how they function together in a virtuous life.

In the definition of virtue, Aristotle claims that there is something *right* about the passions and actions of the virtuous person. Passions, then, are such as to be felt rightly or

wrongly, properly or improperly.<sup>2</sup> The following passage, which expands upon the concept of virtue, reinforces this idea.

*EN II.6.1106<sup>b</sup>16-23*: I mean moral excellence; for it is this that is concerned with *passions* and *actions*, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the *right* times, with reference to the *right* objects, towards the *right* people, with the *right* aim, and in the *right* way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of excellence.

Now, we should be familiar with the thought of acting in the right way or doing the things that one ought, but may be puzzled by the notion that there are right and wrong ways to feel and that these are in some important way related to action and virtue. The idea that there are right or wrong ways to feel seems to imply that agents are responsible for their feelings and should be able to change or control them. But emotions appear to be the kinds of things that we cannot control. And we often see people react angrily or joyfully for what seems like no reason at all. And we *should* be puzzled by the absence of an explicit characterization or analysis of this phenomenon on Aristotle's part given that the relevant concept is not transparent.

Despite the apparent lack of analysis, I think we can formulate an initial account of right or proper feeling by looking at some passages that more clearly illustrate the relation between passions and actions and between the passions and virtue. Consider, first, the following two passages:

*EN III.1.1111<sup>a</sup>34-<sup>b</sup>2*: "Again, what is the difference in respect of involuntariness between errors committed upon calculation and those committed in anger? Both are to be avoided, but the irrational passions are thought not less human than reason is, and therefore also the *actions which proceed from anger or appetite are the man's actions.*"

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<sup>2</sup> We want to avoid, as we do similarly with actions, confusing proper or virtuous affective states with affective states that are felt rightly or virtuously. The former description of affective states as virtuous suggests that the rightness of the state depends on its being one type rather than another, love instead of anger say. That same description might also seem to suggest that feeling the right affective state (ambiguous between types and tokens) is sufficient for virtue.

EN V.8.1135<sup>b</sup>19-2: “When he acts with knowledge but not after deliberation, it is an act of injustice – e.g. the *acts due to anger* or to other passions necessary or natural to man.”

Here, Aristotle says that there are actions that *proceed from* or are *due to* an emotion, anger specifically. He also suggests that actions might be due to other passions as well. These passages clearly suggest that there is something like a causal relation between an agent’s emotions or passions and his actions. This might be the start of an adequate account of the relation between passions and actions. But what is the relation between passions and virtue? The following passage taken from the *Eudemian Ethics* serves to illuminate a possible answer.

EE II.2.1220<sup>b</sup>10-20: Now we have to state in respect of what part of the soul we have character of this or that kind. It will be in respect of the faculties of passion, in virtue of which men are described, in reference to those passions, either as feeling them in some way or as not feeling them.

Aristotle is suggesting that the quality of our character depends importantly on our emotions. If someone feels them in the right way, she will be virtuous. But if she feels them in the wrong way or not at all she will be vicious (or at least not virtuous). So, if actions are due to passions or emotions in some sense, and exhibiting virtue depends on our having the right emotions, the actions that are performed as the result of a virtuous character should be due to the emotions that are felt in the right way.

I would now like to suggest a rough initial account of what Aristotle regards as proper feeling. By *proper feelings*, I will mean those affective states of an agent that function as a cause of her performing the actions that she ought.<sup>3</sup> This account, though not yet fully developed, should serve to highlight the central ideas regarding the passions that we’ve seen

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<sup>3</sup> I identify ‘cause’ here with Aristotle’s notion of efficient cause. I take it as sufficient for an affective state’s serving as the cause of an action its being given as a reason in explanations for why an agent performed a particular action.

Aristotle offer, namely that they appear to be related, perhaps causally, to actions and that they play a central role in virtue and in determining the character of a person generally. My main task in this thesis is to expand upon this initial account. If the *pathê* are correctly characterized as playing at least a causal role, if not a constitutive role, with respect to actions generally and with respect to the actions of the virtuous agent specifically, they may be apt to serve as that in virtue of which the actions they cause (or constitute) count as expressions of virtue.

Clearly not just any emotion will be related to virtue and virtuous action, only those that are, as Aristotle would say, felt rightly. Anger, for instance, will result in the sorts of actions which one ought to perform if felt properly.<sup>4</sup> An agent cannot perform the right action without feeling in the right way. Two agents may perform the same action, fleeing from danger, for instance, but only one may be the right action. Further, some emotions, such as hatred, are simply exempt from being the sorts of feelings that can ever be rightly felt.

The account of proper feeling that I have offered serves the mere theoretical purpose of explaining the general phenomenon, and if we are to follow Aristotle's lead and take interest in the practical and prescriptive side of ethical inquiry instead of the theoretical and descriptive side, we will want to know more about how this generalization might apply in particular circumstances, how an agent comes to have the right feelings in the first place. We are, intuitively I believe, far less familiar with the notion of feeling as we ought than we are with the notion of acting as we ought. We are better acquainted with *the thing to do* than we are with *the way in which to do things*.

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<sup>4</sup> In saying that, on Aristotle's view, there are actions that one ought to perform, I am not suggesting that there are certain voluntary actions *simpliciter* that one should perform. Rather, we should think of them as actions that are performed in the way that they ought to be, namely, from a virtuous disposition. I use the term 'virtuous action' here to refer to actions that arise from a virtuous character and not to describe actions as virtuous as such in order to preclude the possibility of attributing to Aristotle the charge of leaving virtue to chance.

We can see that there are numerous questions surrounding Aristotle's conception of emotions and passions and the role they play in virtue. These exegetical questions have no doubt served as the motivation behind accounts such as Kosman's and certainly reveal the need to get clearer about what the Aristotelian emotions are and what role they play in virtue.

In Chapter 2, I set out my formulation of the problem for Aristotle's conception of virtue as conceived by Kosman. I then consider his proposed solution to the problem, including his account of the relation between passions and actions, and point toward some *prima facie* objections to this account. The questions raised by Kosman's characterization of the relation between passions and action motivate a closer investigation of Aristotle's views about emotions generally as well as his views regarding the psychology of action.

In Chapter 3, I consider Aristotle's account of the *pathê* generally. I also reflect on the views of John Cooper, William Fortenbaugh, and Martha Nussbaum concerning both Aristotle's conception of the emotions and his psychology of action. I begin my analysis with a discussion of the nature of the *pathê* generally. I then turn to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to examine the nature of emotions specifically as a species of the *pathê*. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* offers what might be seen as the most explicit (yet not nearly comprehensive) account concerning the nature of emotions. I argue that Aristotelian emotions are complex, intentional states involving both a cognitive and feeling element, a view that, I believe, is not fully appreciated in Kosman's account. Lastly, I take up a discussion of the role of the *pathê* in Aristotle's explanation of animal movement found in *De Motu Animalium*.

In Chapter 4, I return to Kosman's account in light of the broader analysis of Aristotle's views regarding the *pathê* and their role in action. I use the analysis of emotion that I have constructed as well as Aristotle's psychology of action to highlight the problems with Kosman's

account more clearly. I then suggest, drawing upon some of the motivations behind Kosman's account, how we might utilize the considered view of Aristotelian emotion along with his psychology of action to outline an account of being properly affected that supports the view that the *pathê* are under an agent's control generally and what this means for Aristotle's conception of virtue.

In Chapter 5, I survey the conclusions drawn in the main portions of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2  
KOSMAN'S ACCOUNT OF BEING PROPERLY AFFECTED

**2.1 A Problem for Aristotle's Conception of Virtue**

In this section I set out a puzzle regarding Aristotle's conception of virtue from Kosman's "Being Properly Affected". This puzzle motivates his account of the relation between passions and actions that I explicate in the following section and with which I take issue in this thesis. I begin by offering my formulation of the puzzle Kosman introduces by presenting three claims that can each be supported by textual evidence from Aristotle's ethical texts. However, when taken together, these claims seem to reveal an inconsistency in Aristotle's conception of virtue. I offer textual support for each statement in turn and go on to place each within the context of Kosman's formulation of the problem, highlighting their inconsistency.

Consider the following three claims:

- (1) Virtue (*aretê*), or moral excellence, is a disposition to not only act but also to feel in the right way.<sup>5</sup>
- (2) Virtue is a state concerned with choice (*hexis prohairetikê*).
- (3) Feelings (*pathê*) are not objects of choice (*prohaireta*).

I first want to show that we have good reason to think that Aristotle endorses each of these claims.

Kosman rightly notes that Aristotle's account of virtue is not concerned solely with actions but with passions as well. I noted earlier that we have evidence in Aristotle's ethical treatises to support his endorsement of this claim. At *EN* II.6.1106<sup>b</sup>16-17, Aristotle explicitly states that virtue "is concerned with passions *and* actions." Aristotle makes similar claims at *EN*

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<sup>5</sup> Another way of putting the same thought is to say that virtue is concerned with an agent's performance of the right actions as well as her having the right feelings.

