Thesis written by

Timothy A. Elsey

B.A., Mount Union College, 2007

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Approved by

Gina Zavota, Ph.D., Advisor

David W. Odell-Scott, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Philosophy

Timothy Moerland, Ph.D., Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
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An Introduction

One distinguishing aspect of a moral theory is the point at which ethical evaluations are assigned. This point differs among competing theories, however three common candidates for evaluation are: motive, action, and consequence. Every action has all three of these components. Kantian deontology places ethical evaluation on our individual motivations, Utilitarian consequentialism places ethical evaluation on our individual and shared consequences, and Aristotelian virtue ethics places ethical evaluation on our individual actions.

For Aristotle, actions are evaluated on either their ability or inability to adhere to the requisite virtue. As agents operating under Aristotle’s paradigm, we must not only aim to act excellently in general. We must also aim for the excellence in each particular situation, with regard to each specifically applicable virtue. In order to do so, we must be able to: (a) identify the necessary virtue, (b) deliberate on how to correctly implement that virtue within an applicable moral dilemma, (c) decide to act on our deliberation, and (d) take action firmly rooted in our virtuous state. Aristotle discusses this process within the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudaimonian Ethics*.

As moral agents operating under Aristotle’s paradigm we must wish for the appropriate end, deliberate on how to bring about that end, decide to take action, and then act accordingly. It is the opinion of some scholars, myself included, that all of these components are exhibited by and inherent within Aristotle’s practical syllogism. On my interpretation an agent’s desired end, his or her process of deliberation, his or her decision to act, and ultimately taking action are contained within the major premise,
minor premise, and conclusion respectively. The major premise involves both an agent’s desired end as well as one of the necessary means required to bring about that end. Next, the minor premise involves the process of identifying a particular instance of the necessary means required to bring about the end, as well as the agent reflecting on the his or her own state in order to determine the applicability of the practical syllogism to him or herself. Finally, the conclusion involves an agent’s decision to act ultimately leading to his or her action. Aristotle states that deliberation occurs up until the point of action. The practical syllogism is representative of the process that occurs within the agent prior to taking action. Therefore the practical syllogism, in its entirety, is included within the process of deliberation.

In order to make this claim, I have researched Aristotle’s applicable texts directly as well as three contemporary scholars, i.e. John M. Cooper, Fred D. Miller, and Paula Gottlieb. Cooper’s interpretation disagrees with my own in that Cooper does not find deliberation to occur throughout the entire practical syllogism. On his view, Cooper attributes deliberation to the construction of the major premise only. Within Miller’s interpretation I find support for my own. Miller agrees that deliberation is exhibited beyond the major premise, to include the minor premise and the conclusion. Gottlieb provides an essential piece for my position, in her discussion of the often omitted, self-reflective portion of the minor premise. This self-reflective portion of the minor premise involves an agent identifying him or herself as an individual to whom a particular practical syllogism is applicable and relevant. My own analysis of the relevant Aristotelian texts incorporates aspects of both Miller and Gottlieb, while it disagrees with
First, in chapter one I provide an exegesis of Aristotle’s texts that pertain to the topic of ethical evaluation, wish, deliberation, decision, and action. My goal is to provide an objective analysis of Aristotle’s position regarding deliberation and its role with respect to the practical syllogism, while at the same time providing the textual support and groundwork on which to base my own position. I find there to be three components relevant for ethical evaluation: (a) deliberation, (b) decision, and (c) action. Deliberation and decision also imply a fourth, i.e. wish, due to the fact that as agents we should wish to achieve eudaimonia on the macro level while at the same time wishing to achieve individual virtues on the micro level.

Next, in chapter two I provide an exegesis of Cooper’s discussion of deliberation and the role of the practical syllogism that is contained within his work *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*.\(^1\) I hope to provide an accurate and objective analysis of Cooper’s position, with the aim of using it within a critical framework set against the work of Miller, Gottlieb, and myself. As I interpret his work, Cooper removes the practical syllogism from the deliberative process. Deliberation only aids moral agents in their processes of constructing any necessary major premise(s). Once an agent is capable of constructing his or her major premise the deliberative process ends. The agent is then

left to perceive a particular instance where his or her major premise, or rule, should be implemented at which point he or she will act upon such an instance.

Then, in chapter three I provide an exegesis of Miller’s position regarding deliberation and its role within the practical syllogism. Again, my intention is to accurately analyze Miller’s text on the matter, in order to later undermine Cooper’s text and buttress my own position. Miller does not agree with Cooper that the deliberative process should be removed from the practical syllogism. Miller agrees that deliberation does aid in the process of constructing a major premise; however, he also finds deliberation to be necessary when implementing the minor premise. He relies on an analysis of Aristotle that finds that deliberation continues until the point at which action can be taken. For Miller, the point at which action can be taken occurs once an agent acts on his or her conclusion. Thus, the minor premise is included in the deliberative process.

Finally, in chapter four I provide my own analysis on deliberation and the role of the practical syllogism based on my exegesis of Aristotle. For further support, I discuss the analyses of both Cooper and Miller within a critical framework, draw similarities between my analysis and Miller’s as they are supported by Aristotle, and highlight areas where Cooper’s analysis falls short. The last addition to the critical framework is found within Paula Gottlieb’s analysis on the role of the practical syllogism, specifically the self-reflective nature of the minor premise. This self-reflection involved by the often-omitted portion of the minor premise entails a deliberative process that Cooper fails to discuss within his own analysis.
In order ethically evaluate actions it is not sufficient to look merely at the action and its consequences, according to Aristotelian ethics. Nor is it sufficient to look merely at the motives behind the action, as it is within deontology. For Aristotle’s interpretation of ethics, the moral theorist must be able to account for the motive, the action, and the consequences. My analysis of deliberation, allows for this type of Aristotelian evaluation.

By assigning a deliberative process, and by distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary actions Aristotle holds us as moral agents accountable for choosing to act in one way or the other. The desired end, beliefs about that end, and the means we seek to bring about the end will determine our fate. Our individual perspectives affect, and color our interpretation of the desired end. Therefore, proper deliberation cannot be tailored to meet each specific individual, but must speak to, and be applicable, universally for all agents in every situation.
An Overview of Aristotle

Deliberation, though applicable for each individual in particular, is also universally effective for all agents in every situation. It must act as a beacon in the distance, that we can each steer towards so as to achieve the right process of surveying our desired end, and necessary means, and then choosing to act accordingly. Not until we attain the correct universal process will our individual choices properly exhibit this paradigm for deliberation. The desired end, and the means we seek to bring it about will determine our morality.

Aristotle’s ethics apply to everyone. All who are caught in the struggle between right and wrong stand to benefit. However only those who are successful at behaving virtuously are praiseworthy. Aristotelian ethics is the a means for achieving happiness, for flourishing as a human being. Only those who are up to the challenge will gain the rewards, although the challenge is there for all to accept. He states, “And just as Olympic prizes are not for the finest and strongest, but for the contestants – since it is only these who win – the same is true in life; among the fine and good people, only those who act correctly win the prize”(Nicomachean Ethics, 1099a4-7).2

The Soul According to Aristotle

Aristotle separates the soul into three parts: the nutritive, the appetitive, and the rational. Each portion is defined by its respective potentiality, “For now let us confine ourselves to saying that the soul is the principle of the <potentialities> we have mentioned – for nutrition, perception, understanding, and motion – and is defined by them” (DA, 413b11-13). Plants have the potential for nutrition, animals have the potential for nutrition and perception, and humanity has the potential for nutrition, perception, understanding, and motion. Possessing a soul is what differentiates living from non-living things. Souls have the potential for “understanding, perception, locomotion and rest, and also the motion involved in nourishment, and decay and growth. And so whatever has even one of these is said to be alive.” (DA, 413a25-26) With regards to ethics and deliberation, we should be concerned with the tripartite soul found within humanity, because it is the capacity for perception, understanding and motion that permits moral agents to deliberate and then act accordingly.

The nutritive portion of the soul includes the potential for nourishment, growth and decay. The appetitive portion of the soul includes the potential for perception and also, although not necessarily, the capacity for motion or locomotion. There are some animals that have potential for motion, although perception is the only portion required to distinguish animals from plants. Aristotle broadly defines animals by stating that,

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“whatever has perception, even without motion or locomotion, is said to be an animal, not simply to be alive” (*DA*, 413b2-4). The rational portion of the soul includes, “understanding and the potentiality for theoretical study” (*DA*, 413b25-26). Aristotle states that each consecutive portion of the soul requires what precedes it:

What is true of the soul is similar to what is true of figure; for in both cases the earlier is invariably present potentially in its successor – for instance, the triangle in the square, and the nutritive in the perceptive. We must consider why they are in this order. For the perceptive part requires the nutritive, but in plants the nutritive is separated from the perceptive. Again, each of the other senses requires touch, whereas touch is found without the other senses, since many animals lack sight, hearing, and smell. Among things that perceive, some but not all have the locomotive part. Finally and most rarely, some have reasoning and thinking. For perishable things that have reasoning also have all the other parts of the soul; but not all of those that have each of the other parts also have reasoning – on the contrary, some animals lack appearance, while some live by appearance alone (*DA*, 414b28-415a13).

Therefore, to be considered a living thing requires only the nutritive portion of the soul, to be considered a type of animal requires both the nutritive and the appetitive portions of the soul, and finally to be considered a type of rational animal, i.e. human, requires the nutritive, the appetitive, and the rational portions of the soul.
Aristotelian ethics deals with humans and their ability to correctly govern the appetitive via the rational portion of the soul. Deliberation also takes the dynamic relationship between the appetitive and rational portions of the soul into account. Deliberation, rational in nature, is the process during which agents identify the appropriate means that can bring about their desired end. Desire is appetitive in nature. Those who can complete this process well and exhibit proper restraint are continent, and those who cannot exhibit proper rational restraint and do not are incontinent.

Wish

The purely rational portion of the soul does have desires, which are exhibited by wishes. However, these are not the same types of desires as those that occur in the appetitive portion. A wish is merely an end that an individual finds to be desirable, while an appetitive drive is more of a yearning, something that arises within the individual without a rational process. Someone who is properly regulated by reason is continent, temperate, in a good state.

According to Aristotle, moral virtue is a result of habituation, which is why achieving the proper habits of deliberating well, and choosing morally praiseworthy actions, is essential to personal flourishing. After all, “we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions” (EN, 1103b). Moreover, it is the appetitive portion of the soul that is at odds with morality. Therefore, an individual’s ability to properly regulate the appetitive portion of their soul will permit that individual to make morally praiseworthy decisions. The effectiveness with which we perform these tasks will shape our individual character, and through the
repetition of actions we form habits:

For what we do in our dealings with other people makes some of us just, some unjust; what we do in terrifying situations, and the habits of fear or confidence that we acquire, make some of us brave and others cowardly. The same is true of situations involving appetites and anger; for one or another sort of conduct in these situations makes some temperate and mild, others intemperate and irascible. To sum it up in a single account: a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities.

That is why we must perform the right activities, since differences in these imply corresponding differences in the states. (EN, 1103b14 – 23)

To become moral agents, merely studying ethics is not sufficient; it is essential that we put moral knowledge into practice. We must seek out effortless self-control, i.e. *sophrosune*, and become a person of practical wisdom, i.e. have *phronesis*, so that deliberation will allow us to become virtuous moral agents. Aristotle finds habituation to be essential to this process. Good habits will produce good behavior, and bad habits will produce bad behavior. The difficulty, or pain involved when performing the required action, is part of the struggle that the moral agent must account for prior to possessing *phronesis* or being capable of acting virtuously with *sophrosune*. By "pain" what Aristotle refers to is the amount of difficulty there is for the rational portion of the soul to rein in the non-rational portion. Merely being capable of performing a particular action is not the only criterion. Although habituation will aid in our moral development, during which our virtue may wax and wane, the individual who struggles to perform the correct
action is not truly moral.

*The Necessary Balance*

With regard to the virtues Aristotle finds that “actions are not enough, even in the case of crafts, for it is possible to produce a grammatical result by chance, or by following someone else’s instructions” (*EN*, 1105a22-24). We, as agents, must also be “in the right state” (*EN*, 11095a31-32) when we perform actions, i.e. we must not be pained by our actions. Therefore, Aristotle outlines three criteria that must be met by a person for an action to have moral status:

First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state (*EN*, 1105a32-35).

