

Right Reason in Plato and Aristotle: On the Meaning of *Logos*

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ABSTRACT:

The notion of “right *logos*” is central to Aristotle’s ethics: virtue is a matter of acting and feeling as the right *logos* commands, for this *logos* determines the intermediate; Aristotle even says that *phronêsis* is the right *logos*. The meaning of *logos* in these contexts was once hotly contested, but the word is now usually translated as ‘Reason’ without argument. Drawing on evidence from Plato’s *Laws* and earlier dialogues, as well as on Aristotle’s discussions of *logos* in connection with two states that resemble *phronêsis*, namely craft (*technê*) and science (*epistêmê*), I argue against the standard translation and show that there is a strong argument for taking *logos* to have the reference it has both in Plato and in Aristotle when used to denote what transforms an inferior epistemic state into a superior one: explanatory account. Thus Aristotelian *phronêsis* is a matter not only of determining which actions are right but also of grasping explanatory accounts of why one’s actions are right. Moreover, given the connections between right *logos* and the *logos* that the superior part of the human soul possesses and the inferior lacks, there is a case to be made that Aristotelian rationality is a matter of being able to grasp accounts in general.

KEYWORDS:

Aristotle, Plato, *logos*, Reason, virtue, explanation.

I. The *orthos logos*

[That one should] act according to the right *logos* is a commonplace, and should be assumed. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1 1103b31-2)

λόγος is an impossible word to translate in Aristotle. (Joachim, *Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics*, 51)

Something Aristotle calls *logos* is central to his ethics. Virtue is a matter of acting and feeling as the *logos* commands, or more particularly as the right (*orthos*) *logos* commands, for the *logos* determines the intermediate in passions and actions; indeed virtue is itself a state determined by this *logos*.¹ Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is dedicated to discovering what this right *logos* is; Aristotle winds up saying that it is none other than *phronêsis* (practical wisdom), the intellectual excellence necessary for character-virtue.²

It should thus be clear that if we want to understand Aristotle's conception of human virtue – and in particular of its intellectual component – we need to determine what *logos* means in these contexts. But this turns out to be no easy task.

Logos is a word of notoriously many meanings. Its entry in LSJ has ten major headings and more than sixty translations, among them word, speech, computation, reckoning, account, relation, correspondence, proportion, ratio, explanation, statement of a theory, argument, proposition, law, rule of conduct, thesis, hypothesis, provisional ground, reason, formula, thinking, reasoning, and report. Aristotle is himself a source for many of these, for he clearly uses the word in many different senses: to take but a very few examples, as form in *Metaphysics* VII, as speech in *Rhetoric* I.2, and as proportion in *de Anima* III.2. Not surprisingly, then, *orthos logos* has received a wide variety of translations: right command, form, formula, plan, prescription, principle, proportion, proposition, ratio, reason, rule, standard, and law.³ In principle, any of

¹ *EN* II.1, III.7 1115b12, 20; III.8 1117a8-9, III.12, VI.1 1138b18-25; *EN* II.6 1107a1-2.

² *EN* VI.13 1144b27-8

³ For 'reason' see among many others Greenwood (1909), Woods (1982); Irwin (1985), Crisp (2000), Pakaluk (2005), Taylor (2006), and Brown (2009); for 'rule' or 'principle' see Burnet (1900), Ross (1925), Joachim (1951), and Gauthier and Jolif (1958-9) (*regle*); Joachim

these is admissible; how can we find a non-arbitrary way to determine which one Aristotle had in mind?

A common strategy seems to be to look at the other things Aristotle says in the *Ethics* about virtue and *phronêsis*, and use these to deduce what *logos* ought to mean in ethical contexts: hence, for example, those who take him to hold that ethics involves general principles often adopt the translation ‘rule’ or ‘principle,’ while those who think him more of a particularist point out that a *logos* can be a particular proposition, and opt for that.⁴ But this makes one’s interpretation of a central element in Aristotle’s ethics dependent on one’s interpretation of the whole; surely it would be better if possible to go the other way around. Other scholars fix on one particular use of *logos* outside of the *Ethics* as providing the relevant parallel.⁵ This seems a promising strategy, but given the bewildering array of different uses of *logos* in different contexts, how can the selection of any one particular use as paradigmatic fail to be *ad hoc*?

If we confine our attention to recent translations and discussions of Aristotle’s *Ethics*, however, we find little discussion of the issue of how to translate *logos*, and in its place a broad consensus

sometimes also translates ‘proportion’ or ‘formula’; Burnet sometimes uses ‘formal cause’; Gauthier and Jolif also propose ‘command’ (*commandement*); Ross, who has a helpful discussion of the matter (comment *ad EN* I.3 1095a10), also occasionally uses ‘rational principle,’ ‘argument,’ and others. Grant (1866) uses ‘law,’ ‘standard’ and ‘ratio or proportion;’ Stewart (1892) mostly concurs, once adding ‘chain of reasoning.’ Stocks (1914) proposes ‘plan’ or ‘form;’ Rowe uses ‘prescription’ or ‘rational prescription’ (Broadie and Rowe 2002); Gomez-Lobo (1995) argues for ‘proposition’. Nor is this list exhaustive!

⁴ For the former view see for example Joachim, for the latter see Gomez-Lobo, who argues that the right *logos* is “a particular practical proposition which identifies the intermediate to be chosen in the given circumstances” (1995, 15).

⁵ Burnet (1914) quotes *Met.* 1070a30, “the medical craft is the *logos* of health,” to yield ‘form’; Stocks (1914) relies on *PA* 639b11-19, which seems to identify *logos* with the final cause, to defend his preferred translation, ‘plan’; Crombie (1962) turns to an instance of the phrase ‘right *logos*’ naturally translated as ‘the right account’ in Plato’s *Phaedo* (73a9-10). Similarly, Gomez-Lobo relies on *Apology* 34b, where ‘right *logos*’ must mean something like “the correct justification,” to argue that the right *logos* is a particular proposition rather than general rule (1995, 20). In fact I think Gomez-Lobo and Crombie get it right, but their arguments are too thin: why should these particular instances of *logos* be the ones to trust?

around one particular translation: ‘Reason.’⁶ The right *logos* is right Reason, and the virtuous person acts as Reason commands.⁷

A century ago this translation was both rare and highly contested: Cook Wilson argued for it at length against the then-prevalent ‘rule,’ and was promptly met with a barrage of protests.⁸ Now, however, it seems to have become the default. No particular justification is offered for the translation. Nor, notably, are explanations given as to what it means. The assumption seems to be that Aristotle means by *logos* something more or less like what we find under the name of Reason or rationality in Descartes, Hume, Kant or Davidson. *Logos* is a faculty or species of cognition. Right *logos* is a good rational faculty or good reasoning, and acting in accordance with right *logos*, or acting as *logos* directs, means acting as directed by one’s reasoning when that is working excellently.

This translation surely gets something right: if Aristotle says that the right *logos* is *phronêsis*, the excellent state of practical intellect, *logos* must have something to do with intellect or reasoning. Moreover, the word *logos* eventually begat, via the Latin *ratio*, our ‘Reason’. Should we thus be satisfied? I want to show that we should not. First, there are no linguistic or grammatical grounds for holding that this is the best translation; second, there are no textual grounds in

⁶ Modern translators do not use the capital R; I will do so, following Cook Wilson (1913) and other earlier translators, to distinguish the intended sense of the word – roughly, the power of reasoning, or its exercise – from others, e.g., explanation or rationale.

⁷ See the translations cited in note 3; Brown (2009) even revises Ross’ 1925 translation to replace ‘rule’ etc. with ‘reason,’ without argument. For recent explicit defenses of ‘Reason’ see Russell 2009, 19, and Pakaluk 2005, 214-15. Important exceptions are Rowe (Broadie and Rowe 2002) and Reeve (2013). Rowe for the most part uses ‘prescription’ or ‘rational prescription;’ Reeve uses ‘reason’ but means by it “not a faculty of reason but the sort of reason that... can be expressed in a proposition” (2013, 102); both of these come close to what I will argue is the right interpretation.

⁸ Cook Wilson (1913), attacked by Burnet (1914), Lord (1914), Stocks (1914), and later writers, including prominently Gauthier and Jolif (1958-9).

Aristotle's corpus nor in his predecessors for assuming that it is; third, and most importantly, there are philosophical grounds for hoping that it is not.

First the grammatical point: Cook Wilson thought he had arguments to show that *logos* must be translated 'Reason' in certain passages of the *Ethics*, and that in all passages it could; Burnet, Lord, Stocks, and later Gauthier and Jolif offered copious and persuasive arguments that neither claim was true. I will not repeat their arguments in detail here; suffice it to say that on grammatical grounds the standard translation has been shown at best optional.⁹

Why then has it become both so prevalent and so unquestioned? I suspect the implicit assumption behind its adoption is simply that Aristotle, following his predecessors, generally uses *logos* this way. But is this true? It turns out that the evidence is much less conclusive than one might suppose.

⁹ The passages Cook Wilson identified as requiring the translation 'Reason' are (a) those in which the right *logos* is identified as *phronêsis*, or more generally as a virtue (*EN* II.2 1103b31 and VI.13 1144b26), and (b) the many passages in which *logos* says or commands something (e.g. VI.1 1138b19); he goes on to argue that it is natural to read Reason in many other contexts as well. An alternative interpretation of the (b) passages is readily available if we take *logos* to be any verbal speech, argument, account, prescription, rule, or command (see Burnet 1914). As to the (a) passages, Lord (1914) shows nicely that the first, which mentions "the right *logos* and the other virtues," can be dismissed on the grounds that in Greek "*x* and the other *Fs*" often does not entail that *x* is an *F*. The passage from *EN* VI.13 which identifies *phronêsis* with the right *logos* is more complex, and I discuss it in detail in section VIII; in any case, I cannot see how it supports Cook Wilson's case, for as one contemporary critic put it in defending his own preferred translation, "Reason is not a virtue any more than the right rule is" (Lord 1914, 1-2). As to Cook Wilson's arguments in favor of 'Reason' in other passages, Burnet and Lord are joined by Stocks (1914), and later Gauthier and Jolif (1958-9, 147-8) in launching detailed and persuasive arguments that their own preferred translations will do at least as well; see also Gomez-Lobo 1995, 17. One of the most impressive is Stocks' demonstration that in the famous phrase "the intermediate-state is determined by *logos* (*hôrismenê logôî*)" (*EN* 1107a1), *logos*, being used in the dative with *horizein*, must be the instrument rather than the subject of the verb (he offers many supporting quotations from Aristotle, including *EN* 1177a10 and 1170a16).

Logos enters the Greek language as the verbal noun from *legein*: to say, speak, or tell. Insofar as it has a literal or original meaning, then, that is *thing said*.¹⁰ It is clearly with this verbal sense that the word plays its role in the works of Homer and Hesiod: a *logos* is a speech, story, account, or argument. These writers do, along with their contemporaries, call non-humans *logos*-lacking, *alogos*, but mean by this simply that they are without speech – dumb beasts.¹¹

Parmenides is often thought to introduce the use of *logos* to mean Reason, in fragment B7: “judge by *logos* (*krinai logôî*).” But the word appears in only two other places in the extant fragments, clearly with the literal meaning of ‘speech,’ ‘account,’ or ‘argument,’¹² and it clearly *can* mean the same here; the conservative conclusion is thus that it does. Heraclitus clearly uses *logos* in this same way in some fragments, and many have argued that all his uses of *logos* should be translated as ‘account’; there is no consensus at all that it ever means Reason.¹³

As to Plato, when he wants to identify the kind of cognition distinctive to humans he uses not *logos* but a number of other words: *noêsis*, *dianoia*, and *logismos*; he calls the superior part of the human soul the *logistikon*, that which is capable of *logismos*, calculation. He does, as we will see in some detail below, use *logos* in connection with virtue in ways that closely anticipate Aristotle, and translators usually translate these instances as ‘Reason.’ As we will also see, however, this translation is an uncomfortable one at best. First, in these contexts Plato often uses *logos* not only

¹⁰ For a good historical account see Dilcher 1995. *Legein* can also mean *to reckon*, and arguably *logos* in its early uses is sometimes better translated as ‘reckoning,’ or ‘accounting,’ but even if this is correct it this sense was probably not sharply distinguished from the verbal one. A reckoning usually takes verbal form, and to say something significant about something is often a matter of taking its measure: note that our English ‘account’ can be heard as combining both senses.

¹¹ For an overview of Homer’s and Hesiod’s uses of *logos* and the word’s subsequent development see Dilcher 1995, and Heath 2005, drawing on Dierauer 1977.

¹² *en tôi soi pauô piston logon* (B8 50); *logoisin peisan* (B1 36-7).

¹³ See e.g. Burnet 1892 and von Fritz 1945; others favor the verbal interpretation in some fragments and ‘ratio’ or ‘proportion’ in others, or sometimes ‘principle’ or ‘cosmic law.’ For good discussion see Johnstone (forthcoming).

with the definite article, as Aristotle does, but also in the plural. Translators generally simply translate out both the article and the plural, but if it is strange of Aristotle to say that (for example) one's passions should obey "the Reason," it is surely even stranger of Plato to say that they should obey "the Reasons."¹⁴ Second, there are clear signs that Plato uses *logos* in these contexts just as his predecessors do, and as he does in all other contexts, in its literal sense of something spoken, aloud or to oneself. *Logos* thus looks in Plato much more like a deliverance of Reason than Reason itself – a verbal account or argument. Are there good grounds for taking Aristotle's use to be different?

Aristotle does in several passages mention *logos* as something that sets humans apart from animals, and this may seem to make 'Reason' the obvious translation. But we have already seen that his predecessors use *logos* in the same context ("aloga animals") to mean speech, and in two of these passages it is clear that Aristotle is doing the same: *logos* is contrasted with mere voice (*phônê*).¹⁵ This provides a *prima facie* argument for taking *logos* to have its verbal sense or something closely related to it in the other passages distinguishing humans from animals too, and the project turns out to be a promising one.¹⁶ I will not attempt to argue conclusively here for a

¹⁴ For example: the courageous person's spirited part preserves "what is announced by the *logoi* to be fearful and not" (*Rep.* IV 442c), and the virtuous person "keeps his pleasures and pains harmonious with and following the right *logoi* (*tois orthois logois*) (*Laws* 696c); cf. *Timaeus* 70a and 71a, where spirit listens to the *logos*, while appetite disregards *logoi*. It is true that Aristotle does not follow suit, but this may be a stylistic preference: notably he does not use the plural even when speaking of the *logos* possessed by the person with craft or science, where, as I argue below, this clearly means 'account.'

¹⁵ See *Pol.* 1253a9-18, where human possession of language is tied to our distinctive ethical and political capacities, and *GA* 786b19-22; the former passage has striking echoes of Isocrates' *Antidosis*, 253-7, where our capacity for *logos*, where this clearly means persuasive speech, explains our superiority to animals.

¹⁶ When Aristotle says that because animals lack *logos* they lack the ability to be persuaded, and therefore lack conviction (*pistis*), and therefore lack belief (*doxa* (*de An.* 428a22-3), a contemporary reader would naturally take *logos* to be persuasive speech, or argument: compare the association of *logos*, conviction, persuasion, and belief in Gorgias' *Helen* (see especially 13), and in Plato's *Theaetetus* (201b) and *Gorgias* (454d-e). *Pol.* 1332a38-b9 likewise links acting on *logos* with acting because one is persuaded, inviting the same reading. When Aristotle says that those who lack *logos* lack thought (*to dianoeisthai*) (*de An.* 427b14), readers would be reminded

verbal reading of *logos* in these passages; I want merely to note that there is enough of a case to be made for it that we cannot cite them as clear evidence that Aristotle uses *logos* to mean Reason.

Aristotle also uses *logos* to mark what is clearly a psychological distinction: in the *Ethics*, the superior part of the human soul is the *logos*-having (*to logon echon*), and the inferior is the *logos*-lacking (*to alogon*). This use is closely related to the ethical use of *logos*: the *logos* that one part of the soul has is also, when good, the *logos* that “exhorts one rightly,” i.e. right *logos*.¹⁷ Surely in this psychological context – and thus in the ethical context too – *logos* means Reason?

