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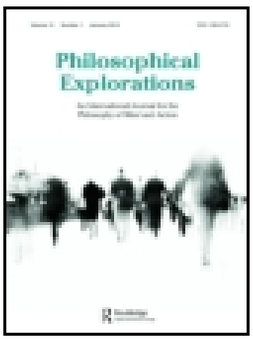

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Reason and intuition in Aristotle's moral psychology: why he was not a two-system dualist

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about the interplay between intuition and reason in Aristotle's moral psychology. After discussing briefly some other uses of 'intuition' in Aristotle's texts, I look closely at (a) Aristotle's notion of virtue and emotion (Section 2); (b) affinities, or lack thereof, between Aristotle's view and the Two-System (dual-process) model of moral judgement that has made headlines in contemporary moral psychology (Section 3); and some complications of the Aristotelian picture related to the specifics of moral functioning at different developmental levels (Section 4). The lesson drawn is that, despite recent attempts to co-opt Aristotle to the Two-System camp, he was, for all intents and purposes, a One-System theorist with respect to the relationship between intuitive emotion and reason. In that sense, his theories are in line with recent findings in neuroscience which show how emotion stimulates reflection rather than directly driving action. Even the motivational make-up of the 'incontinent' does not (as might perhaps be urged) provide a persuasive counter-example to a One-System interpretation of Aristotle.

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Aristotle; intuition; emotion; two-system theory; developmental levels; Jonathan Haidt

1. Introduction: the coarse-grained picture

The motivation behind this paper lies in responding to a suggestion commonly made by proponents of a Two-System (dual-process) model of moral judgement that it has strong affinities with Aristotelian virtue-based moral psychology regarding the role of intuitions (see e.g. Haidt 2012a). In order to explore this suggestion, we need to study the interplay between intuition and reason in Aristotle's moral psychology and, more specifically, in his theory of virtue. However, that task is a tall order for a number of reasons. One is the well-rehearsed problem of the multiple meanings of the term 'intuition' both in philosophy (Kekes 1986) and psychology (Osbeck 1999). Another problem is that there is no term corresponding unambiguously to the term 'intuition' (in any of its modern incarnations) in Aristotle's corpus. A third, and related problem, is that Aristotle discusses at three discrete

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issues – relating to distinct concepts – that all could be brought to bear on the topic of 'Aristotelian intuition'.

To plot a path through this thicket, I start by offering a coarse-grained picture of Aristotle's diffuse references to intuitions. I finish this section by addressing, in the broadest possible terms, the idea of what a 'moral' or – more accurately perhaps – a 'virtue-relevant' intuition could mean in Aristotle's system. Subsequent sections then aim to finegrain this coarse picture by looking more closely at (a) Aristotle's notion of virtue and emotion (Section 2); (b) affinities, or lack thereof, between Aristotle's view and the Two-System model of moral judgement (Section 3); and some complications of the Aristotelian picture related to the specifics of moral functioning at different developmental levels (Section 4). I close, in Section 5, with a few concluding remarks.

Let me avail myself, at the outset, of a definition of 'intuition' that closes off as few interpretative avenues as possible. 'Intuition' in this paper means 'spontaneous, non-deliberative/non-inferential judgement' (cf. e.g. Railton 2014). Notably, this definition leaves unanswered the fundamental question – which opens up a Pandora's box of controversy – of whether the relevant judgement relies on *previous* deliberation and/or inference, or whether it is somehow prior to or independent of reasoning. For present purposes I simply mean that the intuitive judgement is non-deliberative/non-inferential *at the time of passing it*; hence deserving the designation 'automatic' or 'spontaneous'.

Now, it so happens that, historically, most of the philosophical discussion about a notion of 'intuition' in Aristotle's system has not centred on his moral psychology or virtue ethics but, rather, his logical and metaphysical treatises. I need to acknowledge some of that discussion at this juncture, if only to distinguish it from references to intuition as a *psycho-moral* construct. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, one of the intellectual virtues that Aristotle explores is understanding (*nous*). This is a virtue of thought concerned with first principles of scientific knowledge; not action (1985, 156–157 [1140b30–1141a19]). While partly built up through experience, people also seem to have an intuitive 'natural consideration, comprehension and judgement' (1985, 166 [1143b6–8]). This intuitive side of *nous* is elicited more clearly in the *Metaphysics* and the *Posterior Analytics*, in which Aristotle explains that there are certain foundational scientific propositions that have no other proposition prior to them but are, rather, naturally (i.e. intuitively) knowable (1941a, 112 [72a7–9]). These propositions cannot, because of their foundational nature, be known by demonstration; only *nous* (*qua* what we would nowadays call 'intuition') can apprehend them. Hence scientific truth is, strictly speaking, not itself the 'originating source' of scientific knowledge (1941a, 186 [100b5–15]). The geometer and the arithmetician simply take these propositions as given (1941b, 736 [1005a29–32]), for there is nothing else they can do, on pain of regress. A further exploration of the nature of those primary propositions (as analytic; *a priori*; necessary: namely, as having all or some of those properties) would take us far into Kantian and Kripkean territory that is, of course, remote to Aristotle. What I simply note here is that the most commonly invoked notion of intuition in Aristotle has nothing to do with spontaneous emotional spurs to actions but rather with the intuitive grasp of non-demonstrable truths, arguably underlying all science.