II.3.1104<sup>b</sup>13-14, II.6.1106<sup>b</sup> 24-5, and III.1.1109<sup>b</sup>30.<sup>6</sup> Given this evidence, we should *not* attribute to Aristotle the view that virtues such as courage or temperance are dispositions merely to act in certain ways but are, as Kosman claims, “dispositions toward feeling as well as acting”.<sup>7</sup>

We might worry that Aristotle might not mean to say that a virtue is a disposition to feel *as well as* act since passions and actions differ in important ways, namely that the former are things an agent experiences in a basically passive manner while the latter are obviously things that an agent does. Kosman considers a solution proposed by H.H. Joachim.<sup>8</sup> Joachim’s solution is that virtues are dispositions merely to act in ways that are the *appropriate response* to certain feelings and are not dispositions to feel in certain ways. Kosman rejects this account, however, because Aristotle says at *EN* II.5.1105<sup>b</sup>26 that, if we are excessively angered, we are badly disposed and if not that, we are well-disposed.<sup>9</sup> The general point Aristotle appears to be making here is that the realization of virtue in an agent depends crucially on whether or not she feels in the appropriate way, whether or not, for instance, she becomes angry too easily or not easily enough. So part of what it means to realize virtuous dispositions is to feel in a certain way. If we do not feel in the right way, we are badly disposed. An agent’s failure to feel the appropriate amount and intensity of anger at the right time indicates that she is not virtuous. Kosman concludes, as I think we should, that feelings are “part of the concept of virtue considered as a disposition.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis mine

<sup>7</sup> Kosman 1980, 104.

<sup>8</sup> Joachim 1951.

<sup>9</sup> Kosman 1980, 108.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

We also have very clear textual evidence that virtue, for Aristotle, is a state concerned with choice (*prohairesis*). In his formal definition at *EN* II.6, Aristotle's states that virtue is a state concerned with choice. In saying that virtue is a state concerned with choice, Aristotle means roughly that the manifestation of virtues such as temperance and courage in the virtuous agent are the result of a process of deliberation about the good. And manifestations of virtue are the result of deciding what should be done to realize this ultimate end. However, an agent cannot choose or decide to be virtuous; she cannot, simply as the result of decision, be temperate or courageous. What she can do is deliberate about what the good for her is and how best to achieve that aim. Virtues, then, are the dispositions formed via the realizations of these completed deliberations.

Finally, what evidence do we have to attribute to Aristotle the view that the *pathê* do not involve *prohairesis*? At *EN* II.5.1106<sup>a</sup>2-4, we find Aristotle saying that, "we feel anger and fear *without choice*, but the excellences are choices or are not without choice."<sup>11</sup> Aristotle's aim in the larger portion of text in which we find this passage is to deny that virtues are identical with passions. He argues for this claim by asserting that emotions such as fear and anger are not *chosen* and since, as we have seen, virtues involve choice in an important sense, virtues are not identical to feelings or passions. If we feel anger and fear without choice, we do not come to feel angry or fearful as the result of a process of deliberation about how to feel. In other words, agents make no decisions about how to feel. Virtues on the other hand are ultimately realized by agents who engage in a process of deliberation about the good.

We should remember also that the passions are not limited to emotions such as fear, anger, or joy, but also include things like desire (*epithumia*). At *EN* II.5.1105<sup>b</sup>21-3, Aristotle

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<sup>11</sup> Emphasis mine

asserts “By passions I mean appetite (*epithumia*) anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure and pain.” Aristotle does not explicitly claim that desire, generally, does not involve choice. However, there is evidence for the claim that appetitive desire (*epithumia*) does not involve *prohairesis*. At *EN* I.13, Aristotle claims that there are two elements in the soul, one rational and the other irrational. The irrational part of the soul is often at odds with the rational element in the soul and manifests itself in the desires that run counter to what reason commands, but it is also at times obedient to the dictates of reason.<sup>12</sup> Appetite (*epithumia*) is the name Aristotle gives to this portion of the irrational element in the soul.<sup>13</sup> And appetite is a form of desire. Since the appetite takes no part in processes of deliberation (only the rational element has that ability) and since *prohairesis* explicitly involves processes of deliberation, as we see at *EN* III.3.1113<sup>a</sup>10, appetite does not involve choice. Further, in the midst of his discussion of *prohairesis* at *EN* III.2.1111<sup>b</sup>14-15, Aristotle states, “Again, appetite is contrary to choice, but not appetite to appetite. Again, appetite relates to the pleasant and the painful, choice neither to the painful nor to the pleasant.” So, given this evidence regarding *epithumia* along with what we see Aristotle saying about fear and anger, we should attribute to Aristotle the view that the passions, broadly speaking, do not involve choice.

Even though we have evidence that Aristotle endorses statements (1)-(3), a closer look at the implications of (1) and (2) reveals an inconsistency in the original set of three. Statements (1) and (2) seem to imply the following claim:

(4) Virtue involves acting with *prohairesis* and feeling with *prohairesis*.

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<sup>12</sup> This point will be crucial later in providing an account of being properly affected.

<sup>13</sup> *EN* I.13.1102<sup>b</sup>13-1103<sup>a</sup>3

We might rephrase (4) to say that the actions and passions that are the manifestations of virtue involve *prohairesis*, a claim that is in direct conflict with (3). The initial problem that we are faced with, then, is how virtue can be, at least partly, a disposition to feel in the right ways *and* involve choice if feelings themselves are not the objects of choice. Kosman highlights the inconsistency of these statements by raising the following two questions: (i) how could choice be involved in a fixed tendency toward that which does not involve choice (or that which is not chosen); and (ii) is it possible to make sense of the notion that a virtue involves choice even though the feelings that are its realizations are not the objects of decision?<sup>14</sup> In what follows, I discuss Kosman's solution to this initial problem in order to bring to light the relation that he suggests holds between actions and passions

## 2.2 Kosman's Solution

In this section I discuss Kosman's solution to the problem raised for Aristotle's conception of virtue with a view toward criticizing his account of the relation between actions and feelings generally and in the case of virtue specifically. Kosman's solution relies on two parallel arguments that I reconstruct here for purposes of clarity. The first argument, which I'll refer to as the Virtue Argument (VA), aims to show how we might formulate an account of virtue in which the virtues themselves are not chosen *simpliciter* but which might be chosen indirectly in virtue of their relation to acts that are chosen. The second argument, which I'll refer to as the Feeling Argument (FA), is aimed at showing how feelings might be chosen indirectly in virtue of their relation to acts that are chosen. Ultimately, Kosman argues that since virtue is acquired through a process of habituation and since this process is carried out by performing acts that are objects of

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<sup>14</sup> Kosman 1980, 110.

choice, the virtue, that an agent acquires as a result of a process of habituation is chosen as are the feelings that, he claims, are “naturally associated” with those actions.

### **The Virtue Argument**

1. Virtues are dispositions (*hexeis*) acquired through a process of habituation (*ethismos*) and as such cannot be acquired directly through decision.<sup>15, 16</sup>

2. Particular performances of an action type can be chosen.

3. [What comes about as a result of an agent’s performance of certain actions is itself chosen in virtue of its relation to the relevant chosen acts.]<sup>17</sup>

4. So, a virtue that is acquired as the result of the repeated performance of acts that are chosen is chosen.

The first premise is relatively uncontroversial given both our previous discussion about the nature of *prohairesis* and intuitions about acquiring dispositions. Kosman rightly claims “it is not as a direct result of calculation, deliberation, [or] resolution.... that we become courageous, temperate, or wise.”<sup>18</sup> Instead of acquiring virtuous dispositions directly as the result of decision, an agent must behave in the ways that the person of virtue would until she behaves in those ways habitually. Kosman puts the idea this way, “On this view one becomes virtuous by impersonating a virtuous person, and in that impersonation, through the process of habituation, becomes the virtuous person whom one impersonates.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *EN* II.6.1106<sup>b</sup>35

<sup>16</sup> *EN* II.4.1105<sup>b</sup>9-10

<sup>17</sup> This premise appears to be implicit in Kosman’s discussion.

<sup>18</sup> Kosman 1980, 111.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 112

We should also be able to see the plausibility of the second premise. Particular actions can be chosen since an agent can deliberate about what to do in any given circumstance and so act as the result of her deliberation. Kosman notes that “a person might decide on... an occasion to act virtuously” and “chooses on [some] occasion to be virtuous and so acts.”<sup>20</sup>

The third premise is one which seems to be implicit in Kosman’s account and is one on which this argument relies. There may be problems with this premise, but these are independent of the criticisms I have of Kosman’s account. For now, then, we should accept this claim in order to get at his entire solution to the problems raised earlier.

If this argument is right, then virtues are chosen if they are acquired through the performance of acts that are chosen. This account seems to accord with what Aristotle says in the ethical treatises regarding the way an agent acquires virtues and also with the intuition that a person cannot acquire a virtue such as justice or temperance simply by deciding. Consider the following passage:

*EN* II.4.1105<sup>b</sup>5-9: Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them *as* just and temperate men do them. It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good.<sup>21</sup>

Aristotle is claiming that the acquisition of a virtue such as justice requires that an agent act justly time after time until she acts that way out of habit, and so on for any virtue. But we should remember that there is a distinction between acting virtuously and acting in accordance with virtue. An agent that acts virtuously has already acquired the relevant virtuous dispositions. An agent might act in accordance with virtue on a particular occasion; she might act justly, say,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 111

<sup>21</sup> Emphasis mine.

without also having acquired the relevant virtue of justice. At *EN* II.4.1105<sup>a</sup>18-21 and 1105<sup>a</sup>28-1105<sup>b</sup>1 we find Aristotle saying the following:

The question might be asked, what we mean by saying that we must become just by doing just acts, and temperate by doing temperate acts; for if men do just and temperate acts, they are already just and temperate, exactly as, if they do what is grammatical or musical they are proficient in grammar and music....but if the acts that are in accordance with the excellences have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent must also be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character.