Again, caution is in order. Like Plato, Aristotle has a number of other words that he uses when he wants to name the kind of cognition distinctive to the superior part of the human soul: *dianoia*, *noêsis*, *nous*, and sometimes *logismos*. In the *de Anima*, where he offers his avowedly most scientific exposition of the human soul, he calls the part unique to humans not the *logon echon* – indeed he mentions that label only to dismiss it as inadequate – but the *noêtikon* or *dianoêtikon*, the part capable of thought.¹⁸ We might thus think that his switch of terminology in the *Ethics* stands in need of explanation: why in the context of moral psychology, while not in the context of straight psychology, is it useful to identify the thinking part of the soul as the part that has *logos*? A natural answer is that *logos* is ethically salient because the part that has *logos* can come to be excellent by acquiring the right *logos* – whatever sort of thing that turns out to be. But if this is

of Plato’s definition of thought as silent *logos*, where *logos* is equated with conversation, *dialogos* (*Theaet.* 189e-190a; cf. *Sophist* 263e-4a). By my count, the only other passages that use *logos* to distinguish humans from animals clearly identify the relevant *logos* as the one that belongs to the superior part of the human soul, so to determine what it means in these passages we should turn to its role in his psychology; there we find a very strong connection between *logos* and persuasion, supporting the verbal reading. I discuss this briefly in section X; for fuller defense, see my MS, “*Logos* and Reason in Aristotle.”

¹⁷ In the akratic and enkratic, “we praise the *logos* and the *logos*-having element of the soul (*ton logon kai tês psuchês ton logon echon*), for it exhorts them rightly (*orthôs*) and towards what is best” (*EN* I.13 1102b13-25).

¹⁸ Aristotle mentions the distinction between *logon echon* and *alogon* parts of soul briefly in *de An.* III.9, but only to reject it as a dubious distinction invented by others (432a26-b6).

right then we need first to find an interpretation of *logos* in phrases like “the right *logos*,” and use that to illuminate phrases like “the part of the soul that has *logos*,” rather than assuming an interpretation of the latter and working the other way around.

None of this entails that *logos* does not or cannot mean Reason in Aristotle, of course; it simply raises doubts. But this brings us to the final argument against translating *logos* as Reason: on philosophical grounds we should be glad that there are doubts, and should hope that a different translation can be found, because we should want to know *why* Aristotle chose *logos* to do the work he gave it.

If *logos* does at some point in the history of Greek philosophy, whether in Aristotle’s work or later, come to denote intellectual cognition, it surely does so through some kind of evolution from one of its traditional meanings. But which one, and how? If one is looking for a word to name some one thing the possession of which distinguishes the better part of the human soul from the worse, and the correctness of which distinguishes the fully virtuous from the ethically inferior, why precisely would one light on a word one uses elsewhere sometimes to mean form, sometimes speech, sometimes proportion, and so on? If we could answer this question, we might learn how Aristotle understands the essential features of what we now call rationality.

The fact is that ‘Reason’ is a mere place-holder for what distinguishes the higher part of the human soul from the lower, and humans from animals, unless we have an account of what Reason is. If we translate *logos* as Reason and assume that we know more or less what that means, we wind up begging an important question. Does Aristotle have in mind the ability to grasp propositional structure and to exercise critical judgment, as in the Stoics? To calculate means-end relations and perform deductions, as in Hume? To entertain transcendental ideas, as in Kant?

Or some other cognitive ability definitive of Aristotelian rationality?¹⁹ If we cannot answer that question, moreover, then translating *orthos logos* as ‘right Reason’ will tell us very little: what intellectual activities, when executed ‘rightly’, make us fully virtuous? The project of taking Aristotle’s use of *logos* in phrases like “the part of soul that has *logos*” to illuminate his use of *logos* in phrases like “living in accordance with the right *logos*” has turned out to be unpromising indeed.

On the other hand, we now see that the reverse project, if feasible, would be very fruitful. If we could find a non-arbitrary, textually and historically grounded, philosophically compelling interpretation of *logos* in ethical contexts, we could hope to use it to illuminate Aristotle’s notion of rationality. If we knew what “right *logos*” meant, we could hope to show how having the capacity for a *logos* of this kind confers superior status on one part of the human soul, and thereby on humans in contrast with animals. That project lies beyond the scope of the present paper, although I will end with some suggestions about how it might work. The main task of the paper is to determine the sense of *logos* in ethical contexts.

But how should we go about that task? At this point (if not earlier) one might be tempted to throw up one’s hands and declare the whole project hopeless. Perhaps Aristotle uses the word in too many different ways for there to be any good reason to isolate a group of instances and insist that these should be read univocally. We cannot assume that the *logos* which commands one to act in certain ways is the same as the *logos* which determines the mean, or the *logos* which when ‘right’ is identified with *phronêsis*, let alone the *logos* which one part of the soul has and the other

¹⁹ I am not claiming that we otherwise have no idea at all of what is distinctive to higher forms of cognition in Aristotle: it is clear that what he calls *nous*, *dianoia*, and *logismos* are absent in non-human animals, and that this means at least among other things that animals cannot grasp universals. What we lack is an account of what is specially noteworthy about these traits, how they relate to other distinctively ‘rational’ traits like the capacity for speech or the ability to acquire human virtue, and which if any of them is fundamental and which derivative.

lacks. Perhaps the best we can do is to interpret the word anew in each separate passage – or to fall back on the arguably anachronistic but surely anodyne ‘Reason,’ seeking illumination of Aristotle’s theories of virtue and rationality elsewhere.

My aim in this paper is to show that we can do much better. Although *logos* has a wide range of meanings, there is one particular use highly relevant to its use in connection with virtue and *phronêsis*, a use firmly established both in Aristotle’s theoretical writings and in the writings of his teacher, Plato. I have in mind the use of *logos* to denote something which, when grasped, transforms an inferior epistemic state into a superior one. Attempts to understand the notion of *orthos logos* have foundered because we have overlooked the fact that Aristotle characterizes it as conferring a species of wisdom or understanding, and have therefore overlooked two crucial sources of evidence for what such a *logos* is:

(i) Parallels between Aristotle’s account of the *logos* relevant to virtue and Plato’s account.

Aristotle clearly takes himself to be in broad agreement with Plato in identifying *logos* as what transforms a quasi- or proto-virtuous state into genuine virtue. The *Meno*, *Republic* and *Laws* give us good evidence that Plato does use *logos* to name something that confers virtue, and that he construes this *logos* as one species of a wider genus, the kind of *logos* that confers wisdom.

(ii) Parallels between *phronêsis* and two other intellectual excellences in Aristotle’s system:

technê (craft) and *epistêmê* (science). The *EN* characterizes all three as being “with *logos*,” implying that the *logos* in question is similar at least in genus. Meanwhile, from the *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics* we get quite clear accounts of the *logos* involved in the latter two – accounts strongly influenced by Plato’s account of wisdom-conferring *logos*.

I will show that these two sources imply broadly similar interpretations of *logos*: what transforms Platonic quasi-virtue into full virtue, and what transforms both Platonic and Aristotelian inferior epistemic states like experience into *technê*, *epistêmê*, or other forms of wisdom, is not a rule, proportion, ratio, or form, nor is it Reason itself; instead, it is a particular kind of deliverance of Reason. It is an *explanatory account* – an account of the *aitia*, cause or explanation, that underlies the facts available to the proto-virtuous, or to the layman.

Noting these parallels should thus give us some expectation that the *logos* relevant to Aristotelian virtue and *phronêsis* will also be an explanatory account. Of course the expectation is defeasible, given the wide range of meanings *logos* can have, but it is based on systematic parallels, so we have reason to hope that it will be borne out by a close study. In the later sections of this paper I argue that it is. What confers *phronêsis* and thereby strict virtue is the grasping of a special sort of explanatory account: an account which states that a particular action is practically good, i.e. to-be-done, and also explains *why* it is good, by correctly demonstrating it to be for the sake of the correct goal, where a goal is a special sort of cause or explanation. Ethical right *logos* is thus correct practical syllogism: an argument which prescribes the right action for the right reason.

In sum, I will argue that Aristotle's use of phrases like 'the wise person has the *logos*,' where *logos* clearly refers to explanatory account, illuminates the meaning of *logos* in phrases like '*phronêsis* is with *logos*' and '*phronêsis* is the right *logos*,' and thereby also in statements like 'virtue is following the right *logos*,' and therefore – as I argue briefly in the last section – also in statements like 'one part of the soul has *logos* and another lacks it.'

I will not pretend to show that my interpretation must be accepted: anyone who wants to interpret *logos* some other way in any given passage will be able to find arguments for doing so. What I do claim to show is that the arguments in favor of my interpretation are the best that can be had in

this area. The interpretation I offer is non-arbitrary: it has ample grounding in Aristotle's texts, and it has substantial Platonic precedent. Moreover, it can make good sense of the *Ethics*: it fits well with Aristotle's uses of *logos* in ethical contexts, and there are no damning textual obstacles.²⁰ It has the added virtue of explaining the parallels Aristotle obviously sees, but does not fully explain, between *phronêsis*, *technê*, and *epistêmê* – between what we might call practical, productive, and theoretical wisdom. Finally, it has a worthwhile philosophical pay-off. It yields a substantive and compelling account of *phronêsis* – an account of the role in Aristotelian virtue of what we now call Reason – and it provides a promising basis for developing an account of Aristotle's theory of Reason in general.

II. *Logos*, understanding, and virtue

Central to both Plato's and Aristotle's theories of virtue is a distinction between genuine, full-blooded virtue and states that resemble but fall short of it. In Plato's *Meno*, people who have mere true belief about the good are shadows compared to the truly virtuous (100a); in the *Phaedo* those who fail to practice philosophy have only illusory virtue (69b), or “civic and political virtue” (82a); in both the *Republic* and the *Laws* those who have undergone the youthful cultural education are prepared for virtue but not yet fully in possession of it, perhaps having only popular (*dêmotikê*, *dêmosia*) virtue (*Rep.* 500d, cf. 619c; *Laws* 968a). In Aristotle's ethical works those with “strict” (*kuria*) virtue are superior both to those with natural virtue – good inborn temperament – and to those who have merely been well habituated (*EN* VI.13, X.9); in the *Politics* those with complete (*teleia*) virtue are superior to those with mere citizen's (*tou politou*) virtue (*Pol.* III.2).

²⁰ Despite initial appearances, the interpretation can accommodate Aristotle's eventual identification of the right *logos* with *phronêsis* in *EN* VI.13: see discussion in section VIII.

Both Plato and Aristotle, moreover, broadly agree on what is needed to transform proto-virtue into genuine virtue: some intellectual quality. Sometimes they put this point by saying that the proto-virtuous lack *phronêsis* (*Phaed.* 69b, *EN* 1144b17, *Pol.* 1277b25) or *nous* (*Men.* 100a, *Phaed.* 82b, *EN* 1144b12). At other points, however, they put the point in an apparently quite different way: one must have or grasp a *logos*, or more specifically the correct or right (*orthos*) *logos*.

This last claim is most explicit in Aristotle's discussion of the difference between natural (*phusikê*) virtue – an inborn tendency to good passions and actions – and strict (*kuria*) virtue, virtue proper. I divide the passage into sections for convenience of reference:

(a.) The natural [virtuous] states belong to children and beasts too, but are manifestly harmful without *nous*....If however one acquires *nous* [intellect/understanding], this makes a difference in action. (b.) So that...there are two kinds of condition of the ethical part of the soul, natural virtue and strict virtue, and of these the strict kind does not occur without *phronêsis* [practical wisdom]. (c.) For just this reason some people say that all the virtues are *phronêseis* [pl.], and Socrates in a way was searching correctly and in a way erred. For in that he thought all the virtues were *phronêseis* he erred, but he spoke well in saying that they are not without *phronêsis*. (d.) And this is a sign: even now everyone when they define virtue adds...that it is the state in accordance with the right *logos* (*kata ton orthon logon*), and that the right *logos* is the one in accordance with *phronêsis*. (e.) ...Virtue is not only the state in accordance with the right *logos*, but the one with the right *logos* (*meta tou orthou logou*). And *phronêsis* is the right *logos* about this kind of thing. (f.) Socrates

believed that the virtues were *logoi* [pl.], for they all were sciences/species of wisdom (*epistêmai*), but we that they are with *logos* (*meta logou*). (*EN* VI.13 1144b8-30)

In this passage Aristotle gives several formulations, evidently intended to be equivalent, of what it is that transforms proto-virtue into strict virtue: *nous* (a.), *phronêsis* (b., c., e.), and *logos* or the right *logos* (e.,f.). Whatever a *logos* is, acquiring the right one amounts to acquiring the distinctive intellectual quality lacking in the proto-virtuous person.

Moreover, Aristotle clearly takes this claim about the right *logos* to be philosophical orthodoxy (d.), and specifically to be the view of Socrates (f.).²¹ The only difference he marks between his own view and Socrates' concerns the sufficiency of *logos* for virtue: Socrates thought that to have the *logos*, i.e. to be *phronimos*, is what it is to be virtuous; Aristotle thinks that virtue also includes a non-intellectual element. Both agree, however, that the right *logos* is necessary for virtue. If we want to know what Aristotle has in mind by virtue-conferring *logos*, then, we might hope to find help from an account of what Socrates meant.

Despite Aristotle's implication in passage f., Socrates never explicitly identifies either virtue or *epistêmê* with *logos*. He does however frequently identify virtue with *epistêmê*, as well as with *phronêsis* and *sophia* – words which I will for reasons explained below translate 'understanding'. And in several passages he implies that *logos* is necessary for virtue, and in several others explicitly claims that *logos* is necessary for understanding. If we want to know what view of *logos* Aristotle means to be attributing to Socrates in *EN* VI.13, then, we should turn to these texts.

²¹ The 'everyone' in (d.) presumably refers only to members of the Academy: see Burnet's note *ad loc.*

I will start with the passages linking *logos* to understanding, for two reasons. First, if Socrates thinks virtue is a species of understanding then we should expect the *logos* necessary for virtue to be one species of the *logos* necessary for understanding – one species of what I will call understanding-conferring *logos*. Second, passages linking *logos* to understanding in Plato are particularly explicit, frequent, and consistent: in a number of dialogues, he uses *logos* to denote that which one must grasp in order to convert some inferior epistemic state into a superior one.

Most famously, Theaetetus reports a definition of *epistêmê* as “true belief with *logos (meta logou)*” (*Theaetetus* 201c-d), and Socrates seems to concur:

When someone grasps true belief (*doxa*) about something without *logos*, his soul is in a state of truth about the thing, but he does not understand (*gignôskein*). For the one who is not able to give and receive a *logos* is a non-understander (*anepistêmona*) about the thing. But when he has in addition grasped a *logos*, he is capable of all this and has reached perfection in understanding (*epistêmê*). (*Theaet.* 202b-c)

We see similar claims in other dialogues:

Don’t you know that to believe correctly (*ortha doxazein*) without being able to give a *logos* is not the same as to understand (*epistasthai*) – for how could understanding (*epistêmê*) be a thing without *logos (alogon pragma)*? (*Symp.* 202a)

A man who has understanding (*epistêmê*) would be able to give a *logos* of what he understands (*epistatai*). (*Phaed.* 76b)

Understanding (*nous*) and true belief (*doxa*) are two different kinds...the one is always with true logos (*met' alêthous logou*), the other without logos (*alogon*).
(*Tim.* 51d-e)

Someone who starts out with mere *doxa* but then grasps a *logos* winds up with *epistêmê* or *nous*: *logos* confers understanding. But what is a *logos* of this kind?

The most explicit account we get is in the *Theaetetus*, and although it is aporetic, it is clear from the definitions Socrates does consider that he is using *logos* in its literal verbal sense.²² The claim under consideration is that a necessary condition of understanding of *x* is the ability to give a *logos* of *x*, where this means the ability to say something important about *x* (although what precisely is left undetermined).