Another notion of 'intuition' that can be wrenched from Aristotle's texts – and which is potentially closer to the psycho-moral area – concerns his proposed method of conceptual inquiries. When we want to identify the most appropriate meaning of terms like 'happiness' or 'continence', we 'must set out the appearances [*phainomena*], and first of all go

through the puzzles. In this way, we must prove the common beliefs [*endoxa*]' ideally, 'all the common beliefs, but if not all, then most of them, and the most important' (1985, 173 [1145b1–8]). Here Aristotle is clearly setting out a method of respect for, and faithfulness to, what we would call 'linguistic intuitions' – not only those of 'the wise', but also of 'the many'. While nothing in what Aristotle says about this method excludes the possibility of considerable trimmings of the ragged edges of common intuitions, he is evidently proposing some sort of a reflective interplay between theoretical constructs and what people intuitively understand concepts to mean, reminding us that if we depart too far from ordinary intuitions, our conceptual studies become futile or trivial for practical purposes. Somewhat ironically, Aristotle is more consistent in this form of methodological naturalism than many current psychologists, by making studies of psycho-moral constructs social scientific 'all the way down' to the level of linguistic intuitions. While paying lip service to this method, shortcuts that Aristotle would have lamented are common in current psychology, where the theorists simply avail themselves of dictionary definitions or make *argumentum-ad-verecundiam* nods to authorities in the field: namely, to the understandings of 'the wise' but not 'the many' (see various examples in Kristjánsson 2018).

Methodological naturalism is an example of an area where contemporary social scientists seem eager to co-opt Aristotle to their camp. The new sentimentalists manning the Two-System barricades in moral psychology are also eager to show their affinity (or at least compatibility) with an Aristotelian approach to moral decision-making (Haidt 2012a). I argue in the remainder of the paper this this move is, to put it mildly, insufficiently motivated. To be sure, what I would call the 'soft rationalism' of Aristotle (which provides a role for emotion in moral epistemology and normative ethics) is slightly closer to the new sentimentalism than is the hard rationalism of Plato or Kant (see Kristjánsson 2018, chap. 2). Yet Aristotle is not a Two-System theorists on any plausible understanding, and there are indeed resources in his works that support the findings of recent *anti*-Two-System research in moral psychology.

In what follows, the attention turns therefore from Aristotle's concepts of *nous*, *phainomena* and *endoxa* – which could all be broadly understood as 'intuition' on some modern conception or another – to his notion of 'moral intuitions'. Now, there is again no concept in Aristotle with a one-to-one correspondence to a modern concept of 'moral intuition'. However, it is not difficult to envisage a narrative that would, at first sight, seem to bring the Two-System theory and Aristotle's account into close alignment. I say more about the Two-System theory in Section 3, but here is an abbreviated description of its account of 'moral intuition'. People typically experience a moral intuition about a given state of affairs – an emotion-driven hunch or an implicit sense of what is the appropriate reaction. Such intuitions normally do not require explicit, effortful reasoning; indeed they seem to persist in the face of contrary rational judgement or of the lack of any rationally grounded conviction. They often arise non-voluntarily and are not fully articulable. Most importantly, they motivate spontaneous action, uninformed by conscious deliberation, although people exhibit a tendency – through motivations such as peer pressure and canonical norms of discourse – to justify their actions retrospectively.

Here would be the proposed Aristotelian corollary, then. Human beings typically act upon motivations provided by general traits of character: vicious, virtuous or somewhere in between. We are essentially creatures of habits (*qua* traits). These traits include emotions (*pathe*) which are the most immediate motivators of action. However, we are

not really responsible for our episodic emotions, such as our bouts of anger or pangs of jealousy; those happen to us rather than being chosen by us. Hence, Aristotelian *pathe* are quite similar to what the new sentimentalists such as Haidt understand moral intuitions to be.