VA, however, does not resolve the original worry raised by Kosman. We still need an account of how feelings might be said to be objects of choice as well as an explanation of the relation between feelings and actions. Recall the initial problem regarding feelings and choice in light of VA. Since virtue cannot be *chosen* in the sense that we cannot choose *simpliciter* to acquire the virtue of courage, say, or temperance, we may have been led to assume that “a virtue’s involving *prohairesis* must depend on the actualizations of that virtue being *prohairesic*”.<sup>22</sup> In other words, given the view of virtue as a complex disposition that is actualized as both the right sorts of actions *and* feelings in conjunction with the view that virtues cannot be acquired by a single act of choice, we are led to the conclusion that the *pathê* which constitute the realizations of virtue must also be chosen, a conclusion which, as we have shown, creates a tension in Aristotle’s conception of virtue. The questions that we raised earlier, Kosman claims, are based on “the supposition that virtues whose actualizations are feelings may only be acquired through choosing those feelings”.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the problem for Aristotle’s conception of virtue becomes salient if we take him to be advocating the view that the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 112

actualization of a virtue might come simply in the form of having a certain feeling; that is, there may be virtues that are concerned only with feeling appropriately and, conversely, there may be virtues that are only manifested in the form of appropriate actions without regard to the agent's feelings. Kosman argues that if this supposition is false we can show that the *pathê* are chosen in, at the very least, an indirect sense. The following is my construction of what I take to be his argument for this view.

### **The Feeling Argument**

1. Virtue is a complex disposition that is actualized as a related set of actions and feelings.<sup>24</sup>
2. Particular performances of an action type can be chosen.
3. Actions and feelings are [logically] related in the sense that certain actions give rise to or “bring about” feelings that are naturally associated with those actions.
4. [What comes about as a result of or is caused by an agent's performance of certain actions is itself chosen in virtue of its relation to acts which are themselves chosen.]
5. So, the feelings that are brought about by the performance of action types which are chosen are also chosen.

Kosman's solution, then, is to argue for the modest claim that feelings are chosen *indirectly* in virtue of their relation to acts that are chosen. He is essentially denying the claim that feelings do not involve *prohairesis*. If he is right, we might be on the right track toward getting around the original problem.<sup>25</sup> However, Kosman does not think that his solution is ultimately successful for reasons that I do not want to go into here. And, again, my aim is not to criticize the solution that he offers but rather to use it as a jumping off point for getting clearer

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Kosman thinks that his solution ultimately fails as a solution to the original problem.

about the relation between actions and passions. The solution centers on his characterization of the relationship between actions and feelings, what we find here as the third premise in FA. I want to take a closer look at this claim and note some prima facie problems.

Kosman stresses that there is a logical connection between certain ranges of actions and feelings. He characterizes this connection in the following ways:

(i) Feelings are accompanied by concomitant actions.<sup>26</sup>

(ii) Actions on the part of an agent .. are characteristically and naturally associated with .. feelings.<sup>27</sup>

(iii) One acts in ways that are naturally associated with and will “bring about” .... [certain] feelings.<sup>28</sup>

What he is claiming in (i) and (ii), I take it, is that there are certain actions that we often find accompanying certain feelings. For instance, the emotion of fear often accompanies instances of flight and anger often accompanies retaliation. To further support this claim, Kosman appeals to Aristotle’s characterization of the *pathê* as enmattered accounts at *De Anima* I.1.403<sup>a</sup>25-7. Here Aristotle states, “Consequently [the affections] definitions ought to correspond, e.g. anger should be defined as a certain mode of movement of such and such a body (or a part or faculty of a body) by this or that cause and for this or that end.” Aristotle seems to say here that bodily movements are part of what an emotion or feeling is, are part of the concept of each feeling. The relationship between actions and feelings is not, for Aristotle, a matter of contingency. So Kosman seems right in saying that actions and feelings are importantly connected. But the notions of “accompanying” and being “naturally associated with” that he uses to express this

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 109

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 112

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

relation in (i) and (ii) are too vague to be helpful in understanding the nature of the relationship between feelings and actions. We need to turn, then, to the more explicit characterization that he offers in (iii).

Claim (iii) is included as a part of Kosman's account of how an agent goes about acquiring the right sorts of dispositions. He claims that, "one recognizes through moral education what would constitute appropriate and correct ways to feel in certain circumstances. One then acts in ways that are naturally associated with and that will 'bring about' those very feelings".<sup>29</sup> After the repetitive performance of these actions, an agent becomes disposed to have the feelings that are brought about by the relevant actions. An agent does not, Kosman claims, have direct control over her feelings. So in this way we can still say that the feelings are not *prohairetic*. What we do have control over are the "actions that establish the dispositions, the virtues, which are the source of our feeling in appropriate ways at appropriate times and in appropriate circumstances."<sup>30</sup>

It is unclear, however, that we should characterize this relation in the way that he does. His suggestion that certain actions give rise to or "bring about" certain feelings gives us a *better* understanding of the relation between passions and actions than (i) or (ii) but is not obviously an accurate characterization of Aristotle's views. It is certainly not a characterization that Aristotle offers in his ethical treatises. And in spite of the fact that we find little if any textual evidence to support this claim, Kosman provides little argument for why we should accept such a characterization. To say that there is a connection between actions and feelings, even a logical one, is not to say that certain actions *cause* certain feelings. Further, we already have textual

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

evidence that runs counter to this view. In *EN* III.1 and *EN* V.8, for instance, Aristotle says that actions *proceed from* or are *due to* passions such as anger. This evidence alone gives us reason to question Kosman's claims about the relation between passions and actions. But if we reject his characterization, we still do not have a very clear picture of the relation. In order to get at a clearer understanding of the nature of this relation and its function in the virtuous life, we need a more developed account of both passions and actions.

In what follows, I undertake a closer investigation of the nature of the *pathê* generally and emotions as species of *pathê* specifically as well as an investigation into Aristotle's psychology of action to more clearly explicate the relation between the *pathê* and actions. Ultimately I argue that Kosman's account of the relationship between feelings and actions fails to represent Aristotle's views on this matter. And a close investigation of Aristotle's views about the *pathê* generally and the emotions specifically as well as his views regarding the psychology of action can help us form an account of the relation between passions and actions, an account which may help us solve certain puzzles regarding the nature of virtue.

CHAPTER 3  
AN ARISTOTELIAN ACCOUNT OF THE *PATHÊ*

**3.1 The General Nature of the *Pathe***

To understand Aristotle's views on the relation between actions and feelings and, in turn, their relation to virtue, we need to investigate Aristotle's views concerning the emotions generally. Unfortunately, Aristotle provides little analysis of emotion where we would want him to, namely, in the ethical treatises. This is a peculiar situation given the central role he gives them in the realization and acquisition of virtue. We must refocus our attention, then, on works outside of the ethical treatises that will help shed light on this issue.

At *Rhetoric* II.1.1378<sup>a</sup>19-20, Aristotle gives the following general definition of the *pathê*.

The emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure.

Aristotle's focus shifts to specific emotions such as anger and fear in subsequent portions of this chapter. But before we look at those definitions, we should first consider what Aristotle means when he talks about passions generally. What is translated in this passage as 'emotions' is *ta pathê*, which we might also translate as 'passions' or 'affections.' Aristotle provides a general characterization of the *pathê* in *Metaphysics* Δ.21. At 1022<sup>b</sup>15-20, he distinguishes between four senses of affection.<sup>31</sup>

We call an affection (1) a quality in respect of which a thing can be altered, e.g. white and black, sweet and bitter, heaviness and lightness, and all others of the kind. – (2) The already actualized alteration. -- (3) Especially injurious alterations and movements, and above all, painful injuries. -- (4) Experiences pleasant and painful when on a large scale are called affections.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kirwan 1971, 171-2.

<sup>32</sup> Kirwan notes that Aristotle does not, in this chapter, provide all of the senses of *pathos* which he uses throughout the corpus. Kirwan distinguishes between the following seven senses: (1) state or condition, (2) property, (3) coincident, or non-essential, properties, (4) quality, (5) feeling, (6) happening, and (7) misfortune. For our present purpose however, Aristotle's characterizations of the *pathê* in *Met. Δ* are sufficient to highlight the relevant sense(s) in which we should understand his use of the terms 'emotions' and 'passions' throughout the *Rhetoric* and in the ethical texts.

The first and second characterizations given by Aristotle suggest that the *pathê*, generally, are both ways in which a subject, whether a person or an object, can be altered, affected, or acted upon and the actualization of these alterations. For instance, if I paint the walls of my room eggshell blue, their becoming or being blue would be considered, on Aristotle's view, a *pathos*. The third and fourth characterizations, however, suggest that the *pathê* are not limited to something like the properties that an object has or takes on or the quality in respect of which objects take on certain characteristics. They are something that is suffered or experienced; something an agent, or patient rather, passively undergoes. These sorts of alterations can take the form of psychological disturbances or feelings of elation. We often speak of people *getting* upset or *becoming* angry or *being* afraid. When a person has these sorts of experiences, something *has happened* to her so as to change the state or condition that she is in, i.e. she has been affected.<sup>33</sup> We should also be able to see why a desire, especially an appetitive one, is considered a *pathos*. Consider a case of hunger. When a person becomes hungry, she generally experiences or undergoes some sort of pain. This pain might be both physical and psychological. And an agent that experiences such pain consequently wants to alleviate her discomfort by eating some food. Her desire to eat, characterized by her experience of pain, is a change in likely both her physiological and psychological state and is something that has happened to her. Taking on this characterization, we should understand Aristotle's use of the terms 'emotions', 'feelings', or 'passions', as well as the specific instances he discusses of these such as anger and fear, then, to refer to ways that an agent is acted upon, something she experiences such that her state or condition is altered in some way.