All three criteria are required for the moral agent to perform morally virtuous actions. By utilizing proper deliberation, and repeatedly performing virtuous acts, the agent can hope to achieve a consistent state of virtue from which to act, i.e. through habituation an agent becomes virtuous:

As we have said then, a human being would seem to be a principle of action. Deliberation is about the actions he can do, and actions are for the sake of other things; hence we deliberate about things that promote an end, not about the end (*EN*, 1112b33 – 1113a).

It is not the goal of Aristotle’s ethics to create an exhaustive list of every possible situation that the theorist can anticipate an individual may be faced with, but rather to create a paradigm for deliberation:
But let us take it as agreed in advance that every account of the actions we must do has to be stated in outline, not exactly. As we also said at the beginning, the type of accounts we demand should accord with the subject matter; and questions about actions and expediency, like questions about health, have no fixed answers (EN, 1104a1-4).

Both health and ethics seek to maintain a balance between excess and deficiency. The virtuous agent has the capacity to maintain moral balance by habituating him or herself in an effort to become a person of practical wisdom. This habituation would pursue the excellence of human function, i.e. eudaimonia. Similarly, good health is achieved through maintaining a balance:

We see this happen with strength and health – for we must use evident cases [such as these] as witnesses to things that are not evident. For both excessive and deficient exercise ruin bodily strength, and, similarly, too much or too little eating or drinking ruins health, whereas the proportionate amount produces, increases, and preserves it (EN, 1104a13-19).

The balance is exhibited by the mean between excess and deficiency. Virtue is the mean and the goal of the agent when faced with choosing between the excessive and the deficient. Due to habituation and proper deliberation the agent knows the mean/virtue. Therefore, as moral agents we must properly understand the dilemma before us, desire the appropriate end, and then deliberate wisely on what means bring about that end. If
we seek to be brave, we must be careful not to become rash. Avoiding intemperance, an excess, can lead to becoming boorish, a deficiency, if the balance is not appropriately maintained:

The same is true, then, of temperance, bravery, and the other virtues. For if, for instance, someone avoids and is afraid of everything, standing firm against nothing, he becomes cowardly; if he is afraid of nothing at all and goes to face everything, he becomes rash. Similarly, if he gratifies himself with very pleasure and abstains from none, he becomes intemperate; if he avoids them all, as boors do, he becomes some sort of insensible person. Temperance and bravery, then, are ruined by excess and deficiency, but preserved by the mean (EN, 1104a20-27).

Therefore, it is the balance that exists between excess and deficiency that is the object of our deliberation. Agents who can maintain the balance, and do so with pleasure, are said to be virtuous. It is not enough merely to act bravely; agents must enjoy being brave. Those who perform brave acts, but do so with pain and much effort, cannot be considered to be brave, although they have deliberated well to identify the appropriate action to be taken. Creating the habit of behaving in a brave manner will produce the effortlessness, and the enjoyment that is required to have achieved the virtue of bravery:

To sum up: Virtue is about pleasures and pains; the actions that are its sources also increase it or, if they are done badly, ruin it; and its activity is about the same actions as those that are its sources (EN, 1105a15-17).

In summary, deliberation should examine the situation, determine the end that is
desired, and identify the means to bring about that end. If the agent is virtuous, pleasure will accompany the action that the agent decides to perform as a result of this deliberation. If all that is missing is the proper state of character, i.e. virtue, then that virtue can be cultivated through habituation.

Agents Must Deliberate About Means, Tendencies, and Character

In addition to discussing the virtues of thought, Aristotle also directly discusses the topic of deliberation within Book VI of the *Nichomachean Ethics*. He begins by distinguishing between inquiry and deliberation, and finds that, while all deliberation is inquiry, not all inquiry is deliberation. This is because deliberation is a type of inquiry. Deliberation is also not scientific knowledge, nor is deliberation a type of good guessing. Temporality and duration also distinguish the deliberation and good guessing, because “good guessing involves no reasoning, and is done quickly; but we deliberate a long time, and it is said that we must act quickly on the result of our deliberation, but deliberate slowly” (*EN*, 1142b3-6). There is a difference between good and bad deliberation; the good deliberator is correct and the bad deliberator is in error. Therefore, deliberation is also not “just any sort of belief.” (*EN*, 1142b7)

To achieve the necessary firm and unchanging state, agents go through a process of habituation, during which time they are consistently deliberating on their actions. The goal of their deliberation is virtuous action, i.e. the virtue itself (an end). Agents deliberate about means, not ends. However, an agent must also understand and deliberate

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4 *EN*, 1142b7-8
on the state of his or her character, in order to understand what type of adjustment might be required to acquire the relevant virtue. For example, a cowardly person may need to behave in a way they consider to be rash in order to acquire bravery. If they would aim for what they understand to be bravery, they could be mistaken and not act bravely enough, still erring on the side of cowardice. Similarly, an agent prone to rash behavior should overcompensate towards cowardice in order to truly act in a brave fashion. Aristotle compares the process of achieving a particular virtue to the process of straightening a bent piece of wood:

We must also examine what we ourselves drift into easily. For different people have natural tendencies toward different goals, and we shall come to know our own tendencies from the pleasure or pain that arises in us. We must drag ourselves off in the contrary direction; for if we pull far away from error, as they do in straightening bent wood, we shall reach the intermediate condition (*EN*, 1109b-7).

Therefore, agents must not only deliberate about the means that promote their ends, but also about their own natural tendencies, and their current state of character. Deliberation about personal character, however, relates to the applicable virtue and not to a particular action. Actions, i.e. means to achieving an end, are the proper objects for deliberation, although at least some capacity for reason and deliberation is required, even if for only a brief amount of time, for an agent to survey and take notice of their own state/disposition when deliberating on how to act.
**Decision vs. Appetite**

After deliberating agents next make a decision. This is the second of three components, which comprise the scope of ethical evaluation within Aristotle’s ethical system. Moral agents operating within Aristotle’s virtue ethics are held accountable for their virtues or lack thereof. The overarching end for each agent is to be virtuous. Every particular virtue is both a means to that end and an end itself. As an end, agents wish for the virtue and decide on the means to promote that virtue, and necessarily deliberate in order to make a decision. In order to correctly determine which agents are wishing for a particular virtue, deliberating and deciding on the means to promote it, and then acting on that deliberation and decision, Aristotle must distinguish decision from appetite.

The choice to act on the basis of either decision or appetite determines if an agent is considered incontinent or continent. It is essential for the moral agent’s reason to override any unnecessary appetitive desire. Moreover, pleasure and pain are the objects of the appetite, while the means to an end is the object of decision. Actions influenced by appetite are not the result of decision, because the rational portion of the soul is not properly engaged. For decision to have occurred, an agent must possess the capability of rational deliberation. The result of that decision, then, is the means found to be necessary by deliberation due to the agent’s ability to bring about the desired end; agents choose to act. However, the actions that an agent can choose must be within the limits of what is physically possible for a human being to do. Therefore, decision is also not what an agent wishes for, because wishes can include doing or possessing the possible or impossible. The end is what the agent wishes for, and if it is possible, then a decision is
made on the means to bring about that end:

We wish, for instance, to be healthy, but we decide to do things that will make us healthy; and we wish to be happy, and say so, but we could not appropriately say we decide to be happy, since in general the things we decide on would seem to be things that are up to us (EN, 1111b28-30).

As individuals, it is possible for us to affect personal health. Therefore, when an individual, e.g. Markus, wishes to be healthy, it is possible for him to act in such a way that his wish could come true. Markus can make a decision to eat healthy and to exercise (the means) in an attempt to become healthy (the end). Personal happiness, on the other hand, is not up to us, according to Aristotle, at least not in the same fashion in which we can decide to be healthy. Happiness, unlike health, is not solely up to the individual. There are external forces that positively or negatively affect personal happiness, e.g. the weather, or an interpersonal interaction with a friend. While how we interpret the outside influences may be within the scope of our agency, the forces that cause us to be happy or unhappy may not be. Therefore, for Aristotle, to be happy is not a decision that can be made, whereas to be healthy is.

To further clarify the specific role performed by decision, Aristotle contrasts decision and belief. He states that we hold beliefs about things that are outside of the scope of decision and individual agency, e.g. impossible and eternal things. Even the values assigned to belief differ from the values assigned to decisions:

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5 Referring to Aristotle’s concept of health, and not to our modern conception.
For belief seems to be about everything, no less about things that are
eternal and things that are impossible [for us] than about things that are up
to us. Moreover, beliefs are divided into true and false, not into good and
bad, but decisions are divided into good and bad more than into true and
false (\textit{EN}, 1111b31-35).

The beliefs that we hold are not restricted to what is possible or what is finite, because
what we believe can be either true or false. Assigning this type of value allows us to hold
a wide variety of beliefs on a multitude of topics, because it is perfectly rational for us to
have a false belief. Also, because the object of a decision is the means to an end, it is not
acceptable to assign a truth-value to it. Either the means promotes the end, in which case
it was a good decision, or it does not, and therefore it was a bad decision. Moreover,
evaluations of our decisions do not reflect the quality or truth-value of the beliefs we hold:

Again, those who make the best decisions do not seem to be the same as those
with the best beliefs; on the contrary, some seem to have better beliefs, but to
make the wrong decisions because of vice. (\textit{EN}, 1112a9-11).

\textit{What Controls Actions?}

The third component involved in ethical evaluation is action. Deliberation and
decision occur prior to taking action. Actions exhibit an agent’s decision as well as the
deliberation, which allowed the agent to make an informed decision. Aristotle attributes
actions to three capacities of the soul, which are “sense perception, understanding, [and]
desire – that control action and truth” (\textit{EN}, 1139a18-20). The morality of an action, then,
is determined by the agent’s ability to exhibit excellence with regard to these capacities:
“If, then, the decision is excellent, the reason must be true and the desire correct, so that what reason asserts is what desire pursues” (EN, 1139a24-26). Actions result from decisions, which result from deliberation. Aristotle states that “The principle of an action – the source of motion, not the goal – is decision; the principle of decision is desire and goal-directed reason. That is why decision requires understanding and thought, and also a state of character; for acting well or badly requires both thought and character” (EN, 1139a33-36). Therefore, virtues of character are not sufficient to be considered virtuous, and agents must also possess virtues of thought, e.g. understanding, comprehension, practical thought, etc.

Virtues of thought are gained through instruction, while virtues of character are gained from habituation (EN, 1103a15-16). Agents must exhibit both types of virtue in order to be fully virtuous agents capable of achieving eudaimonia. While relying on virtues of thought, an agent can begin the process of cultivating virtues of character. Deliberation and decision are integral to this process insofar as they allow us to identify the necessary means.

While analyzing and inquiring about the necessary means and appropriate steps involved, agents must determine what is and is not possible for their individual agencies to affect. This includes receiving help from others:

What is possible is what we could achieve through our agency [including what our friends could achieve for us]; for what our friends achieve is, in a way, achieved through our agency, since the principle is in us. [In crafts] we sometimes look for instruments, sometimes [for the way] to use them;
so also in other cases we sometimes look for the means to the end, 
sometimes for the proper use of the means, or for the means to that proper 
use (EN1112b26-32).

It may simply be the case that seeking the assistance of a friend or the instructions for 
utilizing a particular tool may be yet another step that promotes the end. Individual 
deliberation begins with the desire for an end, but we do not deliberate about that end. 
Rather, we deliberate about the possible actions we could take in order to bring about that 
end, i.e. the means.

Our goal is to link that end to ourselves through actions that are possible us to 
directly affect through our agency, which includes outside assistance through the use of 
friends or even tools whenever necessary. Linking our desired end to ourselves through 
means that promote that end,

We have found then, that what we decide to do is whatever action, among 
those up to us, we deliberate about and [consequently] desire to do. Hence 
also decision will be deliberative desire to do an action that is up to us; for 
when we have judged [that it is right] as a result of deliberation, we desire 
to do it in accord with our wish (EN, 1113a10-13).

Therefore, while decision is what precedes actions, it is deliberation that informs our 
decisions. Without it, we are incapable of possessing the proper understanding of how to 
most effectively bring about our actions, or even how the actions we perform are 
influenced by our agency. This influence is what holds us accountable for the actions 
that we choose to perform.
Voluntary and Involuntary Actions

Only those actions that an agent has the ability to choose to either perform or abstaining from performing without external influence are subject to moral evaluation:

Suppose, for instance, a tyrant tells you to do something shameful, when he has control over your parents and children, and if you do it, they will live, but if not, they will die. These raise dispute about whether they are voluntary or involuntary (EN, 1110a6-8).