On reflection, this turns out to be a very familiar Socratic idea. Throughout the definitional dialogues Socrates refuses to accept that his interlocutors have understanding of some subject *x* if they are unable to tell him something important about *x* – its essence or form – and he refers to whatever they do say about *x* as their *logos* of *x* (see e.g. *Euthyphro* 7e, 8a, 8d, 10d, etc.). And early in the *Theaetetus* Socrates asks Theaetetus – who is joining him in a quest to understand understanding (*epistêmê*) itself – to “grasp a *logos*” of understanding, where this gets cashed out as: “state (*proseipein*) the many kinds of understanding in a single *logos*” (*Theaet.* 148d). Being able to give a *logos* of *x*, where this means being able to state what we would call a

²² To give a *logos* is to express thought in words (206c), to answer questions about something by giving a description (*diexodos*) that lists its elements (206e-7a), or to state (*eipein*) its distinguishing mark (208c).

definition, is a crucial sign and condition of expertise about it. (Compare also *Philebus* 62a).²³ (Arguably, a *logos* of this kind need not be actually vocalized in order to qualify as a *logos*: in the *Theaetetus* Socrates defines thinking (*to dianoesthai*) as “*logos* which the soul goes through, itself by itself about whatever it’s investigating” (*Theaet.* 189e4-7), and it seems charitable to attribute this view to him throughout the dialogues: to be able to give a *logos* is to be able to give a verbal account, where this may be silent rather than spoken.)

We find confirmation and a development of this account of understanding-conferring *logos* in a dialogue that explores the distinction between one particular superior epistemic state, namely craft (*technē*), and the inferior epistemic state of experience (*empeiria*):

[Flattery] isn’t craft, but mere experience, because it has no *logos* of the nature of whatever things it applies [or to what] it applies them, so that it’s unable to state (*eipein*) the cause (*aitia*) of each thing.²⁴ And I refuse to call anything without a *logos* (*alogon*) craft. (*Gorg.* 465a)

Medicine [a craft] investigates both the nature (*phusis*) of that which it looks after and the cause (*aitia*) of the thing it does, and is able to give a *logos* of each of these; while pastry-baking [a form of mere experience],...investigating neither the nature of pleasure nor the cause, proceeds *alogôs*... (*Gorg.* 501a)

What the person with craft has, and the person with mere experience lacks, is the ability to state (*eipein*, from *legein*) something important – that is, to give a special *logos*, again in the sense of

²³ Perhaps this is what is implied in the *Theaetetus*’ explicit discussion of *logos*: so argues Burnyeat, citing the second and third definitions (1980, 180).

²⁴ The bracketed translation is my attempt, following Dodds, to make sense of some contested text. This reading renders the passage intelligible while also reconciling the passage with a later one explicitly billed as recapitulating it – 501a, quoted in part below.

verbal account. Specifically, she can give an account of the nature and cause of the phenomena in her domain: because the doctor grasps the nature of the human body and of the medicines she applies, she can identify the cause or explanation (*aitia*) that shows *why* the procedures used are the right ones, or *why* the human body reacts in the way it does.

Is the inclusion of cause here a departure from the definitional dialogues, where the understanding-conferring *logos* is simply of the essence, i.e. *phusis*? Arguably it is instead an elaboration of that view: an essence is in Plato a cause of a very important kind – what Aristotle will call a formal cause, the explanation of why something is the kind of thing that it is.²⁵ A *logos* of a thing's essence is thus one species, arguably the most important, of what Socrates here attributes to the craftsman: an explanatory account.²⁶

The *Gorgias* speaks of explanatory *logos* only in connection with craft, but elsewhere in Plato we see the idea that a grasp of causes confers other superior epistemic states. In the *Phaedo*, grasping causes confers wisdom (*sophia*) about nature (96a-102a), and as we will see below in the *Republic* the highest epistemic states require a grasp of ultimate causes. Most explicit and most famous, however, is a claim in the *Meno*:

True beliefs (*doxai*)...[when] one ties them down with reasoning about the cause (*aitias logismos*)...become *epistêmai*. (*Meno* 98a)

According to this passage what converts a true belief about *x* into *epistêmê* about *x* is reasoning or calculation (*logismos*) about the cause of *x*: someone with *epistêmê* will be able to *explain* the

²⁵ This is a view Plato develops most explicitly in the *Phaedo* (100b-e), but it looks to be implicit or inchoate at *Gorg.* 465a, where lacking a *logos* of something's nature entails lacking a *logos* of its cause.

²⁶ Thus Burnyeat claims that *logos* in the *Theaetetus* is “an explanatory account which answers the question what something is” (1980, 180); cf. the fuller discussion in his 1990, at 235-7, which traces a similar interpretation back to an anonymous ancient commentator; Cornford agrees.

truths that a believer merely believes. There is an obvious similarity between this claim about *epistêmê* and the *Gorgias*' claim about craft: what confers superior epistemic status is a *logismos* of the cause here, a *logos* of the cause there. We can reconcile the two passages if we take *logos* to be the product and *logismos* the process that yields it. Successful reasoning about the cause confers superior epistemic status because through such reasoning one grasps a *logos* of the cause: thus an *epistêmê*- or craft-conferring *logos* is not merely a verbal explanatory account, but one reached on the basis of reasoning or calculation. (Here we see what I above called the two literal meanings of *logos*, *reckoning* and *thing said*, both at work.)

It should now be clear why I have opted for 'understanding' as the generic term for the superior epistemic states in Plato's system (*technê*, *epistêmê*, and also *phronêsis* and *sophia*, which he seems to treat as equivalent to *epistêmê*). The standard translation is 'knowledge,' but if there is no having these superior epistemic states without a *logos*, and if a *logos* is an explanatory account, then the standard translation is misleading: in English we can say that someone knows that *p* without at all implying that she knows *why p*. We should thus join Burnyeat, who argues that rather than taking Plato to be "misdescribing the concept which philosophers now analyze in terms of justified true belief," we should take him to have in mind a deeper grasp, better captured by 'understanding' (Burnyeat 1980, 186).²⁷ ('Wisdom' might do as well or better, but it lacks a verbal form to match the Greek *epistasthai*.) We can thus summarize what we have seen from the *Gorgias* and *Meno* as follows: when Plato says the ability to give a *logos* is a requirement for superior epistemic status, he has in mind the ability to give an explanatory account, and he holds this view because the epistemic states he prizes are forms of understanding. The ultimate

²⁷ Burnyeat's argument focuses on the *Theaetetus*. For a related interpretation of *epistêmê* in the *Meno* see Nehamas 1985, and for an extended argument for a similar interpretation of the *Meno* and *Republic V*, see Whitney Schwab's unpublished dissertation. Once we doubt that *epistêmê* in Plato is best translated 'knowledge' we should also doubt whether *doxa* is best translated 'belief.' I will not pursue the question here; for interesting discussion see Schwab.

epistemic state – the *Republic*'s *noêsis* – will thus require a grasp of, and the ability to give a *logos* of, the ultimate cause and explanation of everything: the Form of the Good.²⁸

Our target, however, was not primarily Socrates' notion of understanding-conferring *logos*, but his putative notion of virtue-conferring *logos*, and here the *Meno* is crucial. For the question at issue in this part of the *Meno* is whether virtue is understanding (*epistêmê*, *phronêsis*) or merely true belief, and the passage on the *aitias logismos* shows this to be the question of whether virtue requires one merely to be aware *that* certain things are good, or also to work out an account (a *logos*) of *why* they are good.²⁹

Socrates seems at first to plump for the former answer – virtue is mere true belief – but the last passage of the dialogue throws that conclusion into doubt:

If throughout our account we have inquired and spoken finely, virtue...is imparted to us by divine dispensation, without *nous* [intellect/understanding], in those to whom it's imparted – that is, *if* there is no politician who is able to make another a politician as well. If there were such a man...[he] would be the real thing when it comes to virtue (*alêthes pragma pros aretên*), among shadows.

(*Meno* 99e-100a, emphases mine)

²⁸ The philosopher who has reached the highest level is “able to grasp the *logos* of the being of each thing,” and in particular “can distinguish/define (*diorisasthai*) by the *logos* the form of the good” (*Rep.* 534b-c); cf. 511b, where at the highest level of the divided line “the *logos* itself” lays hold of the objects, proceeding to the unhypothetical first principle of everything, the Good.

²⁹ That the subject-matter of the understanding that putatively constitutes virtue is what is good, or to-be-done, is not as explicit in the *Meno* as in the *Protagoras* and other Socratic dialogues, but is clearly implied by the immediate context: Socrates is asking whether true belief is as good a guide as understanding *to action*. It is also implied earlier in the dialogue when Socrates hypothetically equates virtue with *phronêsis* on the grounds that *phronêsis* shows us how to act for our benefit (88a-89a).

If virtue is true belief, then one can have real virtue “without *nous*.” We recognize the phrase from Aristotle’s characterization of proto-virtue (passage a.), and the clear implication of this passage too is that true-belief virtue is not virtue proper: the genuinely virtuous person has some intellectual quality that goes beyond true belief. Given the dialogue’s earlier way of distinguishing true belief from its superior correlate, the implication is that she can reason out the cause of the things the believer believes – that is, she knows not only *that* certain actions are good but also *why*. She is thus related to the person with mere true belief about good action as the *Gorgias*’ craftsman is to the empiric: she is epistemically superior, and her superiority consists in her grasp of an explanatory *logos*. (In support of this parallel, note that the *Meno*’s genuinely virtuous person is able to teach others (“make another a politician as well”), an ability that Plato confines to the person with craft (see especially *Laws* 719d-720d and 875c-d, and cf. Aristotle’s *Met.* I.1).)

To summarize: in Plato we find a use of *logos* to denote what confers superior epistemic status, and strong evidence that the *logos* in question is an explanatory account; the *Meno* implies that a *logos* of this kind can also confer virtue. More specifically, virtue-conferring *logos* will be one particular species of understanding-conferring *logos*, because the understanding relevant to virtue is of a special kind: understanding of what is good, i.e. of what is to-be-done. Thus Platonic virtue-conferring *logos* has two aspects: it is (i) prescriptive, stating *that* something is good, and (ii) explanatory, explaining *why* it is good.³⁰

³⁰ Craft-conferring *logos*, the kind at issue in the *Gorgias* passage, will be similar: what the doctor grasps will be an account that is prescriptive, stating e.g. that a diet of barley water is to be administered, and also explanatory, showing that this diet is to be administered *because*, given the nature of the body, it promotes health in such-and-such a way.

In the next section I will argue that this account is borne out by a dialogue that makes explicit reference to the role of *logos* in virtue, and also shows strong influence on Aristotle's ethics: the *Laws*.

III. Virtue and *logos* in the *Laws*

Plato uses the phrase *orthos logos* only on a few occasions. In none of these is *logos* naturally translated 'Reason': instead, the right *logos* seems always to be a correct account, argument, or explanation.³¹ These uses may be too casual and unsystematic to provide firm precedent for Aristotle's notion of the right *logos*, but we will see in this section that when in his last dialogue Plato develops the notion of a right *logos* in connection with virtue, and does so in ways that closely anticipate Aristotle, he has this same general sense in mind: the virtue-conferring right *logos* is an account. More specifically, and in keeping with the *Meno*, it is an account that both prescribes certain things as good and shows why they are good.

Like the *Republic*, the *Laws* prescribes an education for the young which shapes their characters mainly through music. Through successful musical education,

pleasure and friendship and pain and hatred arise rightly in their souls while they are not yet capable of grasping (*lambanein*) the *logos*, but when they have

³¹ The *Statesman* has "they act out of not one single right *logos* (*oud' ex henos orthou logou*)" (310c): as Lord points out, the implication is that a person can act from more than one *logos*, so *logos* cannot mean Reason (Lord 1914, 2). The *Phaedo* uses the phrase twice (73a, 94a): for the second Grube gives "correct reasoning," but it is clear that the *logos* in this line is the same referred to just below – "it follows from this *logos*" (*ek toutou ara tou logou...*) – where *logos* clearly refers to Simmias' account of the soul as a harmony; even Grube here translates 'argument,' and at 73a he goes with a natural translation, "the right explanation." The *Apology* has "what *logos* do they have for aiding me except the *orthos* and just one, that they know that Meletus is lying and that I am telling the truth?" (34b). As Gomez-Lobo argues, the right *logos* here is most naturally understood as "the correct justification" (1995, 20). (Notably, this right *logos* is an account that shows why something is to-be-done.) I quote and discuss the occurrences of the phrase in the *Laws* below.

grasped the *logos* they will be harmonious (*sumphônêsôsi*) with the *logos*, by having been rightly habituated by fitting habits. And this whole harmony (*xumphônia*) itself will be virtue. (*Laws* 653b)

There are two stages in virtue-acquisition: first, one's soul is prepared to be harmonious with and to grasp the *logos*; second, one actually grasps the *logos*, and is harmonious with it. Only in the second phase is one fully virtuous. Thus as on Aristotle's view in *EN* VI.13, proto-virtue is transformed into strict virtue by the acquisition of a *logos*. In fact the *Republic* implies a very similar view too: youthful musical education prepares one to grasp and be harmonious with the *logos* (*Rep.* III 401d-402a), and full virtue comes when one acquires wisdom, which involves the ability to give a *logos* of all the Forms and especially of the Good (VII 534b-c).³² I will return to the *Republic* briefly at the end of the section, but will focus mostly on the *Laws*, where the role of *logos* and the similarities to Aristotle are more developed.

Indeed, the similarities to Aristotle are striking. First, the *Laws* explicitly refers to the virtue-conferring *logos* as the "right *logos*":

Education is the drawing and leading of children toward the *logos* declared right (*orthos*) by the law....[The songs they sing exist] in order that the soul of the child not be habituated to feel pleasure and pain contrary to the law. (659d)

³² Good music and other art shape the citizens' souls by "leading them unwittingly, from childhood on, to resemblance, familiarity, and harmony with the beautiful *logos* [Grube/Reeve have "with the beauty of reason," which is surely a stretch, and in ignoring the definite article obscures the connection with grasping the *logos* below]...Since [one educated in this way] feels disgust rightly he'll praise beautiful things, and enjoying them and receiving them into his soul, and being nurtured by them, become fine and good. He'll rightly censure and hate ugly things while he's still young, before he's able to grasp (*labein*) the *logos*, but when the *logos* comes he would welcome it, recognize it on account of its familiarity to him" (*Rep.* 401d-402a).

[The truly virtuous person is] the one whom we called *sophon*, the one who keeps his pleasures and pains harmonious (*sumphônous*) with and following the right *logoi* (*hepomenas tois orthois logois*). (696c)

Second, as these two passages make clear, the role of the “right *logos*” (or *logoi*, plural) is precisely what it is in Aristotle: to regulate one’s non-rational passions – pleasures and pains and desires. In Aristotle the virtuous person’s non-rational part must harmonize with (*sumphônein*) and obey the right *logos*, which commands it to feel passions like anger, appetite, and fear in the right way, at the right time, and so on (see especially, among many others, *EN* I.13 1102b28, III.11 1119a19-20 and III.12 1119b13-18). In the *Laws* too, we now see, to be harmonious with the right *logos* is to feel the right pleasures and pains. The non-rational aspect of virtue is a matter of feeling the right pleasures and pains, and the right ones are those that accord with the right *logos*.³³

There are further striking similarities too, ones that become particularly clear when we note that law, *nomos*, is an institutionalized version of virtue-conferring *logos* (see e.g. 645b, quoted below).³⁴ Aristotle’s right *logos* regulates passions and actions by determining (*horizein*) the intermediate (*to meson*) (*EN* II.6 1107a1 and VI.1 1138b18-29), where hitting the intermediate is acting and feeling “when one should, and about the things and toward the people and for the sake of what one should, and as one should (*hote dei....kai hôs dei*, *EN* II.6 1106b21-2; cf. III.12 1119b17); equivalently, the *logos* orders one to choose the fine (*kalon*) (III.8 1117a8; cf. *EE* III.1 1229a1-9). In the *Laws*, the role of law (and so of *logos*, given that law is institutionalized *logos*) is not only to regulate passions but more specifically to “determine (*horisteon*) what is fine

³³ At other points Plato refers to passion-regulating *logoi* as beautiful or fine (*kalos* - 689b) or true (782d-3a; compare Aristotle, *EN* VI.2 1139a24 and VII.9 1151a34).