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<sup>33</sup> I will talk more about the specific ways in which agents are affected in the proceeding sections.

### 3.2 Emotions as Species of the *Pathê*

Having gotten clearer about the general nature of emotions as species of *pathê*, we need to turn our attention to the specific nature of emotions as *pathê*. What we are interested in is what about the emotions differentiates them from other sorts of *pathê* such as becoming blue or broken. Another way of asking this question might be, what conditions need to be met in order to say that a person is experiencing a particular emotion? What conditions need to be met, for instance, in order to rightly say that an agent is angry or afraid and what distinguishes one emotion from another? We can return to the general definition that he offers at the outset of the *Rhetoric* as well as to the definitions that he provides for specific emotions to get at the answers to these questions. What we will find is evidence to support the view that Aristotelian emotions are complex states that involve both cognitive and conative elements.

### 3.3 The Cognitive Element Involved in Emotion

After offering a general definition of the *pathê* at the outset of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle provides definitions of specific emotions. Consider the following:

Anger may be defined as a desire accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous [*phainomenes*]revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one's friends. 1378<sup>a</sup>30-32

Fear may be defined as a pain or disturbance due to *imagining* [*phantasias*] some destructive or painful evil in the future. 1382<sup>a</sup>21-22

Confidence is the *imaginative* [*phantasias*] expectation of the nearness of what keeps us safe and the absence or remoteness of what is terrible. 1383<sup>a</sup>17-18

Shame may be defined as pain or disturbance in regard to bad things, whether present, past, or future, which *seem* [*phainomena*] likely to involve us in discredit. 1383<sup>b</sup>11-13

Pity may be defined as a feeling of pain at an *apparent* [*phainomeno*] evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon. 1385<sup>b</sup>12-15

Though each definition includes a reference to feelings of pain, we should also note that the definition of each emotion is not given *merely* in terms of the pain (or pleasure) that characterizes it. We also find references to the way something seems or appears, or ways that a person imagines a situation to be. The definitions of fear and confidence, for instance, both make explicit reference to *phantasia*, and we find a form of this term in each definition provided. But what are these appearances, and what role do they play in a person's experience of an emotion?

At *De Anima* III.3.428<sup>a</sup>1, Aristotle describes *phantasia* as "that in virtue of which an image arises for us." Later, at 428<sup>b</sup>10-12, *phantasia* is said to be "impossible without sensation... and to have for its content what can be perceived." We might say, then, that *phantasia* functions both, to present or represent the objects of sensation, and is the presentation or representation of the objects of sensation. In other words, *phantasia* is both the active and passive faculty of imagination, the power by which an object is presented to the mind or a mental representation of an object or some state of affairs. Sense perception provides the raw material upon which the faculty of *phantasia* acts to represent some object or state of affairs to an agent as being of a certain kind. An observer then has the appearance that something is a certain way. For instance, *phantasia* might present some object to me as white or nearby. The appearance that something is white or that something is nearby is results of the exercise of this faculty. If something appears to me as white or nearby, I am having the thought that some object is white or nearby. We should say generally then that *phantasiai* are thoughts that arise in an agent who imagines something to be the case.

What sorts of impressions are involved in the experience of an emotion? Each definition specifies the impression that is constitutive of the relevant emotion. If we look back to Aristotle's definition of fear, for instance, we see that an agent who is fearful has the appearance that there

is some destructive or painful evil in her future. In other words, she has a mental representation that a situation or object is potentially destructive or painful. An agent who is experiencing anger, on the other hand, has the appearance that another who has no cause to slight her has indeed slighted her. And so on for each definition. We can see, then, that having a certain kind of thought is, for Aristotle, at least a necessary condition for the experience of an emotion. In addition, different emotions can be distinguished by the relevant thought of which they are partly constituted.

The view that emotions are not merely disturbances or feelings is an intuitive one since otherwise we would be hard pressed to distinguish an emotion such as fear from one such as anger, both of which, we commonly think, involve disturbances. Further, since Aristotle includes explicit reference to types of thoughts or impressions in his definitions of particular emotions, we should be inclined to say that Aristotle advocates a cognitive theory of emotions, a view in which emotions, minimally and importantly, require thoughts of some kind. And, conversely, we should not want to say that Aristotle advocates a feeling theory of emotion, a view in which emotions are nothing other than physiological (or psychological) disturbances of some kind.

Aristotelian emotions, then, are importantly intentional states, states that are directed at or are about some particular object or state of affairs. For instance, an agent who is fearful is fearful *about* something in particular, namely what appears to her as potentially harmful. She does not simply have some kind of fearful feeling, and she is not merely disturbed in some undirected way. And we often expect answers from people who claim to have certain experiences. Consider a case where a person says that she feels frightened. We might ask her what she is afraid of, or, at the very least, we are within our rights to ask such a question. If she responds by saying that she is afraid of nothing at all or that she is not sure what she is afraid of, we would be tempted, I

think rightly, to say that she is not, in fact, scared. Rather, we might say that she is experiencing some undirected feeling of anxiety. Without the thought *that something may cause her harm*, we may not want to say, and Aristotle clearly would not say, she is truly experiencing fear. And so, generally for each of the definitions under consideration, the agent must have the relevant kind of thought in order, on Aristotle's view, to have a particular emotion. We should be tempted to say, then, that feelings of a certain kind are not sufficient, on Aristotle's view, for the experience of an emotion. But, since Aristotle also makes explicit reference to feelings of pain or pleasure (*lupe* and *hedone*) in his definitions, we have reason to think that they are also important and necessary elements in his analysis of emotion. We thus need to get clearer about both the nature of these feelings and their relationship to the impressions (*phantasiai*) involved in emotion.

### 3.4 The Feeling Element in Emotion

To obtain a clearer understanding of the relation between the thoughts and feelings that constitute Aristotelian emotions, we should first focus on the nature of these pains and pleasures. John Cooper notes that the pleasure and pain Aristotle has in mind here include both psychological and physiological disturbances. Examples of physiological disturbances that a person might feel are a quickening heartbeat or cold chills. Cooper also notes that, by 'lupe', Aristotle likely means "both bodily pain and all kinds and degrees of negative mental response and attitude."<sup>34</sup> He cites *DeAn.* II.2.413<sup>b</sup>23, *EE* III.1.1229<sup>a</sup>34-41, and *EE* VII.8.1241<sup>b</sup>9 as instances where Aristotle uses the term to refer to bodily pain. Psychological disturbances, on the other hand, take the form of mental distress or depression. But the physiological disturbances, Cooper suggests, "can be accompanied and qualified by psychic turmoil."<sup>35</sup> We

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<sup>34</sup> Cooper 1999, 415.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

should not assume, then, that Aristotle's use of *lupe*, when translated as 'pain', is limited to instances of *bodily* or physiological pain. We can say something similar for feelings of pleasure. They are experienced both as psychological and physiological feelings of delight or excitement.

If we look again to specific definitions of emotions, Aristotle seems to be suggesting that the physiological and psychological disturbances involved in emotions are related to the constitutive impressions in a certain way. In the definition of fear, for instance, the pain or disturbance felt by the agent is said to be *due to* her having a certain impression, in this instance, the impression that she is in imminent harm. Pity is defined as pain *at* an apparent evil. In both instances, the prepositions, which are flanked by references to pain and the impressions had by the agent, seem to indicate that the relevant impression is either the cause of or that from or because of which the disturbance arises. On Aristotle's view then, an agent has impressions that cause her to experience feelings of pain or pleasure that are constitutive of emotions.

If we understand the accompanying relation mentioned in the general definition of emotion at the outset of the *Rhetoric* as a causal relation between certain impressions had by an agent and feelings of pleasure or pain, we can say that the nature of the relevant thoughts that are involved in an agent's having an emotion are such as to bring about certain feelings whether painful or pleasant. And if we are right to say that these psychological and physiological alterations are the result of certain impressions had by an agent, we should ask what it is about these impressions that causes an agent to have the relevant feelings, what it is in virtue of which they give rise to these sorts of feelings.

Presumably, we can have a variety of impressions. I might have the impression that my friend is in the room with me or the impression that it is raining outside. But it is unclear, or at least not immediately obvious, that either one of these thoughts is the sort that would cause me to

experience the sorts of feelings involved in an emotion. I could certainly have one of these thoughts without consequently feeling pain or pleasure. There must be something more to the content of impressions that give rise to feelings of pain or pleasure, something about the way that objects and situations are represented.

If we look back to the definitions of specific emotions like fear or pity, we see that the relevant impressions are evaluative in nature. In other words, the thoughts that cause feelings of pain or pleasure include some evaluation about the object or situation in question, i.e. whether it is good, pleasurable, bad, or destructive. Objects and situations that appear destructive or harmful, for instance, cause pain of some kind. In the case of fear, for example, someone feels disturbed or pained when it seems to her that there is some sort of harm in her future. Someone might have the impression, for instance, that another person is approaching with a weapon and intends to harm her and consequently feels afraid. She becomes afraid, not simply because someone is approaching with a weapon, but because she appears to be in imminent danger of being harmed. The relevant content of her impression, then, includes some evaluation of the object or situation.