In a situation where actions are performed due to fear of death, it would seem that an external force is at work, and that any action carried out by the agent would necessarily be considered involuntary. There are also actions that Aristotle classifies as mixed, because an agent did choose to perform them under circumstances where their options were all less than desirable. Therefore, with his next example Aristotle looks to support his thesis that there are three types of actions, i.e. voluntary, involuntary, and mixed:

However, the same sort of [unwelcome choice] is found in throwing cargo overboard in storms. For no one willingly throws cargo overboard, without qualification, but anyone with any sense throws it overboard to save himself and the others (EN, 1110a9-12).

In the cargo example, the fear of death is just a real as the fear experienced in the tyrant example. The only difference is that a force of nature has replaced the tyrant. However, they both serve the same purpose and exhibit a choice to act insofar as, if that action is not taken, lives will be lost. Aristotle finds decisions to act such as these to be mixed actions, although there are more similarities existing between mixed and involuntary than
between mixed and voluntary actions. This is because a decision is made to act, although the action that the agent chooses to perform is only performed in that particular situation. It may only be acceptable to perform shameful acts under pain of death, and it may only be acceptable to throw cargo overboard in a violent deadly storm for the very same reason. Therefore, just as an individual’s state of character is relevant, so too is the situation, when deliberating on what action to take.

Mixed Actions

Actions are considered mixed when there is a will to act on the part of the agent, although under different, i.e. non-threatening, circumstances a different action may have been chosen instead. The agent voluntarily performed the act, although that particular action would not have been deliberately chosen in a situation where it was not brought about by necessity, as it is in the case of the tyrant or the tempestuous storm. However, although the action performed would not be praised in purely voluntary circumstances, within the context of mixed circumstances some praise may be warranted, as Aristotle points out:

For such [mixed] actions people are sometimes actually praised, whenever they endure something shameful or painful as the price of great and fine results. If they do the reverse, they are blamed; for it is a base person who endures what is most shameful for nothing fine or for only some moderately fine result (EN, 111-a20-24).
Failing to performing the shameful act may produce blame on the part of the agent. However, praise is not always given in circumstances of mixed actions. There are instances where no human being can be asked to perform an act due to an overwhelming outside influence:

In some cases there is no praise, but there is pardon, whenever someone does a wrong action because of conditions of a sort that overstrain human nature, and that no one would endure (EN, 1110a24-25).

Again, the possibility of praise, blame, or pardon, which accompanies the actions performed as a result of a mixed situation, exhibits the need for deliberation. Like the necessity of understanding their individual state of character when choosing to act in a purely voluntary situation, agents must be capable of identifying whether their mixed situation is one that could lead to either praise or blame, or whether it is a situation in which no human being would be expected not to perform the act(s) that are demanded. If the agent deliberates poorly, and therefore misinterprets the situation, blame could be given when pardon is anticipated. Therefore, only actions that are forced, or where the agent contributes nothing, are involuntary and excused from ethical evaluation.

**Ethical Evaluation and Accountability**

Voluntary actions, then, are the only type of action that rely solely on the influence of the agent, i.e. the agent decides to act and is solely responsible for the action. Only fully rational human beings, members of the ethical community, are capable of making decisions. Moreover, neither children nor animals are included within the ethical community. These two groups are capable of performing voluntary acts, though they are
not held accountable for their actions in the same fashion as moral agents, e.g. adult humans, because they are not capable of making decisions. Accountability relies necessarily on the ability to prove an agent has made a decision. Moreover, ethical evaluation of the decision will rely on the deliberative process used in order to make the decision. My own analysis relies heavily on the relationship between moral evaluation and deliberation performed by individual agents.

Voluntary and mixed actions are both capable of ethical evaluation, because they both involve acting on a decision made by a moral agent. Aristotle finds decision to be a uniquely human behavior, and therefore it is not analogous to appetite or spirit. Reason is required for decision, and animals do not possess the rational portion of the soul; this is reserved solely for humanity. Animals also exhibit appetite and spirit, although they do not participate in decision making. If they were to participate, then their actions would be subject to ethical evaluation. However, merely possessing the capacity for reason is also not enough for decision, because to make a decision a deliberative process must be utilized. Aristotle finds spontaneous actions to be the result of neither decision nor deliberation:

Decision, then, is apparently voluntary, but not the same as the voluntary, which extends more widely. For children and the other animals share in voluntary action, but not in decision; and the actions we do on the spur of the moment are said to be voluntary, but not to accord with decision. (EN, 1111b7-10)
I propose that Aristotle makes this contrast between decision and other voluntary actions that may appear to result from decision because of the necessary connection between moral evaluation and accountability – on the part of either the individual or a larger group, e.g. a society. Agents who have gone through a deliberative process, made a decision as a result of that process, and then performed the action that was decided upon are accountable for their actions. Those who have acted voluntarily but without deliberation or decision are not. While a child performing an inappropriate action may do so voluntarily, an adult performing the same action is susceptible to blame in a way that the child is not. A child may be reprimanded by a parent or guardian whereas the same act committed by a member of the moral community could receive retribution, depending on what type of act is committed. The same applies to giving and receiving moral praise for actions. Therefore, it is vital to be able to demonstrate that individual actions are the direct result of a deliberate decision making process. Every moral theory accounts for deliberation; Aristotle’s theory is no exception.

Continence vs. Incontinence

The continent person and the incontinent person share a desire to act in accordance with pleasure. The difference between them is that the continent person will resist the desire and will take action in accordance with reason, while the incontinent person will not. Aristotle states, “The continent person seems to be the same as one who abides by his rational calculation; and the incontinent person seems to be the same as one who abandons it” (EN, 1145b11-12). We find further support for this in the affirmation that “The incontinent person knows that his actions are base, but does them because of
his feelings, where the continent person knows that his appetites are base, but because of reason does not follow them” (*EN*, 1145b13-14).

However, continence and incontinence are not synonymous with temperance and intemperance. Continence differs from temperance, inasmuch as while the continent person restrains base desire, the temperate person lacks base desire and exhibits restraint. Moreover, incontinence differs from intemperance, since the incontinent person knows their desire is base while the intemperate person does not and is of the opinion that acting in accordance with pleasure is correct. *Akrasia* is the Greek term for incontinence and *enkratēia* is the Greek term for continence. Both the akratic and the enkratic individual experience base desires, therefore neither is virtuous.

We have already seen that the soul has both rational and non-rational processes. While these two are separate functions of the soul, Aristotle asserts that they are part of a singular soul, like the two sides of a coin. All living things share the non-rational portion of the soul, exhibited in “the cause of nutrition and growth” (*EN*6, 1102a34-1102b). When discussing continent and incontinent individuals, Aristotle begins by attempting to discover whether the rational or the non-rational portion governs their respective behaviors. The continent person is praised because the rational portion of the soul has properly restrained desire. However, what of the irrational desire to act? Aristotle finds that the soul of an incontinent person can be analogous to the body of an individual with paralyzed limbs, i.e. that although the signal to go in one direction is given, it is not

6 Abbreviation for *Nicomachean Ethics*
received. When it comes to incontinent behavior it is the inability of reason to restrain the appetitive drive that is condemnable.

Conclusions

Finally then, I offer my conclusions based on my analysis of Aristotle’s discussion of deliberation, decision, and action within the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I feel there are two main statements that I can make about deliberation based on my analysis: (a) the aim of deliberation is always the same and (b) there are some means that require a lot of deliberation and there are some means that do not require as much deliberation. The choices that we make are a direct result of a deliberative process, and they exhibit voluntary actions done for the sake of promoting a desired end, e.g. to be virtuous. A deliberative process is required in order to choose, and a choice must be made for agents to be accountable for their actions. Aristotle connects decision and deliberation in the following manner:

Then perhaps what is decided is what has been previously deliberated.

For decision involves reason and thought, and even the name itself would seem to indicate that [what is decided, *prohaireton*] is chosen [*haireton*] before [*pro*] other things (*EN*, 1112a16-18).

Actions result from deliberation and decision, therefore actions are what decisions precede.

Aristotle states that things “open to deliberation” are those “that someone with some sense, not some fool or madman, might deliberate about”. (*EN*, 1112a19-21) As rational animals, it is only reasonable for humans to deliberate about what it is possible
for their agency to affect. For example, humans can deliberate about how to spend their money, though they cannot deliberate about the rotation of the Earth. The former they have direct influence on, the latter is unaffected by their agency:

We deliberate about what is up to us, that is to say, about the actions we can do; and this is what is left [besides the previous cases]. For causes seem to include nature, necessity, and fortune, but besides them mind and everything [operating] through human agency. But we do not deliberate about all human affairs; no Spartan, for instance, deliberates about how the Scythians might have the best political system. Rather, each group of human beings deliberates about the actions that they themselves can do.

\( EN, 1112a31-33; 29-33 \)

Aristotle finds that in cases of foreign politics, human effort is indeed involved, though it is not reasonable to suggest that those who are not directly involved deliberate about them. Again, because deliberation results in choosing to act, i.e. making a decision, individual deliberation is limited to what can be directly affected by the agency of each individual. Therefore, Aristotle tells us that “there is no deliberation about the sciences that are exact and self-sufficient, as for instance, about letters, since we are in no doubt about how to write them [in spelling a word].” \( EN, 1112b-3 \)

Even among areas affected by our agency, there are some that we deliberate about more than others. It would be incorrect to equate little deliberation with no deliberation. Those that allow for more latitude of choice are deliberated about more than those that allow for less. We deliberate more when the outcome is less certain, and less when the
outcome can be expected. For example, while Aristotle finds that we deliberate about both navigation and gymnastics, he states that “we deliberate about navigation more than about gymnastics, to the extent that it is less exactly worked out, and similarly with other [crafts]” (EN, 1112b5-6). Presumably, there is more to account for in navigation, e.g. currents, wind, weather, cargo, crew, etc., and comparably less to account for in gymnastics; the individual and the surface being used may be the only two variables accounted for when deliberating about gymnastics. Aristotle finds deliberation to occur when the necessary means to promote the desired end are unclear, or perhaps when there are a variety of ways to bring about the end. He states:

We deliberate about things in which our agency operates but does not always produce the same results; for instance about questions of medicine and of business; and we deliberate about navigation more than about athletic training, because it has been less completely reduced to a science; and similarly with other pursuits also. And we deliberate more about the arts than about the sciences, because we are more uncertain about them.7

Deliberation involves identifying the appropriate means to bring about the desired end and determining which set of means should be chosen over another, if an end can be brought about by more than one set of means. Therefore just as agents desire the end, but choose the means, the object of deliberation is the means that promote a desired end, and

not the end itself:

We deliberate not about ends, but about what promotes ends. A doctor for instance, does not deliberate about whether he will cure, or an orator about whether he will persuade, or a politician about whether he will produce a good order, or any other [expert] about the end [that his science aims at]. Rather, we lay down the end, and then examine the ways and means to achieve it (EN, 1112b12-16).

Whether, as agents, we are deliberating between different ways of promoting an end, or a single way of promoting an end, our aim is the same. We are analyzing and deliberating on the means that promote our desired end in order to discover “the first cause, the last thing to be discovered.” (EN, 1112b19-20) This “first cause” is the action we look to perform in order to promote our desired end, i.e. either a single, or the first out of a set of, means. Aristotle finds deliberation to be similar to the act of analyzing a geometrical diagram. Through a process of deliberation, the agent must be able to visualize every component necessary to bringing about a desired end, to comprehend the causal relationship between the relevant means, to identify the first cause, i.e. the means that will begin the process of bringing about the end, and finally to find when and how to take action, i.e. to bring that first cause into being. Therefore, agents who deliberate undergo a process of inquiry, although deliberation is not always present whenever an agent undergoes inquiry. Deliberation has a similar relationship with inquiry to that between decision and voluntary actions.
I will now turn my attention to John Cooper’s discussion of deliberation and the practical syllogism. By giving my interpretation of his analysis, I hope to show how he has incorrectly understood Aristotle’s discussion of deliberation within the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cooper’s analysis finds deliberation to be completely separate from the practical syllogism.
II

An Overview of John M. Cooper

In the first chapter of his work *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*\(^8\), John M. Cooper gives his analysis of Aristotle’s treatment of deliberation in the *Eudemian Ethics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cooper relies on Aristotle’s use of the practical syllogism in order to illustrate what he finds to be the scope of deliberation in Aristotle’s ethics. Cooper finds deliberation to be completely absent from the practical syllogism; in other words, deliberation has given rise to the practical syllogism and that what is required for the practical syllogism to be implemented is perception. Once an agent is capable of constructing the practical syllogism, the deliberative process has ended, and all that is required of the agent is to exhibit their ability to perceive an instance where the practical syllogism can be implemented.\(^9\) On Cooper’s view, not every moral decision is the result of deliberation.\(^{10}\) He also tries to equate most moral decisions with decisions akin to choosing what to eat for lunch, or knowing which switch turns on a particular light, thereby confusing effortless self-control with acting without thinking, and failing to


\(^9\) However, if deliberation were involved in constructing the practical syllogism would not there also be deliberation occurring while the practical syllogism is being implemented?