³⁴ Aristotle echoes this claim too: “the *nomos*... is a *logos* that proceeds from a certain *phronêsis* and *nous*” (*EN* X.9 1180a21-2); like Aristotle’s *orthos logos*, his *nomos* has the task of regulating the citizens’ pleasures and pains (*X.9 passim*).

(*kalon*) and not” in passions (632b). The laws aim to make the citizens feel pleasures and pains “whence once should, and when and how much one should” (*hothen te dei kai hopote kai hoposon*, 636d). Moreover, “the right (*orthos*) life,” the life prescribed by *logos*, “should neither pursue pleasures nor avoid pains entirely, but welcome the intermediate (*to meson*)” (792c-d; cf. “the intermediate path” at 793a); thus it is the role of the law-giver to discern what the intermediate (or middle or proportionate amount) is in various spheres, and to make laws that prescribe it: the law-giver must “recognize the measured (*metrion*)” in all fields (691c-d), prescribe the *metrion* or *meson* in funerals (719d), prescribe the moderate (*metron*) in wealth and weapons (744d and 746a-747b), and hit the intermediate or moderate (*meson* or *metron*) in political systems (756e-757a).³⁵

Thus there is ample evidence that Aristotle’s notion of the right *logos* is indebted to Plato’s in the *Laws*. But what does Plato here mean by *logos*? One negative point should be clear, given his frequent use of the plural: Plato’s right *logos* is not right Reason. But the *Laws* also turns out to provide substantial positive guidance in interpreting the term. The picture that emerges of the right *logoi* fits well with what we saw implied in *Meno*: virtue-conferring *logos* is explanatory-cum-prescriptive account.

A look back at *Laws* 659d and especially 696c – the two most explicit mentions of right *logos*, quoted above – shows that the virtue-conferring right *logos* is prescriptive: it enjoins certain pleasures and pains and proscribes others. This is strongly confirmed by the very close relation Plato draws later in the dialogue between *logos* and *nomos*, law. The role of the laws is to confer virtue on the citizenry as a whole; like the right *logoi*, they confer virtue by dictating which

³⁵ Any remaining doubt that Aristotle was influenced by these parts of the *Laws* might be allayed by the appearance, just between the two passages on choosing the intermediate, of *EN* II.1’s claim that character (*êthos*) results from habit (*ethos*) (*Laws* 792e).

pleasures and pains they should accept and which avoid. Indeed, the relation is even closer, since a *nomos* just is a *logos* that has been enshrined by the city:

The individual, having grasped the true *logos* in himself (*ton men logon alêthê labonta en heautôi*) about [pleasure, pain, hope, fear, and reasoning]..., should live following this *logos*, and the city [should], having received this *logos* either from some god or some person who knows these things, and having made it a law (*nomon themenên*), interact with itself and with the other cities. (645b, emphasis mine)

[In a city with inferior laws] how will the people hold back from those appetites which drive many to ruin, appetites which the *logos*, attempting to become law, commands that one hold back from (*hôn an ho logos prostattêi apechesthai, nomos epicheirôn gignesthai*)? (835e)³⁶

Logos is to the individual as law is to the city: it issues commands to regulate passions and actions, and the individual who obeys her own *logoi*, like the city that obeys its laws, will be virtuous. Thus virtue-conferring *logos*, like law, is prescriptive.

If this were all there were to it, however, we might think it mysterious why one has to “grasp” the *logos* rather than merely obey it, and correspondingly why the *Laws* distinguishes the condition produced by youthful musical education (in which one obeys the *logos* without yet grasping it) from virtue proper (653b, quoted above).

³⁶ Cf. 645a: *logismos* (calculation – the process that, as we saw above from comparison between the *Meno* and *Gorgias*, produces a *logos*) “is called the common law of the city.” Elsewhere *logos* and *nomos* work in parallel: we must try to keep appetites in check through “fear, law, and the true *logos*” (783a).

But this is not all there is to it. Virtue, according to the *Laws*, involves more than simply doing what the *logos* or *nomos* prescribes: it also involves understanding *why* the prescriptions are correct.

This emerges most clearly from Plato's description of good laws as composed of two distinct elements: in addition and prior to the prescription, there must be a prelude (*prooimion*) (722e). In a passage strongly reminiscent of the *Gorgias*'s distinction between craftsmen and empirics (465a, quoted above), he explains the function of the prelude through an analogy between the law-giver/citizen relationship and the doctor/patient relationship. The passage begins with advice to the law-giver regarding prescriptions in one particular area, the arrangement of funerals:

Since there is such a thing as an excessive funeral, a deficient one, and a moderate one, you, having chosen the intermediate one, and having praised it without qualification, prescribe it (*prostatteis*)... (719d)

This is the prescriptive element of a good law, but there must be something more:

But you should not [merely] say in the way you have done now that it is moderate (*metrion*), but you should say what the moderate is and how big it is; otherwise you should not yet propose that a *logos* like that become law...(719e)

This second element in a good law is an explanation: one must not merely prescribe some particular expense, but explain why this is the right one: because it is moderate, and such-and-such is what it means to be moderate, and so-and-so-much is what counts as moderate in this circumstance. Plato now generalizes:

Let us make the same request of the law-giver that children might make of their doctor....[A slave-doctor] neither gives nor receives any *logos* about the illness the slaves have, but prescribes (*prostaxas*) for it what seems best to him from experience (*empeirias*), as if he knew (*eidôs*) precisely....But the free-born doctor....investigates [his free-born patient's illness] from the starting-point and according to its nature (*ap' archês kai kata phusin*)...and as far as he is able teaches the patient, and never prescribes anything before having persuaded in some way....(720a-d, emphases mine)

The lawgiver must, like the expert, *technê*-having rather than merely empirical doctor, teach his subjects – convey understanding (compare 857c-d). This requires giving a certain kind of *logos*: one that appeals to the nature of the thing at issue (the illness, in the doctor case; the moderate, in the funeral case). In the *Gorgias* the doctor needed to grasp the nature of the things at hand so that he could give an account of the cause (465a, 501a), and we can take Plato's point here to be the same: the *logos* in each case appeals to the nature of the subject in order to provide an explanation of *why* the prescribed course is to-be-done.

Thus to make the citizens virtuous it is not enough to ensure that they obey the prescriptions of the right *logoi*; they must also understand *why* the prescriptions are good. Thus the right *logoi*, like the *nomoi* themselves, turn out to be double: one part prescription, one part explanation. A virtue-conferring *logos* – a *logos* the grasping of which and harmony with which constitute virtue – is not just a prescription, but an account that backs up its prescription with an explanation.

(There is something confusing here: in the passage on slave-doctors just quoted Plato uses *logos* to mean only the explanation: giving a *logos* is giving an explanation of one's prescription. Elsewhere, we have just seen, a *logos* is a prescription. Given the clear implication that full

virtue requires grasping both prescription and explanation, it is arguably most charitable to take ‘*logos*’ in the phrase ‘right *logos*’ and in other mentions of virtue-conferring *logos* as referring to both elements. Like the laws that enshrine them, right *logoi* have two components: as Plato says at 719e, a merely prescriptive *logos* should not become law until it has expanded to include an explanation. We will see a similar issue arise in Aristotle.)

Moreover – in another move that we will see Aristotle follow – Plato claims that the ultimate explanation of a prescription is a grasp of the target, aim or goal (*skopos*) that underlies it. While the *Laws*’ citizens, even when they have been taught and persuaded, have mere demotic virtues (*dêmosiai aretai*, 968a), the ruling elite (the Nocturnal Council and the law-giver) require something more.³⁷ The citizens only need to be persuaded by the explanations of why the laws are good; the rulers need to be able to give those explanations, which means that they must grasp them more fully, and this turns out to mean that they must have a full grasp of the laws’ aim (962a-d).³⁸ (This aim is of course to instill virtue in the citizens, so it is virtue that the rulers will need to know (966b): they will need to know for example whether it is a unity, a composite, or something else (965d).)

In other words, a ruler will grasp the ultimate explanation of why a law must be followed, where this is what Aristotle will call a final cause: what the law prescribes should be done because the goal is virtue, which is of such-and-such a nature, and the prescriptions of the law contribute to something of that nature in such-and-such a way.

³⁷ For helpful discussion of these two forms of virtue see Kraut (2010).

³⁸ “If someone were plainly ignorant of the target (*skopos*) toward which a statesman (*politikon*) should look, would he be rightly called a ruler?...[The ruler must] understand first this target we were mentioning – what the political target is; second, in what way one should attain this...” (962a-b). Aristotle echoes this metaphor in *EN* I.2.

Thus in the *Laws*, as in the *Meno*, the *logos* that confers virtue also confers understanding: a grasp of the ultimate explanations. Grasping the right *logos* means knowing not only *that* one should do such-and-such, but also *why*; the right *logos* is a prescriptive-cum-explanatory account.³⁹

It is worth showing very briefly that we can see the elements of these ideas in the *Republic* too. Youthful musical education makes one harmonious with the fine *logos* but not yet able to grasp it (401d-2a, quoted above); good *logoi* prescribe virtuous actions and passions to the individual just as good laws prescribe them to the city (see especially 442c with 429b-c); to be fully virtuous, as only the wise are, one must also grasp a *logos* of the ultimate explanation of the goodness of these things – that is, of the Form of the Good (534b-c). (For the notion of Forms as causes of their participants see especially *Phaedo* 100c.)

We have thus seen that Plato uses *logos* to name something which transforms proto-virtue into virtue proper, that *logos* in this context should be translated ‘account,’ and that a *logos* of this kind is a prescriptive, explanatory account – an account that both identifies certain things as good and shows why they are good, ultimately by relating them to an end or goal. We have also seen that Aristotle explicitly takes himself to be following Plato in his own talk of virtue-conferring *logos* (recall *EN* VI.13’s allusion to his agreements with Socrates), and that Aristotle’s discussion of this *logos* is strongly influenced by Plato’s, especially in the *Laws*. Therefore, we have some reason to expect that Aristotle’s right *logos* will be, like Plato’s, a prescriptive, explanatory account.

³⁹ The *Laws* does not equate understanding with virtue, as the *Meno* tentatively does: one must in addition to grasping the *logos* also “be harmonious with it,” which is as we saw a matter of having one’s non-rational passions in good condition. In this the *Laws*, like the *Republic*, is closer to Aristotle’s view.

In the remainder of the paper I will argue that this expectation is borne out. First, Aristotle follows Plato almost word-for-word in identifying that which transforms inferior epistemic states into *technê* or *epistêmê* as a *logos*, and also in characterizing this *logos* as an explanatory account (sections IV through VI). Second, Aristotle also follows Plato in identifying what confers virtue as a particular species of understanding-conferring *logos*: *logos* that is not only explanatory but also prescriptive, saying what to do and why, where the explanation is a final cause – that is, a practical syllogism (section VII). This account of right *logos* fits with Aristotle’s texts (section VIII), and illuminates his account of *phronêsis* (section IX). Finally, it provides the basis for a compelling account of the notion of “having *logos*” that plays so large a role in his theory of what we now call rationality (section X).

IV. *Phronêsis, technê, epistêmê*

The task of *EN VI* is to identify the *logos* essential to virtue. Aristotle begins with a reminder that we ought to choose the intermediate (*meson*), which is “as the right *logos* says” (VI.1 1138b18-20), and an admission that this is not yet sufficiently informative, for we have not yet defined the right *logos*. By the end of the book, as we have seen, he has concluded that the right *logos* is *phronêsis* (passage e.).

Rather than jumping directly into a discussion of *phronêsis* at the start, however, Aristotle sets out to answer the question “what is the right *logos*?” through a discussion of the intellectual virtues more generally, and he winds up defining *phronêsis* largely by positioning it relative to the others. There are five states “by which the soul grasps truth through affirmation and denial” (VI.3 1139b15): at first pass, five kinds of knowledge. *Phronêsis* turns out to be very similar to two of these, craft (*technê*), and science (*epistêmê*). (I choose these translations for convenience, rather than the more idiomatic but cumbersome ‘craft-wisdom’ and ‘scientific-wisdom.’ It should be clear that *technê* and *epistêmê* usually refer in the contexts we will be concerned with –

and certainly in *EN VI* – to epistemic conditions, although at other points Aristotle uses the terms to refer to bodies of knowledge, where my translations are perhaps more natural.) The central similarity lies, we will see, in these three states’ parallel relations to *logos*.⁴⁰ It is thus natural to infer that Aristotle thought that his comparisons between *phronêsis* and these other states would illuminate the question of the right *logos* relevant to virtue; I propose to follow his suggestion, examining the role of *logos* in these other states with the hope of gaining a better account of ethical *logos*. In the process we will see that Aristotle’s analogies between *phronêsis*, craft, and science are closer and more illuminating than sometimes thought.

The parallel between *logos* in virtue and in craft is drawn right at the start of Book VI:

We have said earlier that one should choose the intermediate...and that the intermediate is as the right *logos* says. For in all of the [virtuous] states...there is some goal looking toward which the person who has the *logos* tightens and relaxes...[and these the intermediate states] are in accordance with (*kata*) the right *logos*. But while to say this is true, it is not at all clear. For in the other concerns about which there is understanding⁴¹ it is also true to say that one should not labor or relax too much nor too little, but the intermediate amount and as the right *logos* [says]. But by having just this much one would not know anything more, for example about what sort of things one should apply to the body if someone said that one should apply those that the medical [craft] (*hê*

⁴⁰ The remaining states are *nous* and *sophia*. *Nous* (use in here in its narrow sense) is contrasted with the others on the grounds that it does not involve *logos*; since *sophia* includes *nous* as a part its relation to *logos* is also different from the others’.

⁴¹ *Epistêmê*. This must be a broad use of *epistêmê* on which it embraces *phronêsis* and craft; later in the book Aristotle will introduce a narrow use on which it is contrasted with these.

iatrikê commands and as the one who has it [would do/recommend]. (EN VI.1
1138b18-32)

In this passage we get two different formulations for the relation of *logos* to *phronêsis* and craft. The *phronimos* and craftsman “have the *logos*” – a formulation reminiscent of Plato’s *Gorgias*, which we will see again in the *Met.* But the equation between doing what the right *logos* says in medical matters and doing what the medical craft commands arguably implies that the medical craft *is* the right *logos* in medicine – the one that determines and prescribes the intermediate – just as according to VI.13 *phronêsis* is the right *logos* in the practical sphere (passage e.). In the middle chapters of Book VI Aristotle puts it yet a third way:

Craft is a productive state with true *logos* (*hexis meta logou alêthous poiêtikê*).
(VI.4 1140a20-21)

Phronêsis is a true practical state with *logos* (*hexis meta logou alêthê...praktikê*).
(VI.5 1140b20-21)

It is odd that Aristotle at some points says that *phronêsis* and craft *are* right *logos* while elsewhere defining them as “with *logos*,” or saying that the person who has these states “has the *logos*.” I will argue below that even if he is being precise and does intend a real difference between the formulae, the phrases “has the *logos*” and “with *logos*” provide the focal meaning of *logos*. What I want to emphasize for now, however, is simply that in whatever way *phronêsis* is related to *logos*, craft is related to *logos* in that same way. Moreover, Aristotle makes the same claim about science (*epistêmê*):

Science is with *logos* (*EN* VI.6 1140b33)⁴²

This parallel between *phronêsis* and these two other states turns out to be excellent news for our project of understanding the *logos* involved in *phronêsis*. For outside of the *EN* there are two other texts which characterize craft and science as involving *logos*, and these give us much greater resources to understand what this means. What we find there will not support the standard translation of *logos* in *EN* VI as ‘Reason’ (on which the claim that *phronêsis*, craft and science are all with *logos* means simply that they all “involve reason” or “are rational”). Instead it will show that Aristotle’s notion of the *logos* that confers superior epistemic status closely follows Plato’s.