But why exactly would evaluative impressions give rise to pains or pleasure? These thoughts must be related in some important way to a subject's further goals and desires. Generally, we experience pain when our goals are thwarted and our desires are hindered and pleasure when they are fulfilled. Take as an example someone who desires respect from those around her. Also suppose that she has the impression that someone has offended her without warrant. Any offense hinders the achievement of the respect she desires. We should expect, in this case, that she will experience pain as a consequence of her impression. On the other hand, suppose that she has the impression that she is honored by the people around her. This honor

contributes toward her goal. We would expect her to feel pleasure as the consequence of her impression.

We should accept, then, for Aristotle that the impressions involved in emotions are evaluative in nature. And the value attributed to the object or situation in question, i.e. whether something appears good or bad, will determine whether a person feels the disturbance of pain or experiences feelings of pleasure. We can summarize our analysis of Aristotelian emotion by saying that emotions are *pathê* experienced as physiological and psychological feelings of pain or pleasure as the result of having an evaluative impression about an object or situation.

### **3.5 A Defense of *Phantasia* as the Relevant Cognitive Component in Aristotelian Emotion**

Before moving on to discuss the relationship between emotions and our actions, I want to spend some time defending the view that impressions are sufficient for the experience of an emotion on Aristotle's view. We have reasons to attribute to Aristotle the view that emotions involve cognitions of some sort. In addition, there is widespread consensus among commentators that Aristotle advocates a cognitivist view of the emotions.<sup>36</sup> What's not agreed upon, however, is what the relevant cognition that is required for the experience of emotion is, whether an impression or some stronger form of cognition such as belief or judgment. It makes no small difference to an analysis of Aristotelian emotion, or for an account of the relation between passions and action in the life of virtue, which form of cognition is involved. I will first present some competing views on this matter.

John Cooper argues briefly that the relevant form of cognition in Aristotelian emotion is impression (*phantasia*), as I have been suggesting. He claims that "Aristotle is quite firm and explicit that the emotion arises from one's having the impression or appearance that something

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<sup>36</sup> See Nussbaum, Cooper, and Fortenbaugh.

good or bad has happened”.<sup>37</sup> The immediate evidence that we have for this view is that Aristotle makes explicit reference to impressions in the definitions that he offers for specific emotions. Contrary to this view, W.W. Fortenbaugh and Martha Nussbaum argue that the relevant cognitive element is belief (*doxa*). *Phantasia*, they claim, is not sufficient, on Aristotle’s view, to cause emotional states. I submit that Aristotle would surely not want to deny that beliefs of the relevant sort are sufficient for emotion. Nussbaum agrees that beliefs are clearly a sufficient condition for Aristotelian emotion or, more specifically, that they are a sufficient condition for an agent’s feeling pleasure or pain. The question at hand, though, is whether impressions are sufficient. I want to spend some time arguing, against Fortenbaugh and Nussbaum, that Aristotle intends *phantasia* as the relevant cognitive constituent of emotion. Specifically, I want to argue that Fortenbaugh and Nussbaum rely on a very limited characterization of *phantasia* in making the case that beliefs are necessarily involved in emotion. We can say that impressions are sufficient for the experience of emotion if we appreciate the broader role that Aristotle has them play. I’ll first consider two arguments against the view that impressions are apt to serve as the relevant cognition in emotion. The first centers on Aristotle’s use of the term *phantasia* in the *Rhetoric*. The second centers on the formal distinction he draws between *phantasia* and *doxa* in the *De Anima*.

Both Fortenbaugh and Nussbaum argue that Aristotle does not attempt to “[dissociate] *phantasia* from belief” in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>38</sup> Nussbaum claims that “the account shows no awareness of the more technical psychological distinctions of the *De Anima*.”<sup>39</sup> She does admit, however,

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<sup>37</sup> Cooper 1999, 246.

<sup>38</sup> Fortenbaugh 2002, 97.

<sup>39</sup> Nussbaum 1996, 321.

that “the distinction between *phantasia* and *doxa* seems to be introduced in one passage in Book I.”<sup>40</sup> Fortenbaugh claims, similarly, that “Aristotle is using everyday language without special reference to his biological psychology.”<sup>41</sup> The worry, then, is that Aristotle’s failure to explicitly draw a distinction between *phantasia* and *doxa* in the *Rhetoric* suggests that he has no interest in bringing that distinction to bear on his discussion of the emotions. If this is right, we should not regard his use of the term *phantasia* as an accurate expression of his view on the nature of the cognitive component that is sufficient for the experience of emotion.

Clearly, Aristotle’s aim in the *Rhetoric* differs from his aim in the *De Anima*. He is not engaging in a biological investigation in the *Rhetoric* as he does in the *De Anima*, so it makes sense that he would not offer an explicit treatment of the *differences* between *phantasia* and *doxa* in the *Rhetoric*. But we have no reason to think that his failure to explicitly distinguish between the two concepts is evidence for his ignoring his own distinction between the two. Unless the discussion in the *Rhetoric* reflects a significant alteration in Aristotle’s views over time, we should assume that the distinction that he originally draws between *phantasia* and *doxa* in the *De Anima* is still in play. Further, if Aristotle’s aim in the *Rhetoric* is to provide orators with the tools to influence their listeners, and if *phantasia* is not sufficient for arousing emotions, it would be misleading of Aristotle to make reference to *phantasia* in the definitions he offers of the emotions. If beliefs are necessary for a person to experience emotions like anger, we would expect him, given his aim, to make explicit reference to forms of *doxa* in the explicit definitions he offers. Since he does not, and since we don’t want to accuse Aristotle of being misleading in

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 321

<sup>41</sup> Fortenbaugh 2002, 100.

his discussion here, we should infer that his use of *phantasia* indicates that they are sufficient to produce emotional states.

Another argument given by Fortenbaugh against the view that *phantasia* is sufficient for the experience of emotion relies on Aristotle's explicit treatment of the differences between belief (*doxa*) and impression (*phantasia*) in the *De Anima. Phantasia*, as discussed at *De Anima* III.3 is likened to viewing an artistic representation and is explicitly distinguished from *doxa* as being unable to cause affective states to arise in an agent. At 427<sup>b</sup>21-4 Aristotle states, "Further, when we think something to be fearful or threatening, emotion is immediately produced, and so too with what is encouraging; but when we *merely imagine* we remain as unaffected as persons who are looking at a painting of some dreadful or encouraging scene." Aristotle is attempting to distinguish imagination from both perception and discursive thinking. He carves out the role of imagination further by saying also that, unlike thought or judgment, it is a faculty that is within our power, the faculty by which we can call images to mind.

Fortenbaugh interprets the passage from the *De Anima* in the following way:

For Aristotle, it seems, believing is not idly entertaining a thought; it is thinking that something actually is the case. And when the belief concerns things terrible or encouraging, then emotional response follows: one feels frightened or confident, seeks safety or acts aggressively. In contrast, *phantasia* apart from belief does not have the same effect. Much as we view a painting or drawing of something threatening without being frightened, for we do not believe the danger real. Of course, there are occasions when imagining a danger, like viewing a picture, has a bodily affect. Aristotle speaks of a movement of the heart, but such a movement is no more than a physiological reaction. ... boiling of blood around the heart ... by itself such a reaction does not constitute fear.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Fortenbaugh seems right to say that the physiological reaction alone is not sufficient to constitute the feeling of fear. However, if we have been right in saying that what constitutes the emotion of fear, for instance, is the physiological reaction that is caused by the thought that the agent is in some kind of harm, then the case of a person who views an artistic representation of some kind and that consequently experiences a physiological disturbance would be a case of fear if that disturbance is caused by a thought that has the relevant content. And, likely, the agent who views a painting and consequently experiences some sort of physiological disturbance does not believe that she is in harm's way.

Fortenbaugh seems right to say that the physiological reaction alone is not sufficient to constitute the feeling of fear. However, if we have been right in saying that what constitutes the emotion of fear, for instance, is the physiological reaction caused by the thought that the agent is in some kind of harm, then the case of a person who views an artistic representation of some kind and that consequently experiences a physiological disturbance would be a case of fear if that disturbance is caused by a thought that has the relevant content. And, likely, the agent who views a painting and consequently experiences some sort of physiological disturbance does not believe that she is in harm's way.

There is nothing surprising, though, in thinking that belief is sufficient to produce emotional states such as fear, anger, or joy. But there is also nothing surprising in thinking that *phantasia* may be insufficient to cause feelings of pain or pleasure. However, suggesting that *phantasia* is *never* sufficient to produce emotional states assumes a more limited role of the faculty than it actually plays. If Aristotle's characterization of *phantasia* is not limited to situations that are analogous to viewing a piece of art or to 'idly entertaining a thought', say, we should be able to point to cases where it is sufficient to give rise to feelings of pain or pleasure. In what follows, I expand upon the nature of *phantasia* and then suggest a reading of the *De Anima* passage that takes this fuller characterization into account.