\(^{10}\) Cooper. p. 9.
understand *sophrosune*. Although it might appear to exhibit little to no deliberation, due to the high level of habituation that an agent must undergo in order to achieve it, the agent is still deliberating. Effortless self-control does not refer to the agent’s deliberation but rather to his or her adherence to a particular virtue. An agent must still deliberate, even if he or she is capable of adhering to the virtue, and must do so while exhibiting *sophrosune*. The practical syllogism is comprised of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. On Cooper’s view, the major premise is the end result of a deliberative process, the minor premise is representative of the faculty of perception, and the conclusion is an instance of the combined premises. The roles performed by these two premises of the practical syllogism are central to Cooper’s view of deliberation.

The minor premise utilizes the deliberation of the major premise and, through perception, articulates an appropriate instance where the conclusion of the major premise can be put into action, e.g. an agent may have come to the conclusion through a deliberative process, that chicken is a healthy source of protein, and might ultimately construct the major premise “Chicken is a healthy source of protein.” The minor premise exhibits an agent going out into the world and finding some chicken to eat, via his or her faculty of perception. Using demonstrative pronouns, the minor premise might look something like “This [pointing to an object] is a/some chicken.” The conclusion that would follow might be something like, “I will eat this [pointing to the perceived chicken] healthy source of protein,” and would, in this case, involve an instance of the chicken that was first deliberated on as a healthy source of protein, and later empirically perceived by
the agent to be such. On Cooper’s view, deliberation has ended once an agent is capable of constructing a major premise; this occurs prior to perceiving. Cooper suggests that agents often use the practical syllogism to explain their actions *ex post facto*.

Cooper distinguishes between the deliberative process and the practical syllogism, claiming that the practical syllogism is not part of the deliberation although it does result from deliberation. As mentioned above, the practical syllogism has three components: (a) the major premise, (b) the minor premise, and (c) the conclusion. The major premise is the result of deliberation, the minor premise relies on perception, and the conclusion is the implemented amalgamation of the premises. For example:

*Major Premise:* In order to be healthy, I will not eat red meat.

*Minor Premise:* *This* (pointing) is not red meat, *this* is chicken.

*Conclusion:* I will eat *this*.12

The major premise in this practical syllogism is the result of my deliberation involving my desire to be a healthy individual, that eating red meat is not a healthy choice, that there are other more healthy options, and that I will choose to eat one of those other healthy options. After deliberating about the necessary means required, i.e. about what to eat, in order to reach my desired end, i.e. to be healthy, I construct this

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11 This ‘chicken’ example is one discussed by Cooper in Chapter 1 of *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*.

12 A reference to Cooper’s example discussing the syllogism related to eating light meats (one deliberative process discussed by Aristotle).
premise. The minor premise only requires my ability to perceive, specifically to perceive a piece of chicken available for me to eat. However, once I have constructed my major premise, there is no further need to deliberate.

Why Deliberation is Essential

Cooper is not persuaded that deliberation, as Aristotle defines it, is the same as moral reasoning. He finds that Aristotle describes deliberation as a technical process, and that without the necessary intrinsic value it is an amoral process. Without this intrinsic value, deliberation is no more moral reasoning than geometrical analysis is. Cooper identifies Aristotle’s notion of deliberation as “always to consist in working out the means, in particular situations or types of situations, of achieving given, relatively concrete ends; and though this may fit well enough the doctor’s or the general’s deliberation, it seems not an entirely suitable model for moral reasoning.”¹³ Cooper wants to remove moral implications from what he refers to as technical deliberation. It is this type of amoral deliberation that Cooper identifies in Aristotle’s discussion of the practical syllogism, or practical reasoning. Cooper provides two separate patterns that can be applied to the practical syllogism, but he first discusses an apparent distinction between technical and moral reasoning:

Moral reasoning, as some of [Aristotle’s] critics bluntly put the matter, must consist, at least in part, in the recognition of the rightness of certain courses of action not as a means to some end or ends. For where actions

¹³ Cooper. pp. 1-2.
are undertaken as means their value is completely derivative, being a function of the value of the end being pursued; whereas actions done on moral grounds – because of courage, or justice, or temperance, or some other moral virtue requires them – are, as such, regarded as possessed of “intrinsic value.” The assimilation of moral reasoning to technical deliberation, with its means-ends structure, seems to preclude Aristotle’s recognition of this distinctive feature of moral thinking.\footnote{Cooper. p. 2.}

Cooper looks to stress the distinction between moral deliberation, which has intrinsic value, and technical deliberation. One example that Cooper refers to involves turning on a light switch:

To see what I’m doing I need light; to get light I can turn on the electric bulb; to turn on the electric bulb I need to turn the switch to “on”; \textit{this} is the switch – whereupon I decide to turn \textit{this} to “on,” and do so at once. Thus deliberation when complete yields an action, decided on as the action of turning \textit{this} (pointing), or eating \textit{this}, and so on, an action described in such terms being always calculated as the, or a, way of realizing one’s purpose.\footnote{Cooper. p. 26.}
Once an agent has determined, through a process of deliberation, that placing the light switch in the “on” position will result in a light bulb’s illumination, the agent locating the appropriate light switch and executing the predetermined action is all that is required. If an agent desired to switch on a light and could perceive what he/she recognized as a switch, then further deliberation on the issue would not be required, only action:

When, in deliberating what to do, one decides that to switch on the electric light is a way of realizing one’s end, then under the sort of conditions Aristotle’s examples seem to envisage there is in fact no need for further deliberation at all. One knows how to switch on the light, and does not need to deliberate about that; nor is it any problem to recognize the switch on sight; there is the switch on the wall before one, so one just reaches out and turns it. To suppose that in general one must do some further thinking about what to do, after deciding to switch the light on, before actually doing so, seems to be a mistake.\(^{16}\)

Here Cooper seems to be suggesting that the ability to rely on all the previous information an agent may or may not have with regards to light switches, and how to properly utilize them, will dictate how much deliberation the agent needs to engage in regarding the use of any particular light switch.

\(^{16}\) Cooper. pp. 26-27.
Aristotle compares the deliberative process with the act of analyzing a geometrical diagram, and while Cooper agrees that this is sufficient to exhibit technical deliberation, it is not all that is necessary in order to claim that moral deliberation has occurred.17 According to Cooper, properly identifying the necessary means and tracing those means back to the individual agent is not enough evidence to imply morality. Cooper suggests that evidence of acting from the motivation to act in accordance with one or more of the virtues is necessary for deliberation to not merely be a type of amoral analytical process.

*The Means-End Pattern and the Rule-Instance Pattern*

As mentioned above, Cooper finds two different forms of the practical syllogism to exist within Aristotle’s ethical works. The first Cooper describes as the means-end pattern, and the second as the rule-instance pattern. Cooper bases these two interpretations of how to the practical syllogism is used within Aristotle’s ethics on the work of D.J. Allan.18 The rule-instance pattern, according to both Cooper and Allan, is capable of reconciling Aristotle’s description of deliberation with the necessary motivation to act in accordance with a virtue. Aristotle, however, seems to suggest that the means-end pattern alone is sufficient. According to Cooper, however, the means-

17 My exegesis and analysis of Aristotle comparing deliberation with geometrical analysis can be found in chapter one of my thesis.

ends pattern cannot and does not allow for the requisite ‘intrinsic value’:

The [rule-instance] pattern names an action as an instance of a rule, and it
is by treating moral thinking as exemplifying this second type of practical
syllogism that Allan thinks Aristotle can accommodate his insight that
there is an “intrinsic value” in actions done for moral reasons. For this
[rule-instance] pattern seems to be exemplified when one returns
someone’s lost property not as a means to getting the reward money, but
because one adheres to some rule requiring that action; and this is at least
an important first step toward the recognition of an “intrinsic value” in
certain actions, since it permits the possibility that one might perform a
particular action not because one expected good consequences to result
from it but just because some accepted rule required it. 19

For Allan, then, accepting only the rule-instance pattern and not the means-end pattern is
akin to attributing moral worth to actions. Without such a rule, deliberation does not
have any type of moral worth, i.e. any intrinsic value. 20

Cooper states, however, that the rule-instance pattern alone is not sufficient for
attributing morality to actions. The motivation of the individual agent to act in
accordance with a virtue is also necessary. Cooper discusses an example involving a

\[\text{19} \quad \text{Cooper. p. 3.}\]

\[\text{20} \quad \text{This insistence on the rule-instance is discussed in my fourth chapter, where I discuss the issue of Cooper reading too much deontology into Aristotle’s ethics.}\]
shopkeeper to illustrate this point. The shopkeeper who is honest in his or her business practices, but who is motivated solely out of practicality, rather than virtue, is less than virtuous. Therefore the moral implications of his or her actions are questionable:

A shopkeeper, for example, who rigidly adheres to a rule of honesty solely on the ground that it is the safest means of making a regular and sufficient income certainly does not see anything intrinsically good in his acts of fair-dealing. Quite the contrary: he adopts this rule only because it is a means to certain ends he is aiming at, and neither the rule nor the actions it enjoins have any value for him other than that they derive from their relation to these ends.\(^{21}\)

Again, Cooper distinguishes the means-ends and rule-instance patterns of deliberation. In this example, merely engaging in honest business practices for the sake of making money exhibits the means-ends pattern of deliberation, and it is not enough to suggest that there is any intrinsic value in the honest business practices of the shopkeeper, even if there is a rule-instance pattern based on the means-end pattern. Cooper finds that the shopkeeper example is evidence that the type of technical deliberation evident within the means-ends pattern is nothing more than an attempt to find the most effective means to the desired end, and has no moral implications at all:

\(^{21}\) Cooper. p. 3.
It therefore appears that even if Allan is right, and the theory of the practical syllogism is the means by which Aristotle hoped to make room in his theory of practical thinking for the recognition by moral agents of an “intrinsic value” in their moral actions, Aristotle could not achieve this purpose without in addition giving an account of the validity of moral rules that treats them as something other than policies adopted to advance given ends.  

Cooper’s approach, then, is to examine the means-ends pattern suggested by Allan, in an attempt to possibly widen its scope to include the possibility of assigning intrinsic value:  

Clearly, if we are to avoid finding Aristotle inconsistent in this matter we will have to reconsider his theory of deliberation, hoping that perhaps the means-ends pattern to which he assimilates deliberation can be interpreted broadly enough so that, in regarding a virtue as a “means,” one may after all still be attributing “intrinsic value” to it.  

Cooper finds this to be a necessary step, due to the implications that Allan’s means-ends pattern has, not only for the deliberative process, but also for the virtues themselves. This could imply that if the virtues could also be classified as a means to an end, then they could also be a part of this technical process and may not have any intrinsic value.

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22 Cooper. p. 4.

23 Ibid.
Agents achieve the virtues *via* habituation and by utilizing deliberation, but if deliberation has no intrinsic value, because it is merely a technical process, then there is the possibility that the virtues may also be without moral worth, for two reasons: (a) they rely on deliberation, and (b) they are means to an end:

And it is a formidable difficulty for Allan that Aristotle seems throughout the *Ethics*, and not merely in the book III account of deliberation, to think of the principles of the virtues as themselves arrived at by deliberation – the very process which, on Allan’s account, is patterned on the sort of means-ends reasoning which necessarily assigns to the means no intrinsic value.²⁴

Individual actions and, more importantly, the virtues themselves are contingent upon the process of deliberation. If, after an analysis of deliberation, it is discovered that deliberation follows the means-end pattern and not the rule-instance pattern, and if the means-ends pattern cannot be redefined more broadly to include the possibility of the intrinsic value that is necessary in order to assign moral worth to both individual actions and the virtues, then the possibility of moral evaluation within Aristotle’s ethics can be called into question.