V. *Logos*, craft and explanation: *Metaphysics* I.1

In *Met.* I.1 Aristotle lays out a hierarchy of cognitive states: first perception, then memory, then *empeiria* (experience), then craft, then science, and finally wisdom (*sophia*). Craft and science are similar to experience, and emerge from it (981a1-3): experience is a kind of proto-craft. Aristotle identifies the difference between craft and experience in two ways. First, those with experience grasp only phenomena, while craftsmen also grasp the underlying causes:

We believe that knowing (*to eidenai*) and being proficient (*to epaiein*) belongs more to craft than to experience....This is because craftsmen know (*isasin*) the cause (*aitia*) while the [merely] experienced do not. For the experienced know the *that* (*hoti*) but don’t know the *why* (*dioti*), while craftsmen know (*gnôrizousin*) the *why* (*dioti*) and the cause. (*Met.* I.1 981a24-30)

Second, the experienced person lacks, while the craftsman has, a *logos*:

⁴² He also identifies *epistêmê* with *logos*, although not *in propria personae*, and perhaps intending *epistêmê* in its broad sense (see previous note), in passage f. from VI.13.

With regard to acting experience seems to differ from craft not at all, but the experienced hit the mark even more than those who have a *logos* without experience. (981a12-15)⁴³

[We think] the architectonic craftsmen wise on account of having the *logos* and recognizing the causes (*to logon echein autous kai tas aitias gnôrizein*) (981b6)

It is natural to take these two claims about the difference between experience and craft as equivalent: to say that the wise person has the *logos* is to say that he grasps the cause (so that the *kai* at 981b6 is epexegetical). This reading is confirmed by the clear debt Aristotle's characterization of craft here owes to the passage we saw above from Plato's *Gorgias*, which explicitly characterizes craft-conferring *logos* as an account of the cause: because experience "has no *logos*," it is "unable to state the cause" (*Gorgias* 465a, and compare also *Laws* 720a-d, quoted above).

Aristotle follows Plato in holding that what distinguishes the craftsman from the mere empiric is a grasp of the causes of the relevant phenomena. Moreover, he also follows Plato in expressing this difference by saying that the craftsman "has the *logos*". So we have good reason to take *logos* here too to refer to an explanatory account – a causal story, spoken or silent.⁴⁴ Thus when Aristotle says in *EN* VI that the craftsman "has the *logos*," and that craft is "with *logos*,"

⁴³ This is a strange passage: presumably the real craftsman has both knowledge of particulars phenomena, gained through experience, and a *logos* that explains them, which is the distinctive contribution of craft; Aristotle is here imagining someone who has the explanatory *logos* without the capacity to apply it. For an interesting discussion see Devereux 1986.

⁴⁴ Like Plato, Aristotle uses *logos* to mean both spoken and silent verbal accounts: in the *APo.*, where as I argue below he uses *logos* to refer to verbal argument, he distinguishes between "external *logos*" and "*logos* in the soul" (*ton exô logon... ton en têi psuchê*, *APo.* I.10 76b23-25), where the latter phrase echoes and may well be a deliberate reference to the *Theaetetus*' "*logos* in the soul" (189e, quoted above).

interpretative charity dictates that in the absence of any evidence to the contrary we should take him to have this same sense of *logos* in mind. His claim is that craft essentially involves the ability to give explanatory accounts of the phenomena in its domain. Aristotelian craft, like Platonic, is a form of understanding.

Met. I.1 implies that science too involves a grasp of causes (981b28-982a3), and we have confirmation from elsewhere that this is Aristotle's view (see especially the opening lines of the *Physics*). The *Met.* does not explicitly characterize science as involving a *logos* of the cause, but Aristotle does say just this in his much fuller discussion of science in the *APo.*

VI. *Logos*, science and explanation: *Posterior Analytics*

The *APo.* is a treatise on *epistêmê* in the narrow sense: the epistemic state that I am calling science. In the final chapter Aristotle uses the same phrase to characterize science that we saw applied to it in the *EN*: it is "with *logos*" (*APo.* II.19 100b10; cf. *EN* VI.6 1140b33). Earlier in the *APo.* he has said that it comes from grasping causes:

We think we have science (*epistasthai*) about a thing without qualification (*haplôs*)...when we suppose that we recognize the cause (*aitia*) on account of which the thing is, that it is the cause of the thing, and that this cannot be otherwise. (*APo.* I.2 71b9-12)⁴⁵

[In scientific inquiries] it is the cause (*aitia*) which is being sought (*APo.* II.1 90a5-7)

⁴⁵ Translations of the *APo.* are based, sometimes loosely, on Barnes.

Moreover, as in the *Met.*'s discussion of craft, the two claims turn out to be equivalent, because the *logos* that confers science is precisely an explanatory account, a *logos* of the cause:

the one who does not have a *logos* of the *why* (*to dia ti*)...is not a person with science (*epistēmōn*) ... (*APo.* I.5 74b27-8)

This confirms that Aristotle applies Plato's account to his discussion of science as well as to his discussion of craft. Both epistemic states are conferred by possession of a *logos*, where this is an explanatory account. Aristotelian *epistēmē* too is a form of understanding: scientific understanding.

One might infer from what we have seen thus far that a science-conferring *logos* is in effect a definition: a grasp of the first principle proper to the science, the *explanans* underlying all the rest. This would fit with *Met.* 981a12-15, quoted above, where the *logos* relevant to craft gives only the *why* – the universal cause – and not the *that*. Like Plato in the *Gorgias* and *Meno* passages, Aristotle thus sometimes identifies the *logos* that confers superior epistemic status as an account of the cause alone. As he develops the idea of science-conferring *logos* in the *APo.*, however, this *logos* begins to look less like an account of a cause and more like an argument that includes that account as a first premise: an entire syllogism. This turns out to be an important development for our project of using the parallels between science and *phronēsis* to illuminate the ethical “right *logos*,” for that, as we will see, is clearly an entire argument.

The central claim of the *APo.* is that science essentially involves demonstration (*apodeixis*).⁴⁶ A demonstration is one species of a wider genus, syllogism (*sullogismos*) (we will see its

⁴⁶ (In *APo.* I.3 Aristotle allows for *epistēmē* of indemonstrable first principles, but elsewhere in the work – and prominently in *EN VI*, where he draws parallels between *epistēmē* and *phronēsis*

differentiae below). A syllogism, in turn, Aristotle has told us in the preceding work, is one species of a yet wider genus, *logos*:

A syllogism is a *logos* in which, certain things having been assumed, something different from these follows of necessity because these things are so. (*APr.* I.1 24b18-20)

Logos here is naturally taken as having its original sense from *legein*: something said, aloud or to oneself (see *APo.* I.10 76b23-25) – a speech or account or argument. On a very natural interpretation, which would align Aristotle’s use with what we inferred from Plato, a *logos* is the account yielded by the process of *logismos*, where rehearsing syllogisms is one way of engaging in *logismos*. (In fact *sullogismos* seems ambiguous in Aristotle: sometimes it is the process of reasoning, the *logismos*, instead of as here the product, the *logos*.)

The opening passage of the *APo.* repeats the claim that a syllogism is a species of *logos*: there are three kinds of *logoi*, “those that proceed through syllogisms, and those that proceed through induction...and the rhetorical ones” (*APo.* I.1 71a5-9). Clearly *logos* here too has its verbal sense; ‘argument’ is the natural translation. Aristotle then claims that it is one particular kind of syllogism that yields science:

– he restricts its domain to demonstrables.) “Involves” is deliberately vague: it seems to me that Aristotle sometimes speaks of *epistēmē* as the mental state that is the result of performing a demonstration (see especially *epistēmē* at *APo.* I.2 71b19, quoted below), but at other times speaks of it as the disposition to be able to perform demonstrations. (This on top of another ambiguity: sometimes *epistēmē* refers not to a mental state at all, but instead the object of that state – a body of knowledge.) Parallel worries apply to craft and *phronēsis*. We can probably resolve them by distinguishing between actual and potential understanding, or possibly between general and specific understanding. Nothing crucial to my main argument hangs on these difficulties, so I will for the most part ignore them.

[We] understand (*eidenai*) through demonstration (*apodeixeôis*). By a demonstration I mean a science-conferring syllogism (*sullogismon epistêmonikon*). By science-conferring I mean that by having which we have science (*kath hon tōi echein auton epistametha*). (*APo.* I.2 71b17-19)

One comes to have scientific understanding about *x* by having a syllogism that demonstrates *x*, and such a syllogism is one species of *logos*. (What is it to “have” a *logos* of this kind? I argued that according to the *Gorgias* to have a *logos* is to be able to put something into words, either aloud or to oneself in thinking, and this seems to fit well with the *APo.* account of science-conferring *logos* as syllogism. A scientist is one who can produce the relevant syllogism aloud or work through it in thought.)

If a demonstrative syllogism is what confers science, and a demonstrative syllogism is a species of *logos*, it is natural to conclude that when Aristotle says in II.19 that science is “with *logos*” he means that it involves this kind of syllogism. This is confirmed by a look at that claim in its immediate context:

Since...all science is with *logos*, there will be no science of the first principles (*archai*) of science. (*APo.* II.19 100b5-12)

Aristotle has been arguing that there can be no demonstration of the first principles of demonstration (i.e. that demonstration must ultimately start from undemonstrated axioms); here he reformulates that point by claiming that there is no *logos* of those first principles. The claim

that science is with *logos* is thus equivalent to the claim that it is the result of demonstration; the *logos* in question is a demonstrative syllogism.⁴⁷

If we look back to the description of science as “with *logos*” in the *EN* we find strong evidence that the phrase has the same meaning. Having earlier defined science as “a demonstrative state” (*hexis apodeiktikê*) (referring us to the fuller account in the *APo.* of what that means (*EN* VI.3 1139b31-3)), and having said that there can be no demonstration of the starting-points of demonstrations (1139b29-31), Aristotle later adds:

Since...there are starting-points of demonstrable things and of all science (for science is with *logos*), there can be neither science nor craft nor *phronêsis* of the starting-point of the scientifically-understandable (*epistêton*). For what is scientifically-understandable is demonstrable... (*EN* VI.6 1140b31-35)

That science is with *logos* here too evidently means that it involves demonstration. This is further confirmed by the later claim that *nous* – the special state in which we grasp these indemonstrable starting-points of demonstration – is of “the limits (*tôn horôn*), of which there is no *logos*,” i.e. no demonstration (*EN* VI.8 1142a26-7).

We saw above that Aristotle equates the claim that science is “with *logos*,” or that the scientist “has a *logos*,” with the claim that science depends on grasping causes: the *logos* that confers science does so by being an account of the cause, an explanation (see especially *APo.* 74b27-8). Thus if demonstrative syllogism is the species of *logos* that confers science, we should expect a

⁴⁷ Compare Barnes (who cites in support the passage from *EN* VI.6 that I give in the main text below): he translates *meta logou* as “has an account,” and claims that in this context “to ‘have an account of P’ is presumably to give, or be able to give, a deductive argument for P.”

demonstrative syllogism to be an explanatory account. And this is precisely what Aristotle says in the *APo.*, explicitly and at length. For example:

The [demonstrative] syllogism is of the *why* (*dioti*); for it has grasped the primary cause (*prōton aition*). (*APo.* I.13 78b3-4)

A demonstration is a syllogism that reveals (*deiktikos*) the cause (*aitia*) and the *why* (*dia ti*). (*APo.* I.24 85b23-4)

Demonstrative syllogisms confer science precisely because they explain phenomena. One scientifically understands the non-twinkling of the planets, for instance, when one demonstrates that it is caused by their nearness (I.13), and one scientifically understands eclipses when one demonstrates that they are caused by the earth screening the moon (II.8). Just like the *logoi* of *Met.* I.1, demonstrations give us the *why* rather than merely the *that*.

Indeed, what distinguishes demonstrations from others syllogisms is that the premises furnish an *explanans* (one that is itself a necessary truth), of which the fact stated in the conclusion is the *explanandum*. We see this in the canonical form of the demonstration:⁴⁸

Necessarily all As are Bs

Necessarily all Bs are Cs

Therefore, necessarily all As are Cs

If this is a true demonstration then the “middle term” (*meson*) – B, the term that appears in both premises but not in the conclusion – denotes the cause or explanation, *aitia*, of the fact

⁴⁸ For an argument that this is indeed the basic form of a demonstration, despite Aristotle’s failure to stick to it in some of the examples he gives, see Barnes 2002 xvii-xviii.

demonstrated in the conclusion (see especially *APo.* II.1 90a5-7). Thus the conclusion could always be amplified by adding: “*viz., because of Bs.*”

The claim that demonstrations are explanations of their conclusions is made particularly clear in a passage from the *EE*. (Here Aristotle identifies the *explanans* with the starting-point, presumably meaning the entire first premise; this is not a serious departure from the *APo.* doctrine, however, since this premise will always make use of the middle term, often as a *definiens*.)

[In all spheres, including in demonstrations] the starting-point (*archê*) is the cause (*aitia*) of the things which are or come to be on account of it (*di' autên*)...For if since the triangle has [internal angles equal to] two right angles it is necessary for the quadrilateral to have four right angles, it is apparent that the cause (*aition*) of this [latter fact] is the triangle having two right angles....and supposing there is no other cause of the triangle being this way, it would be the starting-point and cause of the later things. (*EE* II.6 1222b30-40, emphasis mine)

These lines suggest a syllogism which takes ‘triangle’ as its middle term:

Starting-point and explanation: Triangles have two right angles

[further premises, including e.g. ‘there are two triangles in a quadrilateral’]

Conclusion: Quadrilaterals have four right angles (*viz., because of triangles*)

Someone who grasps this syllogism – who has this *logos* – not only grasps *that* quadrilaterals have four right angles, but also understands *why*. And this is what it is to have scientific understanding of quadrilaterals.⁴⁹

We can now summarize how the *APo.* explains the *EN*'s claim that science is “with *logos*.” As in the *Met.*, the *logos* that confers superior epistemic status is an explanatory account. The *APo.* elaborates by showing that a science-conferring *logos* takes the form of a demonstrative syllogism, where this is a chain of reasoning that shows how some phenomenon is explained by its cause – that shows *why* it is the way that it is as well as *that* it is that way.

Aristotle says in the *EN* that science is “with *logos*;” we have seen that the *logos* in question is an explanatory syllogism. Aristotle also says in the *EN* that *phronêsis* is “with *logos*;” the parallel *prima facie* suggests that here too the *logos* in question will be an explanatory syllogism. A close look at his discussion of *phronêsis* will confirm that this is precisely his view. To have *phronêsis* is to have practical understanding: to grasp an explanatory account of the relevant phenomenon. Moreover, this account takes the form of a syllogism. Both *that* and *why*, *explanandum* and *explanans*, differ from those at issue in the theoretical case, but the basic explanatory structure is the same.

VII. Practical *logos* as explanatory syllogism

⁴⁹ In fact, as the last lines of the passage suggest (“*supposing* there is no other cause...”), complete geometrical *epistêmê* will require the grasping of a prior demonstration, one that takes as its starting-point the essential definition of triangle and uses that to derive the claim that they have two right angles.

If science is “with *logos*” insofar as it involves the kind of syllogizing proper to it – demonstrative syllogizing – one might naturally infer that craft and *phronêsis* are “with *logos*” insofar as they involve the kind of syllogizing proper to them: practical syllogizing. The aim of this section is to show that this is indeed Aristotle’s claim, and that he construes such syllogisms as explanatory accounts.

Both *phronêsis* and craft make one excellent at a certain kind of reasoning about what to do – deliberation (*to bouleuesthai*).⁵⁰ Aristotle is explicit in presenting deliberation as a form of *logismos*:

Let us call [the part of the soul responsible for deliberation] the *logistikon*: for to deliberate and to reason (*logizesthai*) are the same (*to gar bouleuesthai kai logizesthai tauton*) (*EN* VI.2 1139a11-13; cf. VI.9 1142b1-2)

More specifically, although the point is sometimes contested, he presents deliberation as a form of *sullogismos*.⁵¹ His famous parallels between practical and theoretical reasoning emphasize that in deliberation, just as in demonstration, one begins from starting-points that are not themselves the product of reasoning, and reasons to a conclusion which necessarily follows from them (*EN* VII.3 1147a26-28). But given the definition of syllogism as a *logos* in which something follows

⁵⁰ “*Phronêsis* is about things about which there is deliberation; for we say that this is the function of the *phronimos* most of all, to deliberate well” (*EN* VI.7 1141b8-10); cf. among others VI.5 1140a30-31). Craft too involves deliberation: see especially *EN* III.3 1112b3-16. Indeed, most of what Aristotle has to say about deliberation applies both to practical deliberation narrowly speaking and to technical or productive deliberation. The difference seems to lie entirely in the nature of the goals: productive reasoning is about what to do in order to produce a product; practical reasoning is about how to act well for the sake of acting well (see *EN* VI.5 1140b6-7)). What the two kinds of reasoning have in common is for our purposes more important: both are forms of deliberation, i.e. (as we shall see) of reasoning about how to achieve a goal.