Any time an image arises in us, *phantasia* is exercised.<sup>43</sup> These images might often take the form of memories, wistful imaginings, dreams, or even fantasies. But, for Aristotle, *phantasia* serves as much more than the faculty by which we are presented with or which

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<sup>43</sup> I don't want to argue that Aristotle has an obviously imagistic view of mental representations since this sort of view has been shown to be problematic. I wish to remain neutral on this issue so I use the term 'image', then, in a very broad way to refer to whatever form these mental representations take for Aristotle.

facilitates our memories and fantastic thoughts. *Phantasia* plays a significant role in presenting or representing our current perceptions as *being a certain way*. Nussbaum notes in that, for Aristotle, *phantasia* presents the objects of perception to us in a certain way, as good or bad, say, or as desirable or undesirable.<sup>44</sup> We should say, then, that *phantasia* is not *merely* the faculty by which we call up images as we do in cases of remembering or fantasizing, though it functions in these cases as well. An object or situation that affects us certainly has to be presented in a certain way, for instance, as being dangerous. Without this presentation, we would not be inclined to fear the object or situation in question. The suggestion that Fortenbaugh seems to be making is that, for Aristotle, even in cases where an object is presented in the relevant way, no emotion will arise unless there is also the belief that the way in which the object is presented is actually the case. But this reading of the *De Anima* passage does not seem to take account of the broader and more significant role that Aristotle gives to *phantasia*. I want to suggest that we do not need to interpret the passage found in the *De Anima* in this way if we accept that *phantasiai* are not limited to fantastical thoughts. Rather, we can read Aristotle as saying that there *are* cases where *phantasiai* fail to cause affective states, namely, cases where a person simply calls to mind an image. Note that Aristotle says that we fail to be affected when we *merely* imagine, when we simply call to mind some image. But not all cases of imagining are like this as evidenced by the fact that *phantasia* functions to present our current perceptions to us in a certain way. My calling an image to mind of some frightening event is different from my thought that I seem to be in harm's way, though these are both cases where I have an impression. In the former case, I may not be affected unless I also have the belief that such an event is occurring. In the latter, I may be affected whether or not I also have the explicit belief.

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<sup>44</sup> Nussbaum 1986, 232-41.

Cooper notes in his paper on Aristotelian emotions that “it seems likely that Aristotle is using *phantasia* here to indicate the sort of non-epistemic appearance to which he draws attention once in *De Anima* III.3.428<sup>b</sup>2-4, according to which something may appear to, or strike one, in some way (say, as being insulting or belittling) even if one knows there is no good reason for one to take it so. If so, Aristotle is alert to the crucial fact about the emotions, that one can experience them simply on the basis of how, despite what one knows or believes to be the case, things strike one – how things look to one when, for one reason or another, one is disposed to feel the emotions.”<sup>45</sup> Let’s see how such a case might play out. Suppose that my best friend fails to show up for a get together that we have planned. This event might immediately strike me as insulting and consequently make me angry even if I know and believe that she generally intends no ill will toward me. So even in a case where I have reasons not to believe and in fact don’t believe that I have been insulted, I may still become angry because of the way the situation appears to me. If this view is right, then Aristotle has supplied us with a very intuitive account of the emotions. We often speak of people who become angry or afraid at very little, or for what seems like no good reason at all.

If we think of *phantasia* as mental representations, the ways objects or situations are represented as being, including being good or bad, desirable or undesirable, we need not limit our talk of its manifestations as situations analogous to the way that a painting represents the world as being. To adhere strictly to this analogy is to assume that every impression is merely descriptive, an assumption that we have seen is false on Aristotle’s view. Imagination is the faculty by which we can call up memories but it is also the faculty by which what we are experiencing is represented to us in a certain way, as perhaps harmful, threatening, beneficial,

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<sup>45</sup> Cooper 1999, 417.

and as good or bad in general. Fortenbaugh is right in suggesting that believing is more than “idly entertaining a thought” but perhaps wrong in suggesting that entertaining a thought is insufficient to arouse emotion if ‘entertaining a thought’ is construed broadly as being presented with an image of a situation as it appears given some current perception.

Ultimately, whether and how an agent’s emotions are in her control may turn on whether *phantasia* is sufficient for her emotional states. I believe that by attributing to Aristotle the view that *phantasia* is the relevant cognitive component in emotion and that it is sufficient to cause the pains and pleasure that are constitutive of emotion, we will be able to propose a more adequate account of the relation between passions and actions.

### 3.6 Aristotle’s Psychology of Action

Having gotten quite a bit clearer on the nature of Aristotelian emotion, we should now turn to the specific role that the *pathê* play in Aristotle’s psychology of action. I want to first turn to a passage found at *De Motu* 8.702<sup>a</sup>17-19.

The organic parts are suitably prepared (for movement) by the affections, these again by desire, and desire by imagination. Imagination in its turn depends either upon thinking or upon sense perception.

We see here four major elements in Aristotle’s explanation of animal movement; thought or sense perception, imagination (*phantasia*), desire (*orexis*), and affections (*pathê*). Any explanation of animal movement or action will need to make reference to each of these elements. We see immediately that the *pathê* are intimately related to action. What we should want to get clear about then is how each of these elements is related and what role the *pathê* specifically play in this explanation.

An initial reading of the *De Motu* passage seems to indicate a causal relation between each successive element. Aristotle employs the phrase “prepared by” to transition from one element of action to the next. But it is not entirely clear how we should understand the idea of

preparation. So we should be careful not to make the move too quickly to saying that each element is causally related before undertaking a closer analysis of the relations between each element.

I spoke earlier about the relationship between sense perception and imagination. Let's then turn to the second phase of preparation, desire by imagination. What does it mean to say that desire is prepared by the imagination? What is the relation between *phantasia* and desire? To answer this question, we should first say something about the nature of desire generally. John Cooper notes that, for Aristotle, to desire, is "more than merely an inclination to want to have or to experience or do something; it is a fully fledged, completed such want – an active psychological movement toward getting in an appropriate way, or experiencing or doing, whatever it is the desire for." Desire, then, sets us in motion toward the objects of desire if nothing else, no obstacle or competing or conflicting desire stands in our way. Further, Martha Nussbaum notes that at *DeAn* III.3.432<sup>b</sup>26-30, Aristotle claims that an animal "cannot desire without *phantasia*", a passage that parallels his claim in the *De Motu* "that *phantasia* is necessary for the operations of desire." In other words, desire would be impossible without impressions of a certain kind. But what kinds of impressions are necessary? Cooper notes in his paper "Some Remarks on Aristotle's Moral Psychology" that "desire involve(s) not just thoughts, but thoughts about what is good or bad."<sup>46</sup> So desire involves *evaluative* impressions, the kinds that are involved in the experience of emotion. On this view of the relation between *phantasia* and desire, if I am thirsty and am presented with a glass of water, I will not desire the water simply by having the thought that it is before me. The water must appear to me as pleasant, refreshing,

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<sup>46</sup> Cooper 1999.

or thirst quenching. Only then will I be moved toward it. We can see that impressions are not only necessary for desire, but that they are constitutive of desire.

How does desire prepare the *pathê*? The relation between desire and the *pathê* is peculiar since, on a number of occasions, Aristotle identifies one form of desire, namely appetitive desire (*epithumia*), as a *pathos*. But in this passage, Aristotle clearly distinguishes between desire and the affections. Though Aristotle identifies *epithumia* as a *pathos* elsewhere, in the present context, Aristotle uses the general term, *orexis* rather than *epithumia*, to denote desire. One immediate question at hand concerns the nature of our general desires and their relation to the *pathê*.

For Aristotle, we desire those things that we take to be good, things like pleasure, honor and respect, or happiness. These things we are said to desire for their own sake. In turn, we desire particular things that bear a certain relation to the objects of our general desires, namely those things that contribute toward the fulfillment of our ultimate desires. If an agent desires health, for instance, she will also see those things that contribute toward her health, things like exercise, as desirable and good. So what is the relation between our general and particular desires and emotion? An agent who has long-term goals and desires toward which she aims will likely feel pained if it seems that those aims are impeded and pleased if circumstances contribute toward them. Let's say that someone desires happiness and her own well being generally. Suppose also that she has the impression that she is in imminent danger of being harmed. She also realizes that this would hinder the achievement her desired goal. Realizing that her desire is potentially frustrated by the prospect of harm, she becomes afraid. She feels pained, cold chills, and her heart begins to race. Her experience of fear in this case is facilitated by the relation between the appearance of her present circumstance and her desire for happiness. In other words,

the realization that harm would frustrate her desire gives her a reason to see the threat as painful and bad and the fact that the harm appears to her in this way causes her to experience fear. What her desires are helps determine the way in which certain objects and situations appear to her and it is in this way that desires might be said to prepare the *pathê*.

So how are actions prepared by the *pathê*? If we consider the case above, the agent in question who experiences fear in the light of the impression that she is in imminent harm will be moved to avoid that particular object. She might be moved to flee the area for example. If, on the other hand, one has the general desire for happiness and has the impressions that some object helps contribute to that end, she will see that object as pleasing and consequently pursue it. These actions of pursuit and avoidance are determined by the emotion that the agent has in light of the relation between her impressions and general desires. Emotions that involve pain and thoughts that objects are unpleasant, harmful, or bad will result in avoidance, while emotions that are pleasurable and involve thoughts that objects are good, beneficial, and contribute toward the fulfillment of some general desire result in pursuit.