*The Practical Syllogism*

Cooper argues that the practical syllogism is not part of the deliberative process itself, but that it represents the result of deliberation. That is, if an agent were asked to

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give evidence of, or even justification for, the deliberative process that led to the performance of a particular action, the practical syllogism would serve as a representation of that process. However, the practical syllogism is not itself a component of the deliberative process, nor does it provide evidence of the agent’s accountability. Therefore, when necessary, virtuous agents should be able to construct a practical syllogism that can account for the act in question.25

Although Cooper does not use examples involving explicitly moral choices, situations involving such choices should also be examined through the lens of Cooper’s interpretation. Consider the following scenario: Mark, a moral agent, is walking through downtown Kent. While on his way to lunch, Mark notices two individuals ahead of him. The first person he sees is Sally, who is lying on the sidewalk, next to a parked vehicle. From Mark’s perspective, Sally seems to be in distress. The second person Mark sees is Johnny, who is kneeling over and physically interacting with Sally. From Mark’s vantage point, it appears that Johnny is either the cause of, or is adding to, Sally’s current distress. In order to act virtuously, in this instance bravely, Mark resolves to come to Sally’s aid by stopping Johnny. The related practical syllogism, is as follows:

In order to achieve bravery, I will act in a brave fashion when the situation necessitates it.

This [pointing at the relevant situation] is a situation that necessitates it.

25 Which, on Cooper’s interpretation, does not so much exhibit deliberation, as it does an agent’s capability of retracing his or her steps.
bravery.

Therefore, I will act in a brave fashion.

The relevant situation for our current example is the one Mark finds himself presented with in downtown Kent.

One problem for Mark is that Cooper’s analysis defines the scope of deliberation quite narrowly. From Mark’s perspective, he has perceived a situation requiring bravery. Unfortunately, the appropriate action for Mark may not be as evidently clear as it appears to be. Such a dilemma would occur when an agent encounters an unfamiliar situation, or one involving factors or elements not previously anticipated by the agent during his or her deliberation. Therefore, although the agent had previously deliberated and constructed his or her rule-instance, once placed in a situation where the rule-instance should be acted upon, the agent might require further deliberation as a result of unforeseen circumstances. In this type of situation, Cooper could allow for deliberation to occur within the context of the practical syllogism, in particular, the major premise could be altered. However, according to Cooper, “it would be wrong to say that all moral decisions are actually deliberated, and, second, that to attribute this view to Aristotle would clash with his theory of moral development.” It would seem that while Cooper

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Against Cooper’s analysis, it is my opinion that practical reasoning within a moral dilemma provides a moral weight to the outcome of the deliberative process. Deliberation does not require moral, but morality does require deliberation.

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26  Against Cooper’s analysis, it is my opinion that practical reasoning within a moral dilemma provides a moral weight to the outcome of the deliberative process.

27  Cooper. p. 9.
would allow for revision or deliberation, it is not the practical syllogism that is up for revision, but rather the required or necessary rule-instance. This would keep the minor premise outside of the deliberative process.\(^{28}\)

As a result, deliberation would not affect many moral judgments if Aristotle’s notion of deliberation were to be understood as a technical process. It would instead be a tool used by moral agents who are asked to justify their actions after the fact, e.g. to explain how they turned on the light by interacting with the switch although they did so without thinking about it. Cooper goes on, affirming that Aristotle’s theory understands virtuous agents to be making moral choices based upon prior processes of deliberation:

Now it may be replied that Aristotle himself admits (\textit{De Motu An. 7 701a25ff}) that the minor premiss of a practical syllogism can be so obvious that one does not bother to recite it explicitly to oneself, so that such further reflection as there is, on this interpretation, may be merely implicit in the action finally performed. But there remains that final decision, the decision to switch \textit{this}, which this interpretation represents as a stage of thinking subsequent to the decision to switch on the light. The act of perception by which one recognizes the switch, whether its content is formulated explicitly as a premises or not, is still being regarded as

\(^{28}\) The problem for Cooper’s agent(s) is knowing when and which are candidates for revision. Their unnecessarily heavy reliance on perception (without deliberation) further complicates the dilemma.
making a contribution to the process of figuring out what to do. But since, in the type of case Aristotle has in mind, this process is complete already when the practical syllogism is tacked on, my original objection stands. On this interpretation Aristotle will be representing as part of the process of deliberative analysis what is in fact the work of perception by which one bring the conclusion of deliberation to bear on the actual conditions in which one finds oneself.\textsuperscript{29}

He goes on to claim that explanation, or justification \textit{post hoc}, and the process of trial and error – which accounts for Aristotle’s theory on morality \textit{via} habituation – have been mistaken for pure deliberation:

Now when one has reached a decision by explicit deliberation, the process of defending or explaining it will take the form of reconstructing the course of deliberation by which one arrived at it: the deliberation contains one’s reasons for acting. Similarly, it might be said, even when there has actually been no deliberation, the attempt to explain what one has done will take the form of setting out a course of deliberation by which one \textit{might} have decided to do what one has done, and which contains the reasons one actually had in acting as one did. That is to say, if a person does have reasons for acting, they will, when produced, constitute a deliberative argument in favor of the decision actually made; hence one

\textsuperscript{29} Cooper. p. 27.
can regard that argument as lying behind and supporting the decision even though it was not actually gone through in advance. In this hypothetical guise, then, deliberation might be said to lie behind every moral decision, even those not actually reached by explicit calculation.\(^{30}\)

The ability to rely on a pseudo-deliberative process as a way of justifying actions as being virtuous *post hoc* makes it difficult to distinguish exactly when the agent has undergone a genuine process of deliberation.\(^{31}\) If virtuous agents are becoming virtuous through a process of trial and error, then agents are not undergoing a process of deliberation in order to identify virtuous acts to be carried out at a future date. The process of habituation implies incorporating information from previous instances into current instances in order to either implement a successful habit or revise an unsuccessful one. Moreover, if Cooper can dismiss deliberation in such a way, then it would greatly alter how Aristotle’s ethics is interpreted. This conclusion would also support Cooper’s claim that deliberation is not a wide-reaching problem solving process, but that its scope is quite limited and reserved only for unusual and difficult cases. Moreover, it strengthens his distinction between practical and moral deliberation, i.e. the means-end vs. rule-instance pattern.

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\(^{31}\) Pseudo-deliberation occurs according to Cooper, not to Aristotle.
Cooper’s agent can only deliberate further when faced with difficult cases. Being able to decide when a case can be qualified as difficult is another area where Cooper’s analysis falls apart. Cooper’s agent cannot verify with deliberation that the middle term, which is located in the minor premise, has been accurately identified in the world. The only faculty that the minor premise exhibits is perception. Therefore, so long as Cooper’s agent perceives properly, and if that perception does not signal to the agent that he or she is presented with a difficult case, then Cooper’s agent must simply perceive and take action. He or she cannot deliberate.

For example, as long as Mark perceives the situation presented before him as one that necessitates bravery, and he perceives nothing about the case to be difficult, then he should act in a brave fashion. Perceiving Sally in distress, and perceiving Johnny as adding to or causing that distress, Mark decides to spring into action. He pulls out his cellphone, calls the police, and describes the situation he perceives. Since the police department is located near to his present location, they quickly arrive on the scene. However, once the police arrive on the scene they perceive the situation differently than Mark had. From their closer perspective, they can see that Johnny is not adding to or causing Sally’s distress but attempting to come to her aid by administering her asthma medication. It seems as though Mark’s perception was incorrect.

Without relying on deliberation, perception appears limited in its ability to correctly determine the correct course of action. However, according to Cooper, the role of perception does not rely on deliberation within the practical syllogism. Cooper interprets deliberation as a technical process that is conducted prior to taking action, in
order to create a rule that an agent should follow when it is appropriate. This rule is exhibited by the major premise. Deliberation aids in the construction of the practical syllogism, though the practical syllogism does not require deliberation in order to be implemented.

_The End of Deliberation_

Beyond delimiting the technical aspects and the moral implications of deliberation, Cooper’s thesis removes the practical syllogism from the deliberative process. Aristotle states that deliberation seeks out the necessary means for a desired end and continues to seek out the requisite means until the agent finds the first thing that she can do in order to begin the process of bringing the desired end to fruition. Relying on his previous analysis of how the practical syllogism is constructed – that the major premise results from deliberation, the minor premise results from perception, and the conclusion is the action – Cooper reiterates his thesis that the practical syllogism is not at all involved in the deliberative process:

[The] conclusion of the process of deliberation is reached when one has something of the form of “Eating chicken is a way of achieving my end.” And since the practical syllogism, whatever its function may be, only comes in after this point is reached, it is therefore no part of the reasoning that leads to a decision [of] what to do. This decision is already completed before the syllogism can get under way.\(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\) Cooper. p. 38
Aristotle consistently compares deliberation with geometrical analysis, a similarity that Cooper uses to strengthen the distinction between moral and technical deliberation. As he sees it, Cooper finds that the goal of deliberation is to seek out a prescription, e.g., “I ought to do x, when faced with situation y.” The logic that he finds within Aristotle’s text does not support a position that allows deliberation to “take a form that remotely resembles an Aristotelian syllogism, and Aristotle never says or implies that it does.”

According to Cooper, Aristotle does not make any definitive connection between the practical syllogism and morality. What Aristotle does make clear, however, is that the practical syllogism and deliberation are both processes of determination, not of justification or explanation. Aristotle compares deliberation with geometrical analysis, and in doing so seems to be equating it with a similar type of critical determinative process performed in geometry. Cooper suggests that by doing so, Aristotle has described determination as being a type of problem solving, “a matter of figuring out what to do.” So what then, is the result of the practical syllogism? Cooper states that the practical syllogism starts when deliberation ends, that once an action-type, i.e. a rule-instance, has been decided upon, then the syllogism facilitates the agent’s perceptive

33 Cooper. p. 24.
34 Cooper. p. 6
36 Cooper ends deliberation at the action-type, while Aristotle ends it at the point of action.
abilities.\textsuperscript{36}
Fred D. Miller agrees with Cooper that the deliberative process does contribute to the construction of the major premise. Miller disagrees with Cooper by asserting that deliberation does not end until an action physically takes place. Miller finds Cooper to be ending the deliberative process prematurely, and that deliberation that occurs in conjunction with the perception that is implicit in the minor premise. Miller’s scholarship concerning Aristotelian deliberation is a continuation of the work of Henry Veatch. Miller builds upon this scholarship to provide what he refers to as the action-terminating interpretation of Aristotelian deliberation.

Miller understands Cooper to be mistaken about the role of deliberation in the *Eudaimonian Ethics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, claiming that Cooper attributes a different logical process to deliberation than what is actually described in the texts themselves. For Miller, the deliberative process does not end with the major premise. He finds support within Aristotle’s texts, which confirms that agents must be able to deliberate about their perceptions. They must be able to be certain that what is presented within the minor premise is indeed an instantiation of what is required by the major premise.

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In his analysis of deliberation Cooper adds a preceding step with its own logical structure. Cooper’s description of the process is: “A is good. B is needed in order to get A. C is needed in order to get B. So C is needed.”\textsuperscript{38} For example:

Being healthy is good.

The proper prescription medication would promote my health, when I am ill. I need to visit my doctor to get the required prescription.

So I need to go to the doctor, when I am ill.

The practical syllogism, on the other hand, has the following form: “C ought to be done. This (pointing to something in particular) is (potentially) C. So, this ought to be done.”\textsuperscript{39} For example:

I need to go to the doctor, when I am ill.

I am ill.

So, I should go to the doctor.

Cooper’s work rests of the rejection of a commonly accepted assumption in Aristotelian scholarship, according to Miller, namely that the practical syllogism is “the proper form for all deliberation.”\textsuperscript{40} Going further with this rejection, Cooper mistakenly suggests that the practical syllogism is completely absent from deliberation.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
When analyzing Aristotle's description of the process of practical reasoning, i.e. deliberation, Miller seeks to understand what the aim of the process, or the object of deliberation, is. What he interprets as Aristotle’s position on the matter is that the aim of deliberation is to take part in a specific action. Miller finds support for this within *De Motu Animalium* 7, in which Aristotle discusses practical reasoning and the practical syllogism in relation to actions:

> How is it that thought sometimes results in action or motion, and sometimes does not? What happens would seem to be more or less the same as when one thinks and deduces about immobile things. In this latter case, however, the goal is [a proposition that we] study; for when one has thought the two premises, one has thought and composed the conclusion. In the former case, by contrast, the conclusion from the two premises becomes the action.