⁵¹ Cooper famously denies this in his 1975, and the claim still has some detractors, but the evidence I am about to give seems to me fairly decisive. For detailed arguments in its favor see Price 2011.

of necessity from the assumptions (*APr.* I.1, quoted above), this is just to say that deliberation, as much as demonstration, is a form of syllogizing. And indeed Aristotle does say just this. In *EN* VI.12 he refers to reasoning about what to do as “syllogisms about what is to be done” (*hoi sullogismoi tôn praktôn*) (1144a31). Even more explicit is a claim in his work on memory:

Deliberation is a kind of a syllogism (*sullogismos tis*) (*De Memoria* 453a13)⁵²

Moreover, Aristotle sometimes refers to deliberation not only as *sullogismos* but also as *logos*. For example, when arguing in the *EE* that deliberators do not get their goals through deliberation, instead of making his familiar claim that “there is no deliberation of ends” (as at e.g. *EN* III.2 1112b11-12), he now puts the point like this:

there is no *sullogismos* or *logos* of the goal. (*EE* II.11 1227b23)

This seems to take for granted that deliberation is or yields a species of “*sullogismos* or *logos*.” (Arguably the first term denotes the process and the second the result; see discussion above.)

Similarly, Aristotle characterizes decision (*prohairesis*) as being with (*meta*) or being derived from (*ek*) or caused by *logos*, where this seems to mean that it results from deliberation (see *EN* III.2 1112a15-16, III.8 1117a21, and VI.2 11139a32-33).

Most explicit, and very important for our overall project of identifying the sense of *logos* relevant to *phronêsis*, is a passage that refers to a good practical syllogism as a right *logos*. Aristotle is describing the deliberation that the akratic performs but then acts against:

⁵² See also *de Anima* III.11, which closely associates deliberation and syllogizing (434a10-12). This seems to be an instance of *sullogismos* referring to the process of reasoning out an account, rather than to the resulting account, as in *APr.* I.1.

Whenever one universal [belief or proposition] forbidding tasting is present, and another, that all sweet things are pleasant and this is sweet, and this [belief/proposition] is active, and appetite happens to be present, then the one [belief/proposition] says to avoid this, but the appetite leads...Thus it happens that the agent acts akratically in a way by the agency of *logos* and belief (*hupo logou pôs kai doxês*) but [belief] that is not opposed in itself, but only accidentally: for the appetite, but not the belief, is opposed to the right *logos*. (*EN* VII.3 1147a31-b3)

The first lines allude to a practical syllogism: just what its content is meant to be is notoriously obscure, but that it is meant to be a practical syllogism is clear. It is moreover meant to be a good or correct syllogism, one that the agent should obey but instead acts against on the prompting of an appetite. When Aristotle says a few lines later that this appetite is “opposed to the right *logos*,” then, the very strong implication is that the *logos* in question is precisely this syllogism.⁵³ As in Plato, the *logos* is what results from the process of *logismos*, reasoning.

We now have strong evidence that Aristotle equates deliberation with practical syllogizing, and that he characterizes this, just like theoretical syllogizing (demonstration) as yielding a *logos*. Given then that *phronêsis* and craft centrally involve excellence in deliberation, when Aristotle defines these as “with *logos*” in *EN* VI.5 we should expect the *logos* in question to be deliberative *logos* – practical or productive syllogism – just as the *logos* in the definition of science turned out to be demonstrative syllogism. Indeed, the definition of *phronêsis* as “with *logos*” comes hard on the heels of a discussion of the connection between *phronêsis* and deliberation: Aristotle appears to be summarizing or drawing conclusions from that discussion. Therefore *logos* in the phrase

⁵³ When he comments in the intervening lines that the person acts akratically “by the agency of *logos*” (1147b1), *logos* should for interpretative charity’s sake be interpreted in the same way, and this is a natural fit with the passage: the akratic’s appetite is influenced by his syllogizing, for he has also reasoned out that “this is pleasant.”

“with *logos*” should be taken to refer, in the descriptions of each of these three intellectual excellences, not to Reason but to a special kind of account: a syllogism. To say that the person with a superior epistemic status, practical, productive, or theoretical, “has the *logos*” is to say that she is able to give or grasp a complex account: demonstrative syllogism in the theoretical case, deliberative syllogism in the practical or productive.

Now we can proceed to a further parallel: it turns out that deliberative syllogisms, just like demonstrative ones, are explanatory accounts – and thus that the *logos* that confers *phronêsis* or craft, just like the *logos* that confers science, is an explanatory account. Intellectual excellence in the practical or productive sphere, like that in the theoretical, is a matter of understanding: of knowing not merely that certain things are so, but why.

This may sound simply wrong: surely deliberation is inquiry into *what* to do, not why to do it. But while Aristotle does indeed characterize deliberation as inquiry into what to do, he also, less famously but very clearly, characterizes it as involving reasoning about causes, i.e. about explanations. (My account of this point, and of the consequent parallels between practical and theoretical syllogisms, is heavily indebted to J.V. Allen’s forthcoming paper, “Practical and theoretical understanding in Aristotle.”)

Most explicit and detailed is a passage from the *EE*:

The deliberative capacity of the soul (*bouleutikon*) is the capacity contemplative of a certain cause (*to theôrêtikon aitiâs tinos*). For the that-for-the-sake-of-which (*hê hou heneka*) is one of the causes, because the that-on-account-of-which (*to dia ti*) is a cause... Wherefore those for whom no goal is laid down are not able to deliberate. (*EE* II.10 1226b25-30)

The deliberative part of our soul is that which contemplates final causes – goals. What can this mean? We can take Aristotle’s claim in two steps.

The first point, emphasized at the end of this passage and in many others (see for example *EN* III.3 1112b11-16), is that deliberation always begins from the laying down of a goal: a person does not count as deliberating merely by thinking about what to do, but by thinking about what to do in order to achieve a given goal. (Thus decision, the result of deliberation, is always “of something *and for the sake of something*” (*EE* II.10 1226a11-12, emphasis mine).) One way to put this point is that in deliberation one always takes a goal as the assumption or “starting-point” (*archê*) from which the reasoning proceeds:

[S]yllogisms about what is to be done (*hoi sullogismoι τὸν πρακτὸν*) are equipped with a starting-point: “Since the goal and the best is of such a sort,” whatever it might be... (*EN* VI.12 1144a31-33)

Thus goals in deliberation play a role parallel to hypotheses or definitions in demonstrations:

For just as in theoretical sciences the hypotheses are our starting-points, so in the productive ones the goal is a starting-point and hypothesis. (*EE* II.11 1227b28-30)

The second point is that these first premises or starting-points of deliberation, just like those of demonstration, are the explanations or causes (*aitiai*) of the conclusions. This is illustrated in the continuation of the passage just quoted:

‘Since (*epeidê*) that person needs to be healthy, it is necessary for this thing to be, if that is to come about,’ just as there [in the theoretical realm] ‘If the triangle has two right angles, it is necessary for this thing to be’. (*EE* II.11 1227b30-32)

It is *because* triangles are as they are that other geometrical figures are as they are: the starting-point of the demonstration explains the conclusion.⁵⁴ Likewise, it is *because* this person needs to be made healthy that some particular treatment is in order: the starting-point of the deliberation – the goal, namely health – explains the conclusion. (Why is the patient to-be-rubbed? *Because* of health.) We can lay out the parallel as follows:

Demonstrative syllogism:

Starting-point and explanation: Triangles have two right angles

[further premises]

Conclusion: Quadrilaterals have four right angles (*viz.*, *because* of triangles)

⁵⁴ Some take Aristotle here to be treating the claim that triangles have two right angles as a hypothesis *to be demonstrated*, rather than as an accepted assumption from which demonstration will proceed. But this fits poorly with the use of same claim earlier in the *EE* (1222b32-5, quoted in section VI above), where it is clearly meant as an *explanans* rather than *explanandum*.

Moreover, as Woods argues (after noting some evidence for the alternate reading), “the most natural analogue of the fact that the ultimate goal in the practical sphere is not within the scope of reasoning” – Aristotle’s main point in this chapter of the *EE* – “is the status of the basic axioms in the theoretical sciences” (comment *ad loc.*). Aristotle’s point would have been clearer had he mentioned here that the ultimate “hypothesis and starting-point” alluded to at 1227b28 will in this case be a statement of the essence of triangles, rather than the claim about their angles, which he elsewhere treats as demonstrable from that essence (cf. *EE* 1220b38-40: “*supposing* there is no other cause of the triangle being this way...”).

Deliberative syllogism:

Starting-point and explanation: Health is the goal

[further premises]

Conclusion: the patient is to-be-rubbed⁵⁵ (*viz.*, *because* of health)

Deliberative syllogisms, then, just as much as demonstrative ones, are explanatory accounts.

There are of course some crucial differences. First, in demonstration one begins with a grasp of the *explanandum* and searches for the *explanans*; in deliberation one instead begins with a grasp of the *explanans* – one lays down a goal – and searches for the *explanandum* (the prescription). This, however, is a psychological difference which leaves the logical parallel untouched. Second, in deliberative syllogisms, unlike theoretical ones, the *explanandum* is a prescription: what gets explained is why something should be done. This entails a third difference: as we see from *EE* II.10's claim that the deliberative part of the soul "is contemplative of...the that-for-the-sake-of-which," in deliberative syllogisms the *explanans* always explains by being the final cause – the goal of the action prescribed, the final cause of the *explanandum*. In demonstrative syllogisms, by contrast, the *explanans* can be any of the four causes but is always "logically (*logikôs*)" a

⁵⁵ Or: "Rub the patient!", or the action of rubbing. (Rubbing is the example of an action prescribed by medical deliberation in *Met.* VII.7.) Aristotle sometimes expresses the conclusion of a practical syllogism as a prescription, and sometimes says that it is the prescribed action itself, without seeming to notice the difference between these formulations. For convenience in showing the parallels with theoretical syllogisms I will refer to the conclusion as a *that*, but one can just as well think of the *explanandum* in a practical syllogism as the action itself: the action gets explained when one answers the question "Why – for what purpose – was it done?"

formal cause (see *APo.* II.11 94a20-b12 and *Met.* VII.17 1041a27-30). In other words, in theoretical inquiry what one seeks to understand is why some x is the way that it is; and although sometimes the answer will be revealed by seeing how facts about x 's final cause y explain facts about x , that does not amount to making y a goal of one's own action.⁵⁶

These differences notwithstanding, both forms of syllogism provide explanations. To grasp an entire deliberative syllogism – to reason from the starting-point to the conclusion – is to grasp not merely *that* something is to-be-done but also, by seeing how it promotes one's goal, *why*.

In our study of deliberation thus far we have been working with examples of productive syllogisms, those which belong to the realm of craft, but before we move to discuss practical syllogisms narrowly construed, I want to address a worry that will apply to both kinds: one might think that the final-cause explanations provided by deliberative syllogisms is “explanation” only in too thin a sense to confer any special epistemic sense on one who grasps them. Surely the empirical doctor, if asked why he rubs the patient, could respond, “In order to promote health.” If we flesh out the examples, however, we find a more plausible account. Consider a passage on medical deliberation from the *Met.*:

⁵⁶ *APo.* II.11's examples of final-cause demonstrations are notoriously unclear, but we can make some headway: when one asks “Why is there a house?” and answers “For the sake of preserving his goods” (94b8-12), one has explained a phenomenon – a house being as it (that is, as *Met.* VII.17 explains, some bricks and stones having the form of a house) – by showing its purpose. It is another thing entirely to adopt that purpose as one's own deliberate about how to achieve it: “My goods are to-be-preserved; a house is for preserving goods; I must make a house.”

Health is produced when one thinks like this: “*Since health is so-and-so*, if the person is to be healthy it is necessary for such-and-such to be present, e.g. uniformity; and if this, heat...”...and this the doctor produces by rubbing. (*Met.* VII.7 1032b6-26)

Although health may be the goal for the empirical doctor as well as for the technical doctor, the technical doctor grasps the goal much more fully: she knows that “health is so-and-so,” where this is clearly meant as a specific account which in its turn entails various details, e.g. that a healthy body is uniform. She also grasps universal generalizations about the things that promote the goal of health, e.g. “Rubbing heats the body.” And this fuller grasp of goal and of means allows her to construct an explanatory account linking the prescribed action to the goal – that is, a syllogism of precisely the kind given in the passage. The merely experienced doctor may recognize the patient’s condition as similar to another’s, and recall that rubbing is helpful in such cases for bringing about health (as suggested by the characterization of the empiric in *Met.* I.1), but she does not know why rubbing is the thing to do. The technical doctor does know why. She can say: “*Since* health entails uniformity, and *since* uniformity in this case requires heat, and *since* rubbing brings about heat, the patient is to-be-rubbed!” The empirical doctor may often do the right thing (I return to this point below), aiming at the right general goal, health. The difference is that the technical doctor does the right thing *for just the right reasons*: her grasp of the goal and the means is precise and detailed enough that she can give a full account of why it is the right thing to do. In other words, she has the right *logos*.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ This interpretation of medical *logos* also shows us how to reconcile an otherwise puzzling feature of *Met.* I.1 with our account of craft. Although Aristotle says there that craft is distinguished from mere experience by its grasp of causes, the only example he gives us to illustrate the difference concerns not final causes, as my account of craft-conferring *logos* would suggest, but instead universal generalizations about the properties of the particulars involved, i.e. formal causes: what the technical doctor understands is e.g. that Callias and Socrates reacted similarly to the same treatment *because* they are both feverish phlegmatics. (This characterization of craft might seem confirmed by a look at Aristotle’s examples of productive syllogisms: while some begin with a statement of a goal, others appear to have as their starting-

Now we are ready to turn to practical syllogisms narrowly construed – to the right *logos* that confers virtue.

Aristotle notoriously presents very few examples of such syllogisms, but we saw *EN* VI.12's claim that the starting-point of a practical syllogism is the *telos*, where the context (a discussion of character-virtue and *phronêsis*) shows that he has in mind syllogisms about action proper rather than technical production, so we should expect these to fit the same model, and indeed the examples he does provide turn out to fit it very well. Consider his most straightforward example of a practical syllogism, the intemperate person's syllogism in *EN* VII.3:

If everything sweet should (*dei*) be tasted, and this particular thing is sweet, it is necessary (*anankê*)...to do this (*EN* VII.3 1147a29-31)

This can clearly be formalized as a final-cause explanatory account (where, as should be clear from the fact that this is meant as a false syllogism, by 'explanatory' I mean purporting to explain something, whether or not succeeding):

Starting-point and explanation: Tasting sweet things is the goal

[further premises]

Conclusion: this thing is to-be-tasted (*viz.*, *because of* tasting sweet things)

points generalizations like “Dry food benefits every man,” or “Heavy water is bad” (*EN* VI.7-8.) What the craftsman can explain is why things are as they are (why Socrates responded to this treatment, why this food will make you healthy); thus craft's explanatory *logos* would seem to be a formal-cause explanation of some descriptive fact, rather than a final-cause explanation of a prescription. Bearing in mind the later *Met.* passage on medical deliberation, however (VII.7, quoted above), we can see that formal causes are relevant to craft only insofar as they help connect particular actions to the goal. The doctor needs to know that the cure benefits feverish phlegmatics because that can connect with his understanding of health to show how this cure promotes (is for the sake of) health. The starting-point of productive deliberation is always the statement of a goal: if Aristotle's examples of syllogisms sometimes omit this, we are to take it as presupposed.

(Plausibly the full syllogism would start from a more general goal to which the one here stated is a constituent means: living pleasurably.) A practical syllogism, then, just like a productive syllogism, shows *that* something is to-be-done *because* it is a means to one's goal.