The problem with this analogy is that it is over-simplified to the brink of being blatantly wrong. To be sure, Aristotle does not deny that we may be driven by knee-jerk reactions to events: conditional reflexes and non-cognitive feelings. However, those would not be *pathe* on his understanding, and the claim that *pathe* are not within our responsibility elides important complexities, elicited in the following section. Let it suffice to say at this point that Aristotelian moral intuitions (*qua pathe*) are part of a learning system that is infused with reason – be it good or bad reason. Moral judgement is in essence, as Sauer (2017, 264) puts it, 'an exercise of reason'. There is no 'brute' moral intuition in Aristotle, and even what he calls 'natural virtue' is not 'natural' as in either 'genetically pre-programmed' or 'conditioned by the nature of one's society'.

To give a quick example of the Aristotelian picture (to be elaborated upon gradually in the following sections), suppose a student *A* perceives a teacher conferring lavish praise on a fellow student *B* for work that is inferior to *A*'s. This might just initiate a fleeting affective response that does not amount to an intuitive judgement, or perhaps no response at all (if *A* does not care). Alternatively, it might evoke the thought 'I would have deserved this praise more than *B*' which then elicits the emotion of jealousy with its concomitant painful feeling and potential goal-directed activity. This jealous intuitive judgement could either (1) bypass reason and issue directly in action or (2) be deliberatively processed and lead to a more reflective action later (or possibly no action after a slow *phronetic* deliberation). However, even if (1) is the case, the very thought underlying the emotion is based on various previous thoughts and experiences, which have been processed by reason. One does not simply become jealous out of nowhere; the emotion is grounded in a complex set of social norms and expectations of non-differential treatment. Jealous reactions are not just a non-rational emotional 'habit', based on 'involuntary' and 'innate' intuitive responses.

True, as this example has illustrated, there is both quick and slow moral decision-making in Aristotle, but the difference between the two does not correspond to that between the non-rational versus rational or to emotion versus reason. Aristotle was simply not a Two-System dualist, full stop. I explain why below.

2. Virtue and emotion in Aristotle

In this section, I offer a general account of the emotions and their relations to virtue in Aristotle's system (see further in Kristjánsson 2018, chaps 1–2). The aim is to pre-empt certain common misunderstandings that may give rise to the hijacking of Aristotle into the Two-System-theory camp (see further in Section 3).

Aristotle is a *cognitivist* regarding the nature of emotions: he does not offer a physiological Darwinian account. Endless debates rage about the exact nature of the cognitive component in Aristotelian emotions: whether it comprises belief, judgement, thought (as I assumed in the jealousy example earlier), or just perception with representational content. Be that as it may, emotions in Aristotle are not non-cognitive thrusts or mere 'feels', although they include mixed-valence feelings of pain and pleasure. In so far as

we act on an emotional intuition, we act on a cognition that is essentially reason-infused and reason-responsive, although the reason informing it may happen to be defective: logically or morally.

It is an Aristotelian commonplace that just as cognitions are components of emotions, so emotions are components of virtues. How do emotional traits fit into Aristotle's virtue theory? Here are the basics. Every person's soul has a rational part (reason) and a non-rational part. The non-rational part is again divided into two subparts. One is 'plant-like' and 'shared [with other living things]'; it is naturally unresponsive to reason. The other part, comprising our appetites and goals/desires (and emotions in so far as they involve goals as well as cognitions), is responsive to reason and can, to varying degrees, 'share in reason' (1985, 30–32 [1102a15–1103a3]). The degree to which this non-rational part does or does not share in *sound* reason further determines the extent to which instantiations of it – for instance, emotions – can be counted as morally justifiable. 'Sharing in reason' can, however, assume different forms according to the developmental level of the moral learner. We initially share in reason by internalising the advice of our moral educators and role models, making their reason our own. We then progress by taking joint rational decisions along with them, and finally 'sharing in reason' means sharing in the reason of our own developed *phronesis*.

After this conceptual deck-clearing, we are in a better position to accommodate the specific Aristotelian insights about the relationship between emotion and virtue. A distinctive feature of Aristotle's virtue theory is the assumption that emotional reactions constitute essential ingredients in virtues. Emotional dispositions can, no less than action dispositions, have an 'intermediate and best condition […] proper to virtue' – a condition in which the relevant emotions are felt 'at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end and in the right way' (1985, 44 [1106b17–35]). If a relevant emotion is 'too intense or slack' for its present object, we are badly off in relation to it, but if it is intermediate, we are 'well off' (1985, 41 [1105b26–28]). And persons can be fully virtuous only if they are regularly disposed to experience emotions in this medial way. This theory ties in with Aristotle's teleological assumption of psycho-social homeostasis, according to which the parts of the soul are arranged such that it may adjust successfully to the various social situations in which individuals will find themselves, *inter alia* by adopting medial emotional states of character (see further in Kristjánsson 2007, chap. 4).