> For example, whenever someone thinks that every man should walk, and he is himself a man, at once he walks. And if he thinks that no man should walk now, and he is himself a man, at once he stays where he is. And he does each of these things unless something prevents him [from doing it] or compels him [to do something else].(701a7-18)\(^{41}\)

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Here Miller finds support for his claim that deliberation results in taking action; he calls this the action-terminating interpretation of deliberation. This interpretation finds deliberation to end only once an agent takes part in the action that his or her deliberation finds necessary.

The Action-Terminating and Action-Type Terminating Interpretations

Veatch finds it to be unreasonable to require a moral agent to account for all the possible ways in which a situation may unfold. Therefore the agent must necessarily engage in the deliberative process until such time that he or she can take action. Miller would agree that the variety of ways in which the situation could take an unexpected turn arises from the fact that often details are missed when applying the general to the specific:

The complexities of the particular case are always such that to try to say in advance what should be done is almost certain to leave out at least some of the relevant features which one cannot possibly know about, save when one is confronted with the actual situation oneself and as it is right here and now. Even for someone else to tell you what you ought to do would be no less likely to involve overlooking at least some factors in the situation which only the agent himself could appreciate from his particular standpoint within the actual situation.43

Individuals cannot apply a general prescription of how to act, whether through their own deliberation or through the advice of another, to a particular situation without taking that particular situation into account. Thus, deliberation does not and cannot end, on this
view, until action is taken. This view does allow for agents to react in real time to any problems, or variables unaccounted for, within the moral dilemma, therefore allowing the practical syllogism to remain a dynamic process.

Miller contrasts this with the action-type terminating interpretation, which holds that deliberation ends once an agent has determined the type of action that is required:

One is understandably inclined to interpret this as the claim that a physical action such as walking or making a cloak, rather than a judgment, is the final stage of practical reasoning. But Aristotle also says, “The conclusion, the cloak [is] to be made, is an action” (701a20), which seems to leave it open that he is calling the conclusion an “action” in the sense of a prescription of an action. This seems consistent also with Aristotle’s remark that when one acts out of fear, sexual desire, and so forth, “at once, as it were, one both realizes that he ought to go and he goes, unless something prevents” (8, 702a15-17).

It is this ambiguity within Aristotle that creates a difficulty for determining just what, exactly, Aristotle found to be the rightful end to the deliberative process.

Cooper subscribes to the action-type terminating interpretation, which Miller contrasts with Aristotle’s action-terminating logic. The two views differ on when deliberation is completed. For the former it is when the agent decides on a type of

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action.\footnote{The rule-instance pattern described in chapter two of my thesis.} For the latter it is at the time of action. By defending the action-type interpretation, Cooper is mistaken not only about when deliberation comes to an end, i.e. when an agent can effectively make a decision, but he is also mistaken about the role that the practical syllogism takes in this process. According to Miller, Cooper’s inaccurate interpretation relies on his imprecise analysis of Aristotle.

Miller attributes the action-terminating interpretation to Henry Veatch, and as I have said before the action-type terminating interpretation is attributed to Cooper. The ambiguity of when Aristotle finds deliberation to end, as Miller sees it, lies in how one translates and interprets the grammar of the text:

If one construes [must enact] as transitive, with [the conclusion] as the understood grammatical object, then the conclusion of the practical syllogism can be understood as content, viz., a prescription to perform a particular action, rather than the particular action itself.\footnote{Miller. p. 504.}

Understanding the relevant action, e.g. to eat, with the corresponding conclusion, e.g. chicken, provides support for the action-type interpretation because it creates a, “prescription on which one acts,”\footnote{Ibid.} as opposed to taking immediate action.
The action-type interpretation terminates the deliberative process when the agent has arrived at a prescription for how to take action, e.g., “In situation x, I will do y.” Cooper’s interpretation is based on two main misunderstandings, as stated by Miller:

First, there is a fundamental difference between the logic of deliberation and that of the practical syllogism which Aristotle would not have overlooked; and secondly the action-terminating interpretation imputes to Aristotle a serious epistemological confusion for which there is no basis in the text.  

Cooper’s position incorporates these two misunderstandings, while Miller’s does not. Miller’s analysis of Aristotle understands the practical syllogism to be the final stage of the deliberative process, and he takes issue with Cooper on this point. The basis for Miller’s position lies within the logic inherent in both means-ends reasoning and the practical syllogism, in addition to Aristotle’s assertion that deliberation results in action.

**Miller’s Analysis of Aristotle**

Miller juxtaposes the action-terminating interpretation with Cooper’s action-type terminating interpretation. He describes both in detail, based on two possible ways of interpreting the function Aristotle assigns deliberation: as a prescription for future action or as a prescription for immediate action:

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48 Miller. p. 505.
(a) The exercise of practical rationality in the process of planning or deliberating can be completed only at the time of action; and it includes as its terminus, a practical syllogism. (The “action-terminating” interpretation)

(b) The exercise of practical rationality in the process of planning or deliberation is completed when the agent decides upon a specific type of action, a decision which may be implemented at an appropriate subsequent time; and the activity of planning does not include or require in any way a practical syllogism. (The “action-type terminating” interpretation)\(^{49}\)

(a) Is Miller’s position, and (b) is Cooper’s position.\(^{50}\) The two interpretations differ on when the process of deliberation ends. As a result, Miller claims that Cooper’s interpretation ends the deliberative process prematurely:

> Although this is an appealing construal of Aristotle’s conception of in action, it is not without opposition. John Cooper has challenged it in favor of the interpretation that deliberation may be completed with a decision on a type of action prior to the time of action. Cooper bases this interpretation on an extensive review of the texts. Nevertheless, as this essay attempts to show, the textual evidence clearly supports an

\(^{49}\) Miller. p. 504.

\(^{50}\) This is also the view of Henry Veatch.
interpretation along the line suggested by Veatch.\footnote{Miller. p. 500.}

Miller wants to begin his analysis by looking at what Aristotle finds to be the goal of the deliberative process. He believes that by understanding the limits that Aristotle sets for deliberation, an understanding of how deliberation fits into the broader scope of morality can be reached. Miller analyzes Aristotle's texts, and finds a perspicuous description of how agents deliberate and what they deliberate about, namely means to an end:

There is strong \textit{prima facie} evidence that practical rationality is confined to identifying the means to ends. For, in addition to the bald statement that we deliberate about means and not ends, Aristotle states that practical rationality makes our means right, in contrast to excellence of character or moral virtue which makes the end right.\footnote{Miller. pp. 501-502.}

With this analysis Miller is capable of showing both what, according to Aristotle, agents deliberate about, and how morality is attributed to the deliberative process. Deliberation is aimed at the means required to promote a desired end. When the desired end is a virtue, then intrinsic value is incorporated into the deliberative process. The ability to denote intrinsic value is a concern that Cooper raised in his analysis of deliberation. According to Miller, Cooper is correct that the means-end structure of deliberation on its own is amoral, and that it is in the desired end that intrinsic value is included.
Miller finds two components within Aristotle’s theory of deliberation. The first is the ability to understand the desired end and how to bring it about -- finding the means. The second is the ability to know when a situation relevant to that end is at hand. In other words, one must be capable of knowing how to bring about the desired end, and also when it is appropriate to do so. Miller states this in the following way:

Practical knowledge for Aristotle has two indispensable, interrelated components: (1) apprehension of the ultimate end of human action, and (2) practical rationality in virtue of which one knows how to pursue this end in concrete situations. As a moral epistemologist Aristotle is exceptional in the emphasis he places upon practical rationality. Even if one correctly apprehends the ultimate end, knowing how to attain it in action is no trivial matter of perfunctorily applying general precepts.53

The second component attributes moral value to the deliberative process. Moral agents who possess the right virtue, which Aristotle attributes to practical rationality[phronesis], are able to survey the situation they find themselves in and correctly judge when and where action should be taken, therefore engaging in a moral deliberative process. Deliberation that is not concerned with virtues is amoral while deliberation that is concerned with virtues can be evaluated as either morally correct or morally incorrect.

53 Miller. p. 499.
But how do we as agents deliberate in order to bring about the ends that we find desirable? Miller explains it in the following way. As a moral agent, I find some principle to be good, e.g. courage; this implies my desired end, e.g. to be courageous. According to Aristotle, then, I will deliberate in order to identify the necessary means to bring about this end, e.g. not giving up when faced with adversity. Miller himself discusses this in relation to bringing about, or maintaining, personal health. He states that Aristotle understands the deliberative process to be a type of technical analysis:

Aristotle in Book III compares the process of planning or deliberation to the process of scientific discovery, for example, the problem of geometrical construction (93, 1112b16-24). Just as problem-solving terminates in the recognition of something ultimate which forms the first step in the construction of a figure, planning terminates in the recognition of something ultimate which is the “first cause” in action. Practical rationality, the state of deliberating well, is a cognitive state which produces imperatives: “for what should (or must) be done or not be done is its end” (VI, 10, 1143a8-9).

Where Miller differs with Cooper is in their views about the point at which deliberation ends. Miller believes that there is support within Aristotle showing that deliberation continues until the point of action, and that Cooper, in allowing deliberation to end when a type of action has been decided upon, ends the process prematurely.

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54 Miller. p. 502.
Segmenting deliberation into two sections: (a) means-ends reasoning and (b) the practical syllogism is a mistake according to Miller. Analyzing the logic of both processes indicates a cooperative relationship. Miller understands the practical syllogism as the process that connects the agent to the desired end. According to Aristotle, this is the point where deliberation ends; he states that we deliberate until we come to “the first cause, the last thing to be discovered” (EN, 1112b19-20). Identifying the appropriate means is only part of the process. For Cooper to stop once the agent is capable of constructing the major premise halts deliberation prematurely. Miller criticizes Cooper’s approach by stating the following:

In the practical syllogism, when we apprehend a major premise, which we may have reached in the course of reasoning about means and ends, and we recognize an opportunity by perception for acting on it, then we conclude that an act is to be done and do it. Practical reasoning on Cooper’s interpretation is segmented into deliberation proper and the practical syllogism, each with a peculiar logic.\(^{55}\)

By splitting practical reasoning into deliberation proper and the practical syllogism, Cooper, on Miller’s analysis, has created two separate logical structures: one for the deliberative process, and another for the practical syllogism. He then wants to place them within the greater practical reasoning structure. Miller outlines their respective structures

\(^{55}\) Miller. pp. 505-506.
in the following way. First Cooper’s structure for deliberation:

A is good

B is needed in order to get A.

C is needed in order to get B.

So, C is needed.\textsuperscript{56}

Second, Cooper’s structure for the practical syllogism:

C ought to be done.

This (pointing to something in particular) is (potentially) C.

So, this ought to be done.\textsuperscript{57}

Aristotle, possibly in an attempt at universality, “defines the syllogism nontechnically so as to cover most deductive arguments.”\textsuperscript{58} Because of this indeterminacy, there is room for disagreement among philosophers. Miller suggests that making a distinction between syllogistic and nonsyllogistic logic cannot be made with certainty due to “the fact that Aristotle is strongly tempted to say that all reasoning is syllogistic in the technical sense.”\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} Miller. p. 506.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} Miller. p. 507.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
Since it removes deliberation from the influence of the practical syllogism, Miller believes Cooper’s interpretation of Aristotelian deliberation to be incapable of dealing with: (a) passages that suggest that syllogistic reasoning takes part in the deliberative process, and (b) the fact that Aristotle would have made such a distinction between means-ends reasoning and a type of syllogistic process, namely the practical syllogism. For Miller, the two failings of Cooper’s position are the result of his misguided analysis discussed previously.  

Syllogisms involving a false minor premise seem to necessitate the deliberation that Cooper’s view is incapable of accommodating: 

Against Cooper’s claim that syllogistic reasoning forms no part of deliberation, stands Aristotle’s observation that deliberation is not excellent if it involves a “false (or fallacious) syllogism”: “to hit upon what one ought to do but not upon the reason why one ought to do it – the middle term can be false” (VI, 9, 1142b21-26).  

Here Miller is calling into question Cooper’s position on the minor premise, i.e. that it relies solely on perception. Miller suggests that there may be situations where perception can be deceived, or mistaken, and relying solely on perception does not sufficiently manage a false minor premise:

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60 This is a reference to an earlier discussion in this chapter.