With this model in mind, moreover, we can extrapolate an example of a good practical syllogism from the ensuing discussion of the syllogism that fails to guide the akratic's action, the syllogism which is there referred to as a right *logos* (1147a31-b3, quoted above):

Starting-point and explanation: Avoiding sweet things is the goal

[further premises]

Conclusion: this thing is to-be-avoided (*viz.*, *because* of avoiding sweet things)

(Plausibly the full syllogism would start from a more general goal to which the one here stated is a constituent means: living temperately and finely.)

The worry may arise here too that the explanations at issue are too thin: surely the person with mere proto-temperance, if asked why she eschews the cake, could respond "In order to avoid eating sweet things," and plausibly even "In order to be temperate, i.e. to live finely."⁵⁸ But the practical parallel to our response in the productive case should be clear. Even if the mere habituee aims at the fine, she lacks an adequate grasp of her goal, and therefore she lacks an adequate grasp of what it is about the actions that appeal to her that make them fine. Just like the empirical doctor, she grasps her goal too vaguely to use it as a starting-point for deliberations, and thus cannot explain how her actions contribute to it. And therefore even if she does the right

⁵⁸ Those who have been well-habituated but are not yet fully virtuous are already "lovers of the fine" (*EN* X.9 1179b9, cf. b25).

things, and does them for the right general goal, only the *phronimos* does the right thing *for the right reasons*; only the *phronimos* really has the *why*.

I have argued that the right *logos* that confers virtue in Aristotle's system is correct practical syllogism, and I have also argued that this right *logos*, like the virtue-conferring *logos* of the *Meno*, *Republic* and *Laws*, is both (i) prescriptive, stating that some action is good, and (ii) explanatory, explaining why that action is good. In the next section I argue that this interpretation fits the textual evidence: all the occurrences of *logos* in ethical contexts – all the mentions of a *logos* that is or accompanies *phronêsis*, that determines the intermediate, or that commands one to act and feel as one should – can be read as referring to prescriptive-cum-explanatory account. In section IX, I will argue that this interpretation fits well more broadly with Aristotle's account of the intellectual element of virtue.

VIII. *Logos* in the *Ethics*

If we search the *Ethics* for uses of *logos* in connection with virtue, we find that Aristotle makes two main claims.

First, the *logos* or right *logos* is what dictates or prescribes good actions, and being virtuous is a matter of following and harmonizing with those prescriptions by feeling and acting in accordance with them. The *logos* of the enkratic and akratic “exhorts them correctly (*orthôs parakalei*) and towards what is best” (*EN* I.13 1102b15-16). The akratic's appetitive part resists this “right *logos*” (*EN* VII.3 1147b3, quoted above).⁵⁹ The enkratic's appetitive part however “obeys the *logos*,” and in the soul of the virtuous person “everything agrees with the *logos*” (*EN* I.13 1102b26-28).

⁵⁹ This claim is one that Aristotle frequently repeats: motivational conflict occurs “whenever the *logos* and the appetites are opposed (*enantiai*)” (*de An.* 433b6); the akratic pursues pleasures that are contrary to the right *logos* (*EN* VII.8 1151a12); she abandons the true (*alêthês*) *logos* (VII.9 1151a29-35).

The virtuous person acts “as the right *logos*” (viz., says or commands), rather than acting on passion (*EN* III.7 1115b12, 20; III.8 1117a8-9; IV.5 1125b34-5; cf. III.11 1119a19-20); character itself is “a quality of the soul in accordance with prescriptive (*epitaktikos*) *logos*, capable of following the *logos*” (*EE* II.1 1220b5-7; cf. 1220b18-20); courage is following the *logos*, and the *logos* orders (*keleuei*) one to choose the fine (*EE* III.1 1229a1-2); the appetitive part of the soul should live in accordance with (*kata*) the *logos* just as a child lives in accordance with the prescription (*prostagma*) of his pedagogue, for the *logos* commands (*tattei*) what and how and when one should appetitively desire (*EN* III.12 1119b13-18), and commands what one should fear and what one should not (*EE* III.11 1229a6-8); *logoi* also encourage and exhort (*protrepsasthai, parormêsai*) one toward virtue (*EN* X.9 1179b7).

This use clearly fits with our account of practical *logos* as prescriptive. The right *logos* is a correct prescription; therefore to have character-virtue is to agree with and obey that prescription. It fits well with the close link between right *logos* and *phronêsis*, for *phronêsis* is prescriptive (*epitaktikê*, *EN* VI.10 1143a8). It also reveals that Aristotle’s right *logoi*, like the two-component laws of the *Laws* and the demonstrative syllogisms of the *APo.*, contains a *that* – namely, a prescription. What about the explanatory element of *logos*? This seems to be absent from Aristotle’s talk of the lower part of the soul’s relation to *logos* – but in fact this is just what we should expect, for it makes sense of Aristotle’s implication that this part can follow and obey the right *logos* without fully grasping it:

That what lacks *logos* (*to alogon*) can be persuaded in a way (*pôs*) by *logos* is revealed by the practice of admonition and all reproving and exhortation. (*EN* I.13 1102b33-03a1)

In section X I will argue that *logos* in *to alogon* also means ‘account,’ but for now let us leave that untranslated and focus on Aristotle’s claim that an *alogon* part of the soul or creature (a child

or animal) can be persuaded “in a way” by *logos*. Why only “in a way”? The caveat clearly implies that there is more to being persuaded by *logos* than obeying it – just as in the *Laws* and the *Republic* there is more to grasping the *logos* than obeying it – and thus more to *logos* than mere prescription. Although Aristotle does not elaborate, here as in Plato explanation seems a good candidate for the extra element. Children and dogs can obey the commands of their parents or masters; they can even “harmonize” or agree with those commands insofar as they follow them willingly, just the way the temperate or brave person’s appetitive part harmonizes with the commands of her practical reasoning. But children and dogs do not understand *why* the prescribed actions are the right ones to do: they lack the explanation. Like those who have completed only the first stage of education in the *Republic* or *Laws*, they are in tune with the *logos* but do not grasp it.

The *Ethics* also makes a second main claim about the role of *logos* in virtue: the *logos* is what determines (*horizein* and variants) the intermediate at which virtue aims or in which it consists. Virtue aims at an intermediate (*meson*) in passions and actions, and this intermediate is “as the right *logos*” (*viz.*, says) (*EN* VI.1 1138b18-25); because it aims at an intermediate virtue is itself an intermediate-state (*mesotêtês*), and this intermediate-state is determined (*hôrismenêi*) by *logos* (*EN* II.6 1106b36-7a1). This is in part a rephrasing of the claim that *logos* prescribes the right actions and passions, but it adds something too. In order for one’s *logos* to prescribe the right actions and passions, it has first to “determine” what these are. How does it do this? By being deliberative: Aristotle frequently speaks of deliberation as a way of determining (*horizein*) what to do, or more precisely, of making an indeterminate goal sufficiently determinate (*hôrismenon*) to be acted upon.⁶⁰ Thus the *logos* that determines the intermediate is deliberative *logos*, which

⁶⁰ Deliberation is about things that are as yet undetermined (*adioriston*, *EN* III.3 1112b9), and hence good deliberation cannot be identical with belief because “everything that is the object of belief is already determined (*hôristai*)” (VI.9 1142b11); “The object of deliberation and the

we have seen to be final-cause explanatory account. The *logos* prescribes that we choose some particular action, but it also explains *why* we should choose that action: *because* doing this action is in this circumstance the way to hit the intermediate – which is to say, doing this action is the way to achieve one’s goal.⁶¹

We find an excellent test-case for our interpretation in Aristotle’s most extended discussion of how proto-virtue differs from strict virtue, the kind that according to *EN* VI.13 is with the right *logos*. The topic is one specific virtue, courage:

The courage on account of spirited passion (*thumos*) seems most natural, and when decision (*prohairesis*) and the that-for-the-sake-of-which (*to hou heneka*) are added, [seems really] to be courage. People too [like animals] feel pain when they are angry, and pleasure when they get revenge; those who fight on account of these things are warlike, however, but not courageous. For they do not [act] on account of (*dia*) the fine, nor as the *logos* [says], but on account of passion.
(*EN* III.8 1117a4-9, emphases mine)

To act as the right *logos* says is not only to do the right actions, but to do them because one has decided on them for them for the sake of the right goal.⁶² But this is just to say that the person with the naturally spirited temperament *would* be fully virtuous if she always did and felt the right things because she reasoned as follows:

object of decision are the same, but the object of decision is already determined (*aphôrismenon*)” (III.3 1113a3-4), i.e., through the preceding deliberation.

⁶¹ That virtuous deliberation aims at the goal of achieving the intermediate is implied at *EN* II.6 and explicit at *EE* II.11 1227b36-38.

⁶² The naturally courageous person acts without having any goal, in the strict sense: she acts not on wish, but like a beast only on passion, which is too short-sighted to count as a desire for a goal. Some other states that resemble but fall short of courage do involve goals, but the wrong goals: people with “political courage” act in a way for the fine, but more directly on account of honor (1116a28-9).

Starting-point and explanation: The fine is the goal⁶³

[further premises, including: ϕ -ing is the fine thing in this situation.]

Conclusion (decision): ϕ -ing is to-be-done! (*viz.*, *because* of the fine).

In other words, the merely spirited agent lacks full virtue because she does not act on the basis of a correct prescriptive-cum-explanatory account, and this is what Aristotle means when he says at the end of the passage that she is not acting “as the *logos*” prescribes. The parallel passage in the *EE* confirms this interpretation:

Courage is a following of the *logos*, and the *logos* commands that one choose the fine. (*EE* II.1 1229a1-2)

Aristotle goes on to say that quasi-courageous conditions driven by passion are not true courage, because virtue involves decision (is *prohairesis*), i.e. “makes one choose everything for the sake of...the fine” (*EE* III.1 1231a28-32. “Following the *logos*” is thus equated not merely with doing the right thing, but with acting on the basis of correct decision, i.e. on the basis of correct deliberation for the correct goal.

Thus, just as our interpretation of *logos* predicts, the right *logos* that transforms proto-virtue into strict virtue ensures that one both does the right things and does them for the right reasons. As in the *Laws*, right *logos* is both prescriptive and explanatory, so to grasp it is a matter not only of obeying its commands but also of seeing why the prescribed actions are to-be-done. When Aristotle says that full virtue is not merely in accordance with right *logos*, but *with* it (passage e.), we should take this to be his point.

⁶³ There is a dispute about whether Aristotle thinks that the virtuous person aims at the fine under that description. There is not much need for present purposes to take a stand on the issue: we could read ‘fine’ in this first premise merely extensionally.

This covers nearly all of Aristotle's uses of *logos* in ethical contexts. In all of these contexts it works well to read *logos* as practical syllogism, i.e. as prescriptive-cum-explanatory account. There is however one apparent exception, a very important one for our account of ethical *logos*: *EN* VI.13's identification of the right *logos* with *phronêsis* (1144b27-8, quoted as e. in section II above). It is this passage that most convinced Cook Wilson that *logos* must mean Reason, and while one might doubt that this translation is idiomatic, 'account' certainly seems to fare even worse: *phronêsis* is a state of the soul, not an account. Does this show that our interpretation of *logos* fails in its most important task?

On several plausible readings, Aristotle is not in fact identifying right *logos* with a state of the soul in this passage at all. He could be speaking loosely, or overstating his point for effect, employing metonymy: certainly some of his other identity claims invite some such reading.⁶⁴ More loftily, in the spirit of Cook Wilson's original critics, we could appeal to the *de Anima*'s doctrine that actualized intellect (*nous*) becomes identical with its objects: if what is grasped is a *logos*, we can then refer to the cognitive grasp itself as a *logos*.⁶⁵ I am however most convinced by an interpretation proposed to me by Whitney Schwab (in conversation): *phronêsis* here could refer to the body of truths that the *phronimos* knows, rather than to the state by which she knows

⁶⁴ His discussion of the passions provides a good example: he sometimes says that they *are* pleasures and pains while at other points saying instead that they are "with" pleasure and pain, or that pleasure and pain "attend (*hepetai*)" them (compare *Rhet.* 1378a19-22 with 1378a30, 1383b12, or 1385b13), and sometimes says that a passion *is* an appearance (*phantasia*) while at other points saying instead that they result from appearances (compare *Rhet.* 1384a22 with 1382a21-23).

⁶⁵ We thereby reach a conclusion similar to Burnet's and Lord's (1914 both), although their solution depends on reading *logos* as 'form'. They point to Aristotle's doctrine that the craftsman's craft is identical with the *logos*, in the sense of form, of the craftsman's product (see *Met.* 1070a29-30), and infer by analogy that *phronêsis* is identical with the *logos*, in the sense of form, of right action.

them. Aristotle frequently uses both *epistêmê* and *technê* in this way (see e.g. *APo.* I.10, throughout).⁶⁶

On the other hand, I am happy to leave open the possibility that in equating *phronêsis* with right *logos* Aristotle is introducing a new use of *logos* that grows from his core notion, possibly as a result of the *de Anima* doctrine mentioned above: here *logos* becomes not only the account grasped, but also the state in which one grasps it (compare Ross 1925, comment *ad* 1095a10). If this is right, then we cannot read *logos* univocally across all ethical contexts. We can, however, read it more than merely homonymously: even if *logos* here refers to a state of soul, ‘account’ functions in the background as the “focal meaning” of the word: that from which other uses are derived.⁶⁷ *Bodily well-functioning* is the focal meaning of ‘healthy’ from which other meanings are derived, so that a diet or complexion is called healthy because it is related in some way to bodily well-functioning (see *Met.* IV.1 1003a34-b4). Likewise, if *account* is not the exclusive meaning of *logos* in ethical contexts it will at least be the focal meaning from which this other is derived, so that a state is called ‘right *logos*’ because it is related in some way to right accounts – namely, by being the state in which one reliably grasps and generates such accounts.

Thus our interpretation, strongly supported for most instances of *logos* in ethical contexts, can be made to work for all them. On textual grounds, then, we should conclude that this is the meaning, or at a minimum the focal meaning, of *logos* throughout Aristotle’s discussion of virtue and *phronêsis*. The right *logos* is the right practical syllogism – the correct prescriptive final-cause

⁶⁶ Notably, this would make sense of the appearance of *logos* in the plural just after our passage: Socrates thought that the virtues were *logoi*, because he thought they were *epistêmai* (pl.) (1144b28-30), or indeed *phronêseis* (pl.) (1144b17-18 just before our passage). The plurals arguably suggest that *phronêsis* and *epistêmê* are both being used in this body-of-knowledge way, so that Socrates’ claim is that the virtues are sciences, things akin to geometry or harmonics; the kind of *logos* that can be identified with science in this sense is not a faculty or state of the soul, but a thing grasped by the scientist – that is, on Aristotle’s view, a special kind of account.

⁶⁷ The term ‘focal meaning’ was introduced by Owen (1960).

explanatory account. Now we must consider whether this interpretation can do the philosophical work required of it.

IX. The value of the right *logos*

If the right *logos* is correct practical syllogism, then when Aristotle identifies *phronêsis* as the right *logos* he is saying that *phronêsis* is the state in which one generates correct practical syllogisms.⁶⁸ When he says that character-virtue is a matter of acting and feeling as the right *logos* says, or that it lies in an intermediate-state defined by the right *logos*, or that it is “with” the right *logos*, he means that character-virtue is a matter of feeling and of desiring to act as those correct practical syllogisms prescribe.⁶⁹ Most generally, he is saying that what transforms proto-virtue into strict virtue is the grasping of correct practical syllogisms: prescriptions backed up by

⁶⁸ Some might object that *phronêsis* is not (only) a reasoning capacity but (also) a perceptual one (see e.g. McDowell 1998, 28). Aristotle does indeed imply that *phronêsis* involves perceptual or quasi-perceptual discernment of particulars (see especially *EN* VI.8 1142a23-30), but any interpretation will have to reconcile this with the characterization of it as being *logos* or being with *logos*, and mine can do so fairly simply: *phronêsis* is the state by virtue of which we grasp correct practical syllogisms, but some premises of these syllogisms will be reached not through further syllogizing, but instead through perception (or, in the case of the major premise – the stating of the goal – from one’s ethical character (see Moss 2012)). Having the right *logos* means grasping all the right premises, sometimes with the help of some non-syllogistic capacity, as well as combining them in the right ways.