So it should be clear that there is an intimate relationship between movement or action and emotion for Aristotle. And often times, this relationship is so intimate as to appear simultaneous. Aristotle states, “the simultaneity and speed are due to the natural correspondence of the active and the passive.”<sup>47</sup> And we have seen that this correspondence can be characterized by saying that movement and actions are caused by or manifestations of the emotions that an agent has in light of the way things appear to her given her general desires and values.

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<sup>47</sup> *De Motu* 8.702<sup>a</sup>20-1.

## CHAPTER 4 CONTROLLING EMOTIONS

### **4.1 A Return to Kosman's View**

In this section I return to Kosman's solution to the problem raised for Aristotle's conception of virtue in light of the discussion of Aristotle's views regarding emotion and action in order to see more clearly whether or not his characterization of the relation between passions and actions accurately reflects Aristotle's view. I first want to reiterate the problem and solution discussed in earlier chapters. Secondly, I want to argue that, given the considered view of Aristotelian emotion and its role in his psychology of action, Kosman's view, that actions give rise to certain feelings, is in direct conflict with Aristotle's views. This conflict not only results in the inadequacy of Kosman's solution to the problem regarding Aristotle's conception of virtue but also leaves us with an inaccurate picture of the relation between passion and action generally. Though I believe Kosman's solution ultimately fails, I also believe that his account reveals something right about being properly affected, namely that virtuous actions and passions are intimately connected, though not in the way that he wants to suggest. Lastly, I want to offer a characterization of the relation between passions and actions that not only reflects Aristotle's views but which also allows us to gesture toward a response to problems that motivate Kosman's account. To do this, I want to distinguish between two questions that lie behind Kosman's solution. Namely, I want to tease apart questions concerning (i) whether or not feelings are chosen and (ii) whether or not they are under the control of an agent. I argue that Aristotle's conception of virtue importantly involves the ability of an agent to control her emotions. I set out a rough picture of how agents, on Aristotle's view, might be able to accomplish this task, drawing a contrast between virtuous agents and agents that have not acquired virtuous dispositions. Virtuous agents, arguably, do not need to control their emotions whereas agent's

who have not acquired virtuous dispositions do. By explicating the role that the *pathê* seem to play in the life of virtue, we may be better able to see how those agents who have not acquired virtuous dispositions can effectively alter their emotional states.

The initial problem noted by Kosman is that virtue, for Aristotle, is a complex disposition involving both passions and actions, the former of which are not chosen though the virtues which involve dispositions to feel (as well as act) in the right ways involve choice. His proposed solution to this problem is that feelings are chosen *indirectly* in virtue of their relation to acts that are chosen. The crucial element in his solution is the relation between actions and passions. He characterizes the relation between the two as essentially a causal one, where actions give rise to or bring about corresponding feelings, feelings, he says, that are naturally associated with the actions performed.

Kosman seems right to suggest that there is an association of some sort between actions and passions and we have seen Aristotle say as much in the *De Motu*. But should we accept that actions give rise to feelings given what we have seen about the nature of Aristotelian emotions and the role that Aristotle gives to the *pathê* in his psychology of action? We have seen that the *pathê* play an integral role in Aristotle's explanation of animal movement. But there is no indication in the *De Motu* that Aristotle's view of the relation between the feelings of an agent and the actions of an agent is such that certain feelings "follow in the wake" of actions that are chosen. If this view were right, we would expect to see Aristotle claiming that the *pathê* are "prepared by" animal movement since he uses this expression to indicate causal and constitutive relations between each element in his explanation. Rather, we have evidence to support an opposing view; actions are a manifestation, in part, of the emotions felt by an agent. In other words, experiencing emotions of a certain kind, such as fear or even joy, often result in action,

namely in movement toward or away from the relevant intentional objects. We have no reason to think that Aristotle suggests that actions are such as to *give rise* to emotions even if we read him as saying that the *pathê* are constitutive of animal movement as opposed to their cause. Recall also that there are passages in the ethical treatises that accord with the view that actions are caused by the passions and not the other way around. Aristotle claims that there are actions that proceed from or are due to emotions such as anger. So, given this evidence along with Aristotle's explanation of animal movement, we should say that Kosman's suggestion that actions give rise to feelings does not conform to a view that Aristotle holds.

Further, if we consider the nature of emotion as a complex state involving impressions as well as feelings, we have even less reason to say that actions give rise to emotions. For Kosman's characterization to be correct, an agent's performance of an action would have to be such as to give rise to *both* the relevant evaluative impressions *and* feelings involved in emotion and he in no way provides an answer for how this might be done.

So, if actions do not give rise to feelings, what should we say about Aristotle's conception of virtue, the passions, and their relation to action? Kosman claims that in order to acquire any specific virtue, a performance of the virtuous action that gives rise to feelings of the right kind is needed. A virtuous agent must act in ways, Kosman claims, "which will 'bring about' those very feelings" which are necessary for the realization of a virtue. But if actions do not give rise to feelings then the right actions will not give rise to the right feelings. And if this relation does not hold then we cannot even say that feelings are chosen indirectly in virtue of their relation to acts that are chosen. And if we cannot say that feelings are chosen even indirectly, we do not yet have an answer to the problem for virtue initially noted by Kosman. We do have reason, however, to attribute to Aristotle the view that the *pathê* are related essentially to

animal movement and actions, and so intimately as to occur simultaneously. Since we cannot divorce actions from the feelings that accompany them, we might say that Aristotle's view is that all human actions are in part being affected, that part of what it means to act just is to be affected in a certain way.

## 4.2 A New Proposal

Since Kosman has failed to offer an accurate characterization of the relation between passions and actions, we are left with the initial questions regarding the role of the *pathê* in Aristotle's conception of virtue. Kosman is right to focus on the relation between passions and actions to get clear about role that the *pathê* play in virtue. And though his characterization is problematic, a clearer understanding of the relation may help us work toward answering some of the questions that motivate his proposal. I want to distinguish, then, between two different but important questions Kosman seems to address. He is very clear that he wants to answer questions about how we can say that the *pathê* involve choice. But he also seems to want answer questions about how we might say that the *pathê* are under an agent's control. I will first draw out the distinction between two questions that serve as Kosman's motivation.

Kosman claims that, "one does not have direct control over one's feelings, and in this sense the feelings are not chosen."<sup>48</sup> He also states that "it appears to be a distinction between our actions and our passions that actions are *within our control*, whereas passions are not; we are the initiating principle of what we do, but not of what is done to us" to argue that the *pathê* are not chosen.<sup>49</sup> He cites *EN* 11.5.1106<sup>a</sup>2, where Aristotle claims that we feel anger and fear without choice, as evidence for the view that the *pathê* are not under our control.<sup>50</sup> Note that he is

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<sup>48</sup> Kosman 1980, 112.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

making two importantly distinct claims. The first is that the *pathê* are not under an agent's control. The second is that the *pathê* are not chosen. He also seems to suggest that if an agent does not have control over her feelings, they are not chosen. And his solution aims at showing how we can say that the *pathê* are chosen by way of saying how they might be indirectly under an agent's control in virtue of their relation to acts that are under direct control of an agent. So, behind Kosman's proposal that actions give rise to feelings is not only a question about how feelings might involve choice but also questions concerning whether the *pathê* are within our control.

But, for Aristotle, what is chosen is not the same as what is under our control. Something that is chosen is also under an agent's control, but whatever is under an agent's control is not necessarily chosen. The crucial point to realize here is that whether or not emotions are under our control is a separate question from whether or not they are chosen.

If we appreciate the distinction between questions about whether our emotions are chosen and questions about whether they are under our control, we should expect that the answers differ for each. We have already seen that Kosman's account fails to show that the *pathê* involve choice. But the failure of this account to show that the *pathê* are chosen does not preclude us from showing that emotions are under an agent's control. If we can show that emotions are or at least can be under our control, we may be able to provide a clearer account of the way they function in the context of a virtuous life.

The view that we *cannot* control our emotions is very intuitive. People lash out in anger or erupt in tears seemingly without reason and often justify their reactions by saying that they couldn't be helped. These sorts of cases might lead us to believe that there is nothing we can do about how we feel toward or about something. But such a view, though strongly intuitive, is at

odds with Aristotle's conception of virtue as something for which we are responsible. So questions about whether the emotions are under our control are central when considering Aristotle's account of virtue. The virtuous person is characterized as *responsible for* who she is and the dispositions that she has. And if virtue involves having emotions of a certain kind, then we should want to say that the virtuous agent is responsible for her emotions as well as her actions. For Aristotle, then, it seems we are responsible for our character and our feelings and emotions are central to our character. But how can we be responsible for something that we seemingly have no control over?

Being in control of one's feelings and emotions might seem less counterintuitive if we attend to the fact that emotions are complex states involving thoughts and feelings. If we are able to control our emotions then we will have to be in control of these elements. But, as Kosman notes, an agent cannot simply *choose* to be angry or joyful. And surely the psychological and physiological feelings of pain and pleasure that constitute emotions are not under our control. This leaves the evaluative impressions that give rise to these feelings of pain and pleasure. I want to investigate, then, whether or not we might be said to be in control of this element of Aristotelian emotion. The thought that agents are in control of and responsible for their evaluative impressions accords well with what Aristotle says at *EN* III.5.1114<sup>b1</sup>. Here he claims that "some one may say that all men aim at the apparent good, but have no control over how things appear to him; but the end appears to each man in a form answering to his character. We reply that if each man is somehow responsible for the state he is in, he will also be himself somehow responsible for how things appear." Further, he states at *EN* II.3.1105<sup>a5-6</sup> that "to feel delight and pain rightly or wrongly has no small effect on our actions." And since impressions incite our feelings of pain or pleasure, feeling delight and pain rightly must then be a matter of

having the right impressions. So, clearly, for Aristotle, we must be responsible for how things appear to us, for the impressions that we have, in order to have a character of a certain kind. In other words, to have a virtuous character depends crucially on having impressions of a certain kind.