61 Miller. p. 507
The mention of the middle term [] suggests a technical syllogism.

Aristotle has in mind the sort of case in which one concludes that this is to be eaten because this is birdmeat and birdmeat is to be eaten – but what is on one’s plate is a soybean substitute.\(^{62}\)

A syllogism with a false minor premise is a false syllogism. Cooper has separated deliberation and the practical syllogism because he does not want to allow for deliberation to occur within the practical syllogism. However, by removing deliberation from the practical syllogism he has also removed the agent’s ability to properly determine the validity of the minor premise. Therefore, the agent on Cooper’s view cannot possibly account for a false minor premise relying on perception without deliberation. This absence of deliberation will allow for an agent to mistake soybean substitute for chicken. Without the possibility for deliberating on the truth of the minor premise present within the minor premise, the agent cannot hope to act virtuously. Cooper would have the agent rely solely on perception. Miller finds this to be a grave error, finding Cooper’s agents incapable of properly determining whether or not what is presented before them is in fact the middle term they require, e.g. chicken.

With regard to dietary habits, a false minor premise might simply be an inconvenience. However, when a virtue is at stake a false minor premise would prohibit an agent from achieving or implementing the desired virtue. For example, Mark operating under Cooper’s interpretation could mistakenly conclude that the situation he is

\(^{62}\) Ibid.
in is one that actually necessitates bravery. Under Cooper’s interpretation, Mark is it at the mercy of perceiving without deliberating and has a greater chance of being unknowingly deceived by a false minor premise.

The Necessary Insight

In the final piece of his argument against Cooper, Miller discusses insight and its role in the deliberative process, finding it to exhibit “an indispensable mental capacity in the sphere of purposeful action as well as theoretical wisdom.” Miller moves on to distinguish the different roles insight performs in: (a) speculative/theoretical pursuits and (b) thought in action. Insight is an integral part of both the major and minor premises:

Whereas theoretical insight secures the causal principles which form the major premises of scientific explanation, practical insight is supposed to supply the minor premises of practical syllogisms (VI, 11, 1142b35-1143b5). Miller finds that the role of insight in practical applications is to connect the deliberative process with an action so as to “[bring] deliberation to completion through the identification of suitable means, within the observable field of action, for the realization of the agent’s ends.” Miller identifies this as the deliberation-completing interpretation.

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63 Miller. p. 511.
64 Ibid.
66 Miller. p. 512
The interpretation he ascribes to Cooper is identified as the deliberation-implementing interpretation which finds that “insight, in its practical exercise, merely connects completed deliberation to action, through the perception of a concrete instance of a specific type arrived at independently by deliberation.”

These interpretations of the role of insight directly correlate to the action-terminating and action-type terminating interpretations which signify when deliberation terminates. Miller’s position involves both the action-terminating and deliberation-completing interpretations. The action-type terminating and the deliberation-implementing interpretations are both implied by Cooper’s position. If Cooper’s analysis that deliberation is completed once an action-type has been determined to be correct, then it would follow that the role of practical insight would be limited to implementing the predetermined action-type via the agent’s perception of his or her present moral dilemma. However, if Miller’s analysis is correct that deliberation continues until the point of action, then it would follow that the role of practical insight should be understood as providing the agent with the catalyst to act. That is to say, practical insight is included in the deliberative process in that it utilizes the agent’s perception of his or her present moral dilemma, relies on the previous deliberation exemplified by the major premise, and verifies that the agent should take action, which is exemplified by the minor premise.

Miller finds support for his analysis within Aristotle:

67 **Ibid.**
Theoretical insight is a capacity to grasp universal principles as a result of repeated sense experiences. For insight is an epistemic capacity acquired through the process of induction (VI, 3, 1139b28-29 and 6, 1141a7-8; cf. Post. An. I, 18, 81b2; 11, 19, 100b3-5, 12); and induction presupposes experience, which consists of sense-perceptions retained in the form of memories.68

Relying on his analysis of Aristotle’s discussion of theoretical insight, Miller finds similarities in Aristotle’s discussion of practical insight within the Ethics:

For he speaks of insight as the perception of particulars (VI, 11, 1143b5). But the precise relationship between practical insight and sense-perception is quite subtle. This passage and others indicate that practical insight involves sense-perception, but as will be seen, insight also presupposes the possession of accumulated experience. For in two passages Aristotle observes that immature and inexperienced persons lack practical insight or rationality. In the first passage (VI, 13, 1144b1-12) he is arguing that one cannot be morally virtuous unless one has insight. Natural virtue is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for virtue in the full sense.69

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68 Miller. p. 514.

69 Miller. p. 515.
Perception without insight is not enough for an agent to be considered virtuous, simply because an agent must also understand why he or she is performing a particular action and not merely acting on instructions as a child or an immature individual would.

Miller finds that Cooper’s interpretations (the action-type and deliberation-implementing) can account for the technical processes involved in decision-making, but they cannot account for an agent acting in accordance with virtue, due to their being unable to properly account for an agent’s insight. Cooper’s analysis is too heavily reliant on the universal aspects of the deliberative process, but not concerned enough with the particular aspects. Cooper’s agent cannot adequately examine the particulars involved in order to correctly implement his or her universal prescription. The agent cannot engage in any further deliberation beyond determining an action-type. The only faculty left to the agent is their ability to perceive, without deliberating any further, that a universal action-type can and should be implemented in a particular situation via his or her deliberation-implementing insight. This is yet another place where Miller finds that Cooper’s analysis cannot accommodate critical, deliberative, insight concerning either the validity of the particular situation in question or the necessity for taking action.
IV

An Overview of My Thesis

In order to correctly identify what is and what is not part of the deliberative process, it is vital to understand the object of deliberation for the virtuous agent. The objective of the virtuous agent is to exhibit virtue in every moral dilemma. When faced with a situation requiring bravery the virtuous agent desires to act in a brave fashion, takes account of his or her personal state, examines the context of the dilemma presented, deliberates in order to determine what a brave action would entail, decides on the most effective course of action based on that deliberation, and then takes action. Each practical syllogism is merely the expression of the agent’s process to act in accordance with virtue. Therefore, all other actions are means to that end. Moreover, we must also correctly understand how Aristotle thinks that moral agents are motivated.

It is my contention that Aristotle has not created a deontological or consequentialist system with his ethics, but rather one that focuses on taking direct action, engaging in a process of trial and error, and dynamically adapting to each specific situation. The virtues are states, and they are about actions. Agents are evaluated on individual ability to exemplify virtues. In order to achieve the virtues agents must deliberate on the appropriate means. Agents are not evaluated on the basis of obligations or consequences, but rather their actions. Therefore, Aristotle’s ethical system is dynamic and necessarily allows for agents to act and react, regardless of any previous deliberation that they have completed prior to taking action within a moral dilemma they may find themselves faced with.
Against Cooper

I disagree with Cooper’s assessment and his thesis concerning deliberation as it is described within the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The practical syllogism does exhibit deliberation and is thus a part of the deliberative process. Removing the practical syllogism from the deliberative process as Cooper does gives the practical syllogism a level of fallibility that renders agents incapable of determining the validity of the minor premise, due to their inability to identify a false minor premise. While it may be redundant at times to include the minor premise in the deliberative process, removing it entirely in an attempt at expediency removes vital processes at the disposal of Aristotle’s agents: trial and error (a component of habituation) and verification. Thus, the deliberative process would not be allowed to continue until it has reached its objective: making a decision and taking action.

As Cooper understands Aristotle, deliberation is completely separate from the practical syllogism except for the construction of the major premise, insofar as the agent deliberates in order to create the major premise prior to constructing the practical syllogism. Moreover, Cooper’s thesis has two main components: (a) that the practical syllogism is constructed *ex post facto*, and (b) that deliberation must exhibit inherent value and follow the rule-instance rather than the means-ends pattern. I suggest that this is evidence that Cooper is interpreting Aristotle’s system as both deontic and consequentialist: deontic inasmuch as he places importance on deliberating in accordance with the rule-instance pattern, and consequentialist inasmuch as agents are to construct their rules based on instances where their deliberation has yielded success.
Moreover, because Cooper would have agents construct the practical syllogism after having performed a successful instantiation of the syllogism, Cooper is far too reliant on consequences and therefore Cooper’s practical syllogism is not Aristotelian.

Under Cooper’s model, when an agent is unsuccessful, he or she is limited when attempting to determine the reason for failure. Since deliberation ends prior to the formulation of the minor premise, its validity cannot be verified. Cooper cannot account for any faculty except for perception occurring within the minor premise. Therefore, Cooper’s analysis leaves agents lacking when they are attempting to verify those perceptions. Is the agent correct in assuming a particular instance is appropriate for exhibiting generosity, bravery, or truthfulness? For Aristotle, agents are permitted to deliberate on these matters and act accordingly. For Cooper, agents are not. Agents operating under Cooper’s model are expected to simply know.

Under Cooper's model, agents only deliberate once, namely when constructing the major premise or rule. From that point forward, agents need only to exact that rule for each relevant instance. However, even if the agent only deliberates once in order to create the practical syllogism, the practical syllogism still exhibits that deliberative process. The practical syllogism can serve as instruction on how to express the relevant virtue while at the same time exhibiting deliberation.

Moreover, by claiming that the minor premise only utilizes the faculties of perception, Cooper has misunderstood the role that the minor premise fulfills. It is not as if agents perceive objects passively, as they would if they were admiring the aesthetic qualities of that object. Rather, within ethics, and the practical syllogism specifically,
agents are engaged in active perception. For example, consider the following syllogism:

In order to have a healthy diet I will only eat light meats, and chicken is a light meat.

This [pointing at relevant animal] is a chicken.

Therefore, I choose to eat this.

In this case, the agent is not merely perceiving the chicken as a chicken but rather is attempting to determine what, in fact, can fulfill the major premise so as to have something healthy to eat. Since dietary habits are not necessarily ethical concerns, we must consider the mistakes that would occur using Cooper’s model when engaged in more grave ethical deliberations. Consider the following practical syllogism:

In order to achieve bravery, I will act in a brave fashion when the situation necessitates it.

This [pointing at the relevant situation] is a situation that necessitates bravery.

Therefore, I will act in a brave fashion.

Without being able to deliberate about whether this situation is in fact one that necessitates bravery, the agent could be mistaken. Take Mark’s dilemma for example. In order to correctly determine (a) if his dilemma is one that necessitates bravery and (b) how to act brave in a virtuous manner Mark must not only perceive, but also deliberate. Otherwise, he could mistake a situation that does not necessitate bravery for a situation that does necessitate bravery due to improperly perceiving it as such.
Thus, my analysis finds that deliberation accompanies the perception involved in the minor premise. I suggest that if Cooper is correct that the minor premise is merely a representation of perception and there is no deliberation present, the minor premise might look something like “Chicken!” However, being that the minor premise is meant to fulfill a criterion set forth by the major premise, it is not merely a product of perception, but rather it is deliberative, and it is evidence that deliberation extends beyond the major premise.

Support From Aristotle

Aristotle found that some situations require more deliberation than others. Specifically, situations where the outcome is less certain require more deliberation than those where the outcome is more certain; however, deliberation occurs either way regardless to what extent. Aristotle writes that we are to deliberate about the means to achieve the required ends, i.e. to understand and identify the relevant virtue, although we are to allow ourselves the flexibility of altering what that may entail. Therefore, if the practical syllogism is the logical representation of how we are to implement our deliberative process, it too is necessarily subject to alteration in order to properly adapt to different situations. Moreover, Aristotle states that we deliberate until the point of taking action, and therefore all but the conclusion of the practical syllogism has the capability of being deliberated about, including the minor premise. By placing the minor premise outside the scope of deliberation, Cooper has not remained true to the deliberative

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70 A reference to chapter one of my thesis.
process that Aristotle describes. While Cooper’s alteration may exhibit deliberation, it is not Aristotelian with regards to its scope.

Virtuous actions cannot have been performed by accident, or without purpose. While the action itself may be an instance of a virtue, acting without purpose is not an indication of individual morality. Aristotle states that for an action to be virtuous agents must be in the right state, decide to act for themselves, decide on the action for itself, and finally act from a firm and unchanging state. In other words, in addition to being in the right state, agents must necessarily exhibit purpose to act (meaning that they decided for themselves, and decided on the action for itself). The ability to demonstrate purpose to act, or that someone has deliberated about the means to a desired end, can be attributed to practical reasoning, i.e. the practical syllogism. If an agent is presented with a moral dilemma, wishes to bring about an end, and decides, after deliberating about the applicable means, which action would promote the end, then that agent has undergone Aristotelian deliberation. Cooper’s process conflates decision with deliberation.