⁶⁹ The second and third of these claims about virtue and *logos* may seem to state some further relation, but on closer inspection reduce to this one basic claim. Regarding the second claim: some take *EN* II.6’s claim that virtue itself “lies in a mean-state determined by right *logos*” to mean that *phronêsis* determines not only the right actions and passions, but additionally the right character-state. But this would be redundant: Aristotle explains the claim that virtue is a mean-state (*mesôtês*) with the claim that it aims at a mean in actions and passions (II.6 1106b27-28), and even says that it is a mean-state *on account of (dia)* aiming at that mean (II.9 1109a20-23). So by determining the mean at which virtue should aim, *phronêsis* thereby determines the mean-state in which virtue lies. Regarding the third claim: in VI.13 Aristotle says that virtue is not merely *kata* (in accordance with) *logos* but actually “with *logos*” – precisely the phrase he used to describe *phronêsis*, craft, and science in book VI. This is confusing: does he now think that both virtue and *phronêsis* are rational, in the same way? But a look at the context solves the problem: just after saying that virtue is “with the right *logos*,” and just before saying that it is “with *logos*,” he explains both claims by identifying the right *logos* as *phronêsis* (1144b26-30). Character-virtue is “with *logos*” in that *phronêsis* is a necessary condition of it – not because it contains in itself some rational element.

final-cause explanations. And when we look at Aristotle's claims about what *phronêsis* adds to proto- virtue, we find that this is precisely what he does claim.

In a discussion that spans *EN* VI.12-13, Aristotle directly questions the value of *phronêsis*:

For what is it needed? For if *phronêsis* is the [virtue] concerned with the just and fine and good for man, but these are the things which it belongs to the good man to do, we are no more practical about these things by virtue of knowing (*outhen praktikôteroi tōi eidenai auta*) (*EN* VI.12 1143b21-4)

In response he makes two claims.

First, he strongly implies that *phronêsis* does after all make a practical difference: it “makes right the things toward the goal,” i.e. enables us to hit on the actions which let us achieve our goals (VI 13 1144a8-9) This fits well with his characterization of *phronêsis* elsewhere as concerned with particulars (e.g. VI.12 1143a29), and as prescriptive (VI.10 1143a10). Without *phronêsis* one may have good intentions (good goals), but will be ignorant about how to execute them. Later in the discussion he emphasizes this point: natural virtue without *phronêsis*, like strength without eyesight, is harmful; *phronêsis* “makes a difference in action,” viz., by telling us *what* to do (VI.13 1144b8-17, passages a.-b. above). So *phronêsis*, as our interpretation of right *logos* predicts, supplies the correct prescriptions.

But that is not all it supplies. Indeed, Aristotle's direct response to VI.12's query makes no mention of *phronêsis*' practical value at all:

But about being no more practical concerning fine and just things on account of *phronêsis*, we must begin a bit farther back, taking this as our starting-point: Just as we say that some do just actions without yet being just...so, it seems, it is possible to do each of these things in such a condition as to be really good – that is to say, on account of decision (*dia prohairetin*) and for the sake of the things done themselves. (*EN* VI.12 1144a11-20)

What the fully virtuous person has over the proto-virtuous is not, according to this response, that she always knows what to do, but that she decides on her actions for the sake of the correct goals.

It is this second function of *phronêsis* that Aristotle emphasizes in all his discussions of how full virtue differs from proto-virtue. Habituees do the right actions, but do not do them virtuously because they do not decide on them for the right reasons (*EN* II.4 1105a31-2). And in the detailed treatment of the difference between proto- and full courage that we saw above, spirited courage “seems to be real courage when decision (*prohairesis*) and the that-for-the-sake-of-which (*to hou heneka*) are added,” that is, when one ceases to act on account of passion and acts instead “on account of the fine, and as the *logos* [prescribes]” (*EN* III.8 1117a4-9, quoted above). This implies that the person with a naturally spirited temperament may well do the right things, and with the right feelings, but will still lack full virtue because she does not act from deliberation and decision – because she does not act for the right reasons. She lacks the right goal, and therefore has no account of how her actions promote it.⁷⁰ In other words, even if she does the right things – has the right *thats* – she will lack full virtue so long as she lacks the right *whys*.

⁷⁰ The naturally courageous person acts without having any goal, in the strict sense: she acts not on wish, but like a beast only on passion, which is too short-sighted to count as a desire for a goal. Some other states that resemble but fall short of courage do involve goals, but the wrong goals: people with “political courage” act in a way for the fine, but more directly on account of honor (1116a28-9).

Arguably Aristotle emphasizes the second function of *phronêsis* in these discussions because he thinks the first one – the providing of correct *thats* – is often redundant. To have *phronêsis* one must also have strict, rather than natural virtue (*EN* VI.13), and this is a product of ethical habituation (II.1); Ethical habituation, however, supplies *thats* (I.4 1095a4-6). Thus the courageous person, when he does not have time to deliberate, can do the right thing on the basis of his character-state (*EN* III.8 1117a18-22); VI.12’s claim that “we are no more practical by virtue of knowing” implies that the same would be true of the virtuous person in many circumstances. Notably, the parallel seems to hold in the technical case too: experience (*empeiria*) – proto-*technê* – provides a grasp of the particulars, i.e. of *thats* (*Met.* 981a7-9); hence as we saw above, “with regard to acting experience seems to differ from craft not at all” (*Met.* 981a12-15). Does Aristotle thus think that the right *logos*, both ethical and technical, is without any practical value, so that the only distinctive contribution it makes is the right explanation?

His considered view seems to be otherwise. In fact, a grasp of the *why* turns out to improve one’s grasp of the *thats*: “Just like archers who have a target,” those who understand the goal are better at achieving it (*EN* I.2 1094a22-4). A doctor who grasps health well enough to recognize how her treatments produce it can arguably treat unfamiliar diseases better than the mere empiric, and a *phronimos* who grasps the fine well enough to understand how her actions participate in it can arguably handle new situations better than the person with mere experience and habituated emotional responses. Aristotle’s occasional suggestions that habituated character-virtue is sufficient for right action – and that experience is sufficient for good production (see *Met.* I.1 981a12-15, quoted above) – must thus be overstatements.⁷¹

⁷¹ In Plato right *logos* makes a practical difference in another way: according to the *Meno*, true belief is just as good a guide to action as understanding only so long as it remains, but without an *aitias logismos* it will be unstable; thus someone with understanding-virtue will not be prone to error while someone with mere true-belief virtue will. It is tempting to conclude that Aristotle held the same view, but this seems a poor fit with his treatment of habituated virtue. Those who abandon their true beliefs about right action in the face of temptation, fear and the like are akratic,

It is important to recall, however, that on Aristotle's view the right *logos* would be worth having even if it made no practical difference. Perhaps that is why he sometimes lets himself speak as if those who lack the right *logos* already have the *thats*. Even if we were able to glean all the right *thats* from proper habituation – or from natural virtue, or from the experience of particulars that is a requirement for *phronêsis*, or from some cousin of deliberation that makes no explicit reference to goals – without the ability to furnish explanations we would lack real virtue.⁷² If this seems bizarre to us, that is perhaps because we forget why it is that Aristotle thinks virtue worth having: not in the first instance because it helps us do the right things, but rather because it lets us achieve our human good – the excellent activity of the *logos*-having elements of the soul.

X. *Logos* and rationality

At the start of the paper I argued that if we could get an account of what *logos* means in phrases like 'the right *logos*,' we could hope to use that account to illuminate phrases like 'the part of the soul that has *logos*' – that is, to illuminate Aristotle's theory of rationality. For Aristotle very strongly implies that the *logos* which one part of the soul has and the other lacks is the same *logos* that plays so large a role in virtue:

But there seems to be another *logos*-lacking nature in the soul [in addition to the vegetative], one which however partakes in a way in *logos*. For we praise the *logos* and the element of the soul that has *logos* (*ton logon kai tês psuchês ton*

but Aristotle's well-habituated people are not: akratics are characterized by unruly passions of precisely the sort that proper habituation precludes. His account of the practical value of correct explanations is different.

⁷² For a rejection of this view of virtue see Arpaly, who refers to it as "the venerable Aristotelian view that to act virtuously one needs...not simply [to be] acting for moral reasons, but rather acting for reasons *believed* or *known* to be moral reasons..." (Arpaly 2002, 72-3). For a contemporary defense of a view very like the one I here attribute to Aristotle see Alison Hills, "What is a moral expert?" (MS), which argues that "explicit moral understanding" is necessary for virtue.

logon echon) in the enkratic and akratic, for it exhorts them rightly (*orthôs*) and towards what is best. But there appears to be something else in them by nature besides the *logos*, which fights and resists the *logos*...There is something in the soul against the *logos*, opposing (*enantioumenon*) and resisting it. (*EN* I.13 1102b13-25)

Unless Aristotle is using the word with two different senses within a single line, the *logos* which belongs to the superior part of the soul is the very same one that, when praiseworthy, exhorts one rightly or correctly (*orthôs*) – that is, the *logos* which when right is a right *logos*. This means that what the superior part of the soul has, and the inferior part lacks, is an account.

Charitably construed, the claim would not be that one part of the soul actively has some particular account: most people's *logos*-having parts never grasp the right accounts, and even if they did it would be strange to think that the possession a particular piece of understanding confers a distinctive psychological status. Instead, this part has the capacity to grasp and generate accounts. (This does not entail that *logos* is now used to name a capacity; the notion of capacity is very plausibly built instead into the "have".⁷³ Alternately, we could appeal to the same point about "focal meaning" that we considered in regard to the claim that *phronêsis* is the right *logos*: if *logos* does here refer to a cognitive capacity, that is because the capacity is related in some way to *logoi*, accounts, namely by being the capacity to generate and grasp them.)

Can this however be the ability that Aristotle has in mind in distinguishing the parts of the soul?

In fact, this turns out to be a very natural reading of Aristotle's psychological theory in the *Ethics*.

⁷³ To "have *logos*" would mean "be capable of [grasping and generating] *logos*" – just as for example when Aristotle says that animals "have perception" (*aisthêsin echousin*, *de An.* 414b6), this clearly means not that animals have some particular occurrent perception, but that they are capable of perceptions – that the capacity to perceive is present in them (*huparchei ...to aisthêtikon*, 414a32-b1).

In VI.1 he introduces a distinction within the strictly *logos*-having part: there is a practical *logos*-having part and a theoretical one. When Aristotle identifies the first part as the calculative (*to logistikon*) because it engages in calculation or deliberation (*to logizesthai* or *bouleuesthai*), and the second as the *epistêmonikon* (VI.1 1139a12-13), we learn that the definitive activity of each is the activity by which it gains understanding. But we have already seen that what confers understanding is the grasping of explanatory accounts, and thus we should positively expect Aristotle's claim in saying that both parts "have *logos*" to be that both can grasp such accounts.

Moreover, this interpretation makes very good sense of Aristotle's most detailed characterization of what it means for a part to lack *logos*, in *EN* I.13:

The vegetative part shares in no way in *logos*, but the appetitive and in general desiderative part partakes [in *logos*] in a way (*metechei pôs*), insofar as it is attentive and obedient to it. This is the same way that we say that one who [attends or obeys] his father or friends has *logos*, and not as mathematicians do. That the *alogon* can be persuaded in a way by *logos* is revealed by the practice of admonition and all reproving and exhortation. (*EN* I.13 1102b25-03a1)

If to have *logos* is to be able to grasp and generate accounts, including the prescriptive accounts at issue in this discussion, then a part that cannot generate prescriptions – cannot deliberate and make decisions – strictly speaking lacks *logos*. Nonetheless, it has some claim to *logos* if it is able to heed prescriptions, because this entails having some awareness of them. Being persuaded by *logos* in the strict sense would mean understanding the account, but being influenced by an account enough to obey its warnings, threats, or commands counts as being persuaded "in a way."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Compare the comparison between the spirited part of the soul's listening to *logos* and its listening to a command (*epitagma*) at *EN* VII.6 1149a25-30.

Moreover, if we look at all the passages in which Aristotle identifies *logos* as what distinguishes humans from animals or the higher part of the soul from the lower – by contrast with those in which he names some other quality, e.g. the capacity for thought (*dianoia*, *noêsis*) – we find that most of these draw this same connection between possessing *logos* and being able to be persuaded.⁷⁵ This fits well with our interpretation: if to “have *logos*” is to be able to generate and grasp accounts, including arguments, then something that lacks *logos* cannot follow arguments, i.e. cannot be persuaded in the strict sense.

Thus our interpretation of *logos* fits well with Aristotle’s explicit descriptions of the *logos*-having and *logos*-lacking parts in the *Ethics*, and with many of his other uses of *logos* in contexts where it is usually translated ‘Reason’. Can it however explain more generally why Aristotle would identify *logos* as what distinguishes the superior, distinctively human part of our souls from the lower part that we share with animals? That is, can it do the work required of a theory of rationality?

Answering that question in full would be a long task, one that must wait for another occasion; let me end, however, with a brief sketch of how the answer might work.

First, it might be possible to explain all the distinctive cognitive and thereby ethical features that Aristotle attributes to humans as consequences of our ability to generate and follow accounts. It would be this, for example, that makes us able to think (*dianoesthai*) rather than merely to perceive, i.e. (among other things) to grasp universal essences rather than mere particulars. This may seem at first to get things backwards, but it may turn out to be a promising view: a broadly

⁷⁵ See especially *de An.* 428a19-24 and *Pol.* VII.12 1332a38-b8 on humans vs. animals, and *EE* II.8 1224b1-2 and *Rhet.* 1370a18-27 on the appetitive part of the soul. As I mentioned in the introduction, the *de An.* identifies the superior part not as the *logos*-having but instead as the *dianoêtikon* or *noêtikon*, thinking part, which implies that identifying it as *logos*-having serves to point out some particular feature of it – e.g. its ability to generate persuasive accounts – rather than its general superior abilities.

Inferentialist view on which a grasp of concepts presupposes the ability to grasp relations between them, and to question whether or not they apply – that is, to follow syllogisms and the other arguments Aristotle calls *logoi*.⁷⁶

There is also a second possibility, supported by the role of *logos* in the function argument. Perhaps Aristotle chooses to identify the superior part of the soul as the *logos*-having when he does (that is, mainly in ethical contexts) not because he thinks the ability to grasp and follow accounts is *presupposed* by all our other distinctively human abilities, but because he thinks that it is the *telos* of all these abilities. Humans are endowed with the capacity to grasp universals, and so on for the sake of grasping and following accounts – and this is because our ultimate *telos* is the activity that consists in grasping and following a certain very special sort of account: the right or true *logoi* that give us understanding, practical and theoretical.

If either of these suggestions can be borne out by further study, the project I outlined at the start of this paper will be a promising one. While it is both anachronistic and uninformative to translate *logos* as Reason, we can hope to learn a lot about Aristotle's idea of what we call Reason from his use of *logos*. The ability to understand and generate a *logos*, where a *logos* is an account, has good claim to be the fundamental cognitive capacity that sets us apart from animals.

If this view is right we can put it idiomatically by saying that Aristotelian rationality consists in the ability to grasp and provide reasons, so that *logos* is well-translated as lower-case-r 'reason'. We can continue translating *logon echon* as 'rational,' and we can even insist that in certain passages *logos* is after all best translated as 'Reason,' so long as we bear in mind that we now

⁷⁶ Irwin attributes a very similar view to Aristotle, on other grounds: "the central capacity presupposed by all [Aristotle's distinctions between thought and perception] is the capacity to recognize and make inferences on the basis of reasons...grasp of universals involves the capacity to recognize the features of objects as reasons for applying a concept to them" (Irwin 1998, 323).

know the focal meaning that underlies these derived ones. To have Reason is to be able to grasp accounts, and therefore to believe and do things on the basis of them. The possession of this capacity sets us apart from animals. The perfection of this capacity – the grasping of the right *logos* – makes us virtuous, wise, and *eudaimôn*. Whenever *logos* does come to mean Reason, this is a crucial chapter of the history it bears.⁷⁷

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