What would it be, then, to have the right thoughts or impressions about objects, situations, or goals? The thoughts or impressions that cause the sorts of feelings that are constitutive of emotions are importantly evaluative in nature; they include reference to whether or not the object or situation perceived by the agent is good or bad, painful or pleasant. So the right impressions cannot simply be an accurate representation of the sensory qualities or characteristics of any object. The right impressions must include the *right evaluation* of an object as good or bad for the agent having the thought. Presumably, then, the action that is manifest as a result of an emotion that includes the right impression is an instance of virtuous action. Controlling one's emotions, then, will be a matter of altering the impressions that one has about an object or situation. More specifically, controlling one's emotions is a matter of altering the evaluation involved in the relevant thought since the physiological pains and pleasures follow from these evaluations.

But how might an agent go about altering the evaluative content of her impressions? Before answering this question, we must first ask what counts as the right evaluation. I want to take some time and discuss the sorts of impressions had by the virtuous agent since this is a paradigm case of proper feeling and action. The virtuous agent aims toward the good. It is what she desires for its own sake and that on account of which she desires other things, namely the sorts of things that are a means to her end. And she acts in ways that contribute toward that end and refrains from acting in ways that do not contribute to that end. Further, she doesn't desire

those things that she sees as frustrating her overarching desire. And as we have seen, the evaluative content of impressions depends importantly on a person's desires and whether situations and objects are represented as frustrating or fulfilling those desires. Anything that either frustrates or contributes toward the virtuous agent's ultimate aim will rightly appear to her as such. Her impressions about the way things are is always right with respect to their relation to the good. As such, it doesn't look like the virtuous agent will need to be in control of her emotions at all in the sense that she will never need to alter them. This is why the virtuous agent is pleased when performing those actions that she ought. They simply appear to her as pleasant. Being able to control emotions only seems to come into play when there is the possibility that the agent in question will have the wrong impression, the sort of impression that doesn't present objects and situations as being good if they actually are or as being bad if they actually are. The crucial thing to note in the case of the virtuous agent is that the rightness or wrongness of her impression depends on how it relates to her overarching desires. To get at cases where an agent's impressions might require alteration, we need to look to agents that aren't yet virtuous, but are perhaps on their way toward acquiring virtuous dispositions. I want to draw a contrast then between the virtuous agent and the continent (*enkratic*) agent.

The ultimate aim of the continent agent is the same as the virtuous agent. The difference between the two consists in the fact that the continent agent often has desires that conflict with her larger goal. For instance, the continent agent and the virtuous agent may both desire health. When presented with a piece of chocolate cake, the virtuous agent will have the impression that the cake is bad for her and will avoid it. It never even occurs to the virtuous agent that the cake is something that she should go for. The continent agent on the other hand, might see the cake as pleasing and desire to eat it. She also realizes that the way that the cake appears to her is not in

accord with her ultimate aims. Realizing this, she does not go for the cake. But the reason she acts in this way is because she recognizes the way her initial impression lines up with her ultimate desires. Her recognition of this conflict gives her a reason to see the cake in a different way, as something bad, essentially altering her impression of the object before her. If this sort of case is remotely plausible and if it helps us explain the actions of the continent agent, then it does look like there are cases where our impressions are under our control. And if impressions are under our control, then so too are our emotions.

In what cases then, can we see that an agent's emotions, specifically, are under her control? Consider the virtue of courage. Courage is a virtue with respect to fear (and confidence) and requires feeling fear in the right way and at the right times and to the right degree. Aristotle claims that "the man, then, who faces and who fears the right things and with the right aim, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confidence under the corresponding conditions, is brave; for the brave man feels and acts according to the merits of the case and in whatever way reason directs."<sup>51</sup> An agent who is not courageous either feels too much or too little fear and is considered a coward or rash respectively. But some amount of fear will be involved in every act or manifestation of courage though to a differing degree. Further, Aristotle claims that the ultimate aim of the brave or courageous person is honor and nobility. It is for the sake of these things that she acts. If nobility is her ultimate desire, acting courageously will require doing those things that contribute toward this end.

Recall that the thought associated with fear, for Aristotle, is the impression that one is in imminent harm. So, to be courageous, an agent needs to have the right impression about how much danger she is actually in with respect to the noble end toward which she aims. Suppose that

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<sup>51</sup> *EN* III.7 1115<sup>b</sup>17-19.

someone is faced with an oncoming enemy who intends her harm. She might have the impression that she is in danger. If she is a coward, the pain that she feels on account of her impression will result in her fleeing her present situation. She sees the situation only as one that will cause her great pain and avoids it without any thought about the ultimate good toward which she aims. In short, the imminent harm appears to her as worse than it actually is and, consequently, she feels too much fear. In this case, her impression of the situation is shaped, not by her view toward the nobility that she desires, but simply by her desire to avoid pain. However, this same person could alter her impression of the situation to act courageously. She could see the imminent harm as painful or destructive and be *tempted* to flee but then *also* see it as a situation that should be confronted for the sake of the noble. If she can make the connection between the impression that the situation is painful and her desired end of nobility, she will see the situation in a different way, as painful but also as good since facing her present enemy is the noble thing to do. In both cases, she has the impression that she is in imminent harmed and feels pained because of the threat. And in both cases she experiences fear. But the fear that she feels in the latter case is not as strong as the fear she feels in the former since she also sees the situation as something good, as something that is a means to her desired end though she may immediately see the situation as painful and be tempted to flee. But in light of her altered impression, she does not flee but stands to face the oncoming threat in spite of the potential pain. And this action counts as courageous for Aristotle for “it is for a noble end that the brave man endures and acts as courage directs.”<sup>52</sup> The agent who acts courageously does so because her overarching desire gives her a reason to view the situation in a different way; it changes her impression and, consequently, the measure of fear that she experiences.

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<sup>52</sup> EN III.7.1115<sup>b</sup>23-4.

If what I have said about cases of courage is correct, then we should be able to tell the same sort of story for any emotional reaction in an agent, namely that her evaluative impressions can be altered if they are measured against her deliberated desire for what is actually good. These sorts of cases should also help us see why Kosman's characterization of the relation between passions and actions is incorrect. For it isn't by virtue of *acting* differently that the coward comes to have the right feelings. Rather it is by the alteration of her emotions that she comes to act differently. And Aristotle seems equipped to tell this kind of story. The acquisition of virtue, then, will ultimately depend on an agent's being able to alter her impressions time after time until she simply sees things just as they relate to her desired ends. And we can only tell this story if we appreciate that emotions are complex states involving impressions that give rise to certain feelings. Further, we see why it is important that impressions serve as the cognitive element in Aristotelian emotions rather than belief. Impressions are something that we can control whereas beliefs are something that is out of our control. If beliefs were necessary for Aristotelian emotions, we would have a more difficult time explaining how we can control and be responsible for them.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

My aim in this thesis has been to examine a widely accepted view of the relation between virtue and emotion in Aristotelian ethics in order to clarify some of the issues surrounding this relation. I have shown that L.A. Kosman's account of the relation between action and feeling is in conflict with Aristotle's views concerning the psychology of action and fails to account for a considered view of Aristotelian emotion. Kosman suggests that feelings are chosen in virtue of their relation to actions that are chosen. The relationship that he proposes between actions and feelings is that actions are such as to give rise to corresponding feelings. Thus, in the case of virtue, the right actions will give rise to the right feelings. However, an appreciation of Aristotelian emotions as complex states involving both thoughts and feelings as well as an appreciation of Aristotle's account of the role of the *pathê* in animal movement found in the *De Motu* suggest that Kosman's view fails to represent an accurate account of Aristotle's views.

However, his account raises important questions about the nature of emotions and their relation to virtue and action that help us distinguish between the issues that need clarifying. By teasing apart two characterizations regarding the nature of the *pathê* that seem to motivate Kosman's account, namely that they are not chosen and that they are not under an agent's control, I hope to have highlighted the importance of latter and to have shown that we do have the resources to alleviate the worry that the *pathê* are not under the control of an agent. In order to alleviate this concern, we need to return to Aristotle's views concerning emotions generally as complex states. The view that Aristotelian emotions involve evaluative thoughts that give rise to psychological and physiological feelings of pain or pleasure helps us see that at least part of what an emotion is, for Aristotle, is something that is under our control, namely our evaluative impressions. In the case of virtuous action, the evaluative impression that an agent has can be

altered if she reflects on their relation to her desires about the actual good. The alteration of evaluative impressions results in different psychological or physiological disturbances or pleasures and consequently different emotional experiences that are manifest in action. Aristotle does not, however, explicitly offer this sort of explanation. So the account that I offer should be taken as a rough estimate of the sort of story he is *prepared* to tell. I believe that any account of the role of the *pathê* in Aristotle's conception of virtue needs to rely on a considered view of his account of the emotions generally and I hope to have gestured toward a successful, though not nearly comprehensive, view that is consistent with Aristotle's views in this thesis.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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