*Paula Gottlieb’s Reflective Deliberation*

Paula Gottlieb discusses the Aristotelian practical syllogism in her article, “The Practical Syllogism”. Gottlieb agrees with Cooper’s assessment of the practical syllogism insofar as he states that that the major premise exhibits deliberation and the minor premise exhibits perception. However, she does allow for agents to go through a deliberative process in order to determine if the minor premise, and therefore also the

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conclusion of the practical syllogism in question, is applicable to their circumstances. It is on this point that I find room for reconciliation with Miller’s analysis of the practical syllogism. This would allow deliberation to continue until the time of the action described in the conclusion of the practical syllogism, and would properly account for Aristotle’s account of deliberation. Gottlieb begins her analysis by looking to phronesis (practical wisdom), which Aristotle says is necessary in order for an agent to become virtuous.

Gottlieb agrees that the debate that occurs between Cooper and Miller is warranted, and that the role of the practical syllogism is not explicitly clear in Aristotle’s discussion. The practical syllogism can assume the role that Cooper assigns it, i.e. serving to justify actions after the fact, or it can represent the rational process that occurs within moral agents as they are deliberating. Gottlieb states that the major premise is indeed the product of deliberation, but that before an agent can carry out the action mandated by the conclusion of the syllogism, he or she must first determine if that minor premise, and therefore the conclusion, is applicable.

Gottlieb’s contribution shows that even under Cooper’s analysis of the practical syllogism, deliberation occurs within the often-omitted reflective portion of the minor premise. Although the minor premise can be truncated and constructed without the reflective portion out of an attempt to avoid redundancy, an agent’s ability to identify his or her situation within a practical syllogism is a vital component to any deliberative

\[72\text{Ibid.}\]
process. Aristotle found that agents must be able to identify their own states in order to correctly achieve a virtue; for example, I should be well aware of where I am with respect to bravery. Am I brave? Am I cowardly? Am I rash? My answers to these questions do two things: (a) identify my state, and (b) identify how I am to achieve the virtue, i.e. how much – if at all – and which extreme I need to “lean” towards so as to not overshoot or undershoot the mean. This certainly would be an influential, essential, and necessary component to the deliberative process that any agent would experience each time they are presented with a moral dilemma, even if the state of that particular agent exhibits the mean.

However, it is not enough for just anyone to perform an action and justify it with a practical syllogism in order for that action to be considered moral. In fact, a seemingly benign practical syllogism can be used incorrectly, as occurs when it is used by either the akratic or the enkratic individual in an attempt to justify immoral behavior. The agent must be capable of determining if both the minor premise and the conclusion are relevant to her, i.e. if she has the virtue that is required of the action, or even if she is the type of individual to whom a particular syllogism would apply. If she does not posses the relevant virtue, then the discussion of whether she is deliberating is moot – she is not acting virtuously. If the syllogism does not apply to her as an individual, then deliberation about that particular syllogism would also be irrelevant.

Since Gottlieb’s analysis does show that the agent must decide if the minor premise and conclusion of the practical syllogism are applicable to her circumstances and to her as an agent, then there is evidence of deliberation occurring within the practical
syllogism itself. Therefore, Gottlieb’s thesis lends support to Miller’s claim that the result of the practical syllogism is to take action, and that deliberation does not end until action takes place.

Cooper, Gottlieb, and Miller

Aristotle understands all deliberation to be inquiry, although not all inquiry is deliberation. Deliberation requires us to seek out the method for bringing about the end. When we are deliberating, our inquiry into the means required to bring about the desired end will create a type of causal chain. For example, to steer the ship I should adjust its sails, to adjust the sails I need to tighten/loosen the appropriate lines; I should adjust this line before that line, and this line before any other. The line that I should adjust before any other is the last thing found in my inquiry, and therefore is the first thing that I should do.

Aristotle also describes where deliberation does not apply. Although we do deliberate about what can result from our agency, “we do not deliberate about all human affairs” (NE, 1112a28-29). We only deliberate about the actions that our collective group can influence and that directly impact us. Also, “There is no deliberation about sciences that are exact and self-sufficient” (NE, 1112b-2). The example Aristotle uses is the process of spelling. There is an exact sound, or sounds, attributed to each of the letters and someone possessing that knowledge of the alphabet is capable of spelling out words without deliberating. More importantly, there is only one way of correctly spelling each word.
Miller finds the practical syllogism to be part of the deliberative process and that deliberation does not end until action occurs. Gottlieb finds the conclusion of the practical syllogism to be “action itself.” She understands the major premise to be relating to a universal, e.g. “light” foods (or more specifically chicken), the minor premise to be relating to a particular, e.g. this chicken, and the conclusion to be permission for the person of practical reason to take action, e.g. I should eat this chicken. Gottlieb confirms what Cooper has already claimed by writing:

[The] universal premise represents the result of deliberation … the minor premise is given by perception … [and] what licenses the conclusion is the fact that the agent is the sort of person she is. If she is not that sort of person, then the universal and second part of the minor premise will have no effect on her whatsoever.

The form of the practical syllogism that Gottlieb relies on is:

Universal Premise: Healthy human beings ought to eat light foods.

Minor Premise: I am a healthy human being. This is chicken.

Conclusion: I should eat this now.

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73 Gottlieb. p. 224.


75 Ibid.
The first part of the minor premise, Gottlieb writes, is often left off as a result of the assumption that anyone who would be constructing or referencing a practical syllogism is a human being. Her rationale for this is based on the fact that “Aristotle says that the agent does not dwell on the part of the premise which says "I am a human being."”\cite{gottlieb1}

Interpreting the practical syllogism in this fashion can support Cooper’s claim that perception is all that is required for the practical syllogism, due to the often-used truncated minor premise. Without the initial, reflective portion Cooper has room to argue for his narrowly-scoped deliberative process.

However, what of Gottlieb’s caveat that “If she is not that sort of person, then the universal and second part of the minor premise will have no effect on her whatsoever”\cite{gottlieb2}? It may be as trivial as being a specific type of individual, however there are syllogisms that would necessitate a specific type of individual in order to be applicable. Thus, the reflective portion of the minor premise, e.g. I am a generous person, would be the result of a necessary deliberative or reflective process that the agent would undergo in order to identify that particular syllogism as being applicable and relevant to her or his situation and her or his person. This seems to involve deliberation, inasmuch as I must deliberate about whether I am indeed the sort of person to whom the minor premise does apply. Moreover, Gottlieb herself finds the conclusion of the practical syllogism to be an instance of taking action. Therefore, even if one part of the deliberative process grants

\begin{itemize}
  \item \cite{gottlieb1} Gottlieb. p. 227.
  \item \cite{gottlieb2} Gottlieb. p. 226.
\end{itemize}
me the major premise, it seems that deliberation would necessarily continue “Until we come to the first cause, the last thing to be discovered” (NE, 1112b19-20). In this case, the last thing for us to discover as agents is whether or not the minor premise is applicable to us.

Unfortunately, by not permitting the deliberative process to continue throughout the entirety of the practical syllogism, the last thing found under Cooper’s model is the major premise. This has negative effects on the minor premise, even for Cooper’s intended use. Narrowly defined as Cooper has it, the minor premise does involve perception, and the faculty of perception does seem to imply “finding” something in the sense that our faculty of perception entails locating other individuals, animals, or objects. Moreover, Aristotle describes deliberation as a process which continues until the agent locates the last thing that is needed, which is the first action taken, in order to bring about his or her desired conclusion. However, stopping deliberation where he does, Cooper does not allow his agents to "find" anything, relegating them to the role of bystanders

*Deliberation Occurs, Until Action is Performed*

Deliberation, as described by Aristotle, is a slow, rational, analytic process that informs our decisions. Good deliberation does this well, and bad deliberation does this poorly. Deliberation done well implies that the agent is capable of identifying the means that promotes the desired end in the most direct and effective way. Good deliberation, as understood by Aristotle, “is correctness that accords with what is beneficial, about the right thing, in the right way, and at the right time”(EN, 1142b28). Agents must be well aware of the interrelated nature of all the necessary steps towards the desired end, analyze
and comprehend them all, and identify how the end can be connected back to their agency, in other words, what they can do to begin the process. With this information agents understand how they are connected to the desired end and are accountable to that end. However, it is the end that is promoted by the means, which the agent is deliberating about, that determines whether she or he is making a moral judgment. Aristotle states that those who are acting in order to satisfy an appetitive desire are deliberating well, though they should not be looking to satisfy, but rather to control, appetitive desire.78

Aristotle states that, “we lay down the end, and then examine the ways and means to achieve it” (NE, 1112b16-17). The major premise is not the end of our deliberation, because it has not brought us to our first cause. It merely describes one of the means required for our desired end. Our end (according to Gottlieb’s example) is to be a healthy human being. In order to do that, we have deliberated and concluded that eating light meats would promote our health, chicken is light meat, and that this is indeed chicken and we as healthy human beings should eat it. Once we have found our chicken we must be sure that it is in fact a chicken, and then must deliberate about whether we are the type of person whose health would be positively affected were we to eat this chicken. Only then would we have reached the first cause, the cause closest to us, and we could then take action. Therefore, deliberation would not stop with our composition of the major premise, but when we take action, i.e. at the conclusion of the practical syllogism.

78 Irwin. See notes on Book VI, Chapter 9 § 2 p. 248
Refering back to my example with Mark, Sally, and Johnny, the necessity for deliberation to continue until the conclusion of the practical syllogism is once again made clear. Mark needs to be able to perceive the situation presented before him, refer back to the major premise to determine if his situation is relevant, and finally he must determine the correct course of action in order to correctly implement his major premise in his current situation in order to properly exhibit the virtue. Therefore, after perceiving Sally lying on the ground, and Johnny kneeling above her, Mark must determine if this situation requires bravery, determine how bravery should be implemented, and then take action.

Cooper found the only aspect of the practical syllogism that exhibited deliberation to be the construction of the major premise. The remainder of the syllogism, in his opinion, required only perception. Miller disagreed with Cooper stating that deliberation, as Aristotle understood it, continued until an agent came to the first thing he or she could bring about in the related causal chain of events and was thus in a position to perform an action. Gottlieb’s thesis shows how to interpret the practical syllogism as exhibiting deliberation until the carrying out of the conclusion, therefore, supporting my thesis that the practical syllogism does exhibit deliberation throughout its entirety. Merely because there are elements of perception, the act of deliberation is not diminished. Creating the major premise does not exhibit the first cause that Aristotle requires before taking action, which involves realizing when and to whom the syllogism is applicable via phronesis. This realization is “the last thing to be discovered” (NE, 1112b20). Therefore that is our first cause, and when we have discovered it, we as agents can take action. Deliberation
will continue up until that point.

It is as though Cooper wants to create a morality codex to which each of us may add a new rule-instance when and where we find it necessary, but that we are not to stray from the codex if whatever dilemma we may find ourselves presented with has already been previously addressed. At first glance this might seem to resemble the type of habituation that Aristotle champions, however Cooper’s codex creates a far too rigid and suspiciously deontic morality. Aristotle’s ethics does not ask for agents to blindly adhere to all of the rules. Agents should have the capability to adjust to a living situation fraught with ethical intricacies that could never fully be accounted for by simply following the rules. Aristotle was not content to take only the rules, or the motivations of the agent, or the consequences of an action into account when he crafted his ethics – he took all three. Aristotle might consult Cooper’s codex, although he could just as likely use it for a doorstop if the situation called for it. Aristotle only asks that his agents keep the virtues in mind, take care when making choices, and not be afraid to have to do things over again even if they got things right the first time. Aristotle wants agents, not automatons.79

Cooper wants the means to provide intrinsic/moral value, but in my opinion he has lost sight and forgets that it is the ends or actions that account for intrinsic/moral worth. Aristotle clearly wrote that agents deliberate about means and not about the ends. Agents wish for ends and decide to achieve them, but that process is not the same as

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79 This is a reference to chapter two of my thesis.
The action-terminating interpretation may allow for instances-where-little-deliberation-is-required to be lumped in with instances-where-much-deliberation-is-required, however it does not follow that little deliberation is the same as no deliberation.81

The false minor premise dilemma raised by Miller is problematic for Cooper’s position due to the fact that Cooper does not allow for perception and deliberation to coexist. As a result his moral agents could be mistaken about their perception at any given time though they would be unable to (a) know that they are mistaken when taking action, or (b) deliberate if they realize they are in error.82

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80 This is a reference to chapter three of my thesis.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.
References
References