Aristotle enters an important caveat here, however. Specific episodic emotions do not constitute virtues any more than individual actions do. Rather, virtues are settled character states: *hexeis*. We are praised or blamed for our virtues and vices, but we 'do not blame the person who is simply angry' (1985, 41 [1105b20–1106a7]). The underlying idea is that we cannot control the experience of occurrent emotions once the relevant emotional disposition to experience them is in place – with emotional habits becoming cobwebs and then cables as the years go by. So talk of the moral justifiability of emotion is about emotions *qua* emotional traits, not about the experience of episodic emotions. Aristotle is making a clear nod to prevailing common-sense views about the passivity of episodic emotions: those are not within our direct control *here and now*. The trouble is that, generally, what is outside our control is also outside the realm of moral responsibility and, hence, of evaluations of moral justifiability. Aristotle famously solves this problem by explaining how we are *originally* responsible – jointly with our educators – for acquiring

our traits, and, how we are, therefore, indirectly accountable for individual acts or emotions stemming from those traits.

Let me now say something about emotional motivation. Aristotelian emotions include, in addition to cognitions and feelings, goal-directed activity as a component. It is clear that, for Aristotle, emotions motivate actions by providing impetus for them (via the specific emotion-relevant goals) and, more generally, by putting fire in our bellies. By possessing, say, the virtuous trait of compassion, 'we are said to be in some condition', but it is because of its emotional component that we 'are said to be moved' (1985, 41 [1106a5–7]). 'Thought [*dianoia*]', Aristotle says further, 'moves nothing; what moves us is thought aiming at some goal and concerned with action'. Moreover, 'the origin of an action […] is decision [*prohairesis*], and the origin of decision is desire (*orexis*) together with reason that aims at some goal'. Hence, decision also requires 'a state of character', ideally a virtue, that provides the motivational pull (1985, 150 [1139a32–1139b6]).

This sound very Humean. However, by applying terms like 'Humean' to Aristotle, we are opening up a box full of conceptual goods that did not exist in Aristotle's time and only came into being, as conceptualisations, in the eighteenth century. I will make do, at this juncture, with briefly summarising and endorsing Terry Irwin's account of Aristotle's motivational theory, as it seems to offer a rare combination of insights, drawing on both what Aristotle 'really thought' and on the relationship to modern theories of motivation.

The question that Irwin (1975) poses – ignoring possible anachronisms – is whether or not Aristotle is a 'Humean' about motivation. To be a 'Humean' in a full sense one needs to accept both the thesis that reason alone (independent of desires) does not motivate and the thesis that reason is irrelevant to the choice of ultimate ends, which is based on non-deliberative desires. It is easy to elicit the first thesis from Aristotle's text cited above. The second thesis seems to follow naturally also if we take at face value Aristotle's repeated claims about *phronesis* only constituting reasoning about means to ends, not about the ends themselves that seem rather to be formed non-deliberately through the cultivation of (habituated) virtue (1985, 168, 171–172 [1144a6–9, 1145a4–6]). There are other places in Aristotle's texts that do challenge this understanding, however, and there is good reason to take those seriously, because they read as more accurate elaborations, or even corrections, of the general thesis about *phronesis* being concerned with means only.

We are now told not only that non-intellectual habituation is insufficient for full virtue, but that full virtue requires a decision to choose virtue *for itself*, and that decision requires *phronesis*. So, although *phronetic* virtue grasps the right ends because the virtuous person has the right desires, those desires require *phronesis* for their creation precisely in order to count as the right desires in the first place (1985, 39–40, 168–169 [1105a28–32, 1144a13–22]). In other words, the transition from habituated to *phronetic* virtue is one of essence: the previously non-intellectually founded desires become deliberative desires, and they are no longer the *same* desires as before, simply dressed up in fancy intellectual clothes, but rather *new* desires, created by *phronesis*. Hence, I agree with Irwin (1975, 571) that Aristotle cannot be categorised as a Humean with respect to Hume's second thesis: that all practical thought depends on non-deliberative desires. To take compassion as an example, the compassion of the reflective adult is not the same compassion as that of the well habituated but unreflective child: not just child-like compassion amplified by reason. It is another kind of compassion, chosen for its intrinsic value from a firm state of reflective character.

We must avoid an interpretative overreach here, however. The core component of *phronesis* is the agent's blueprint of the good life (of *eudaimonia*), and this blueprint must already be in place, with its concomitant desires (originally adopted non-deliberately from educators) to actualise this good life, for *phronesis* to be operative at all. So it is not as if *phronetic* decision-making is about choosing (new) ends. However, there is going to be a feedback loop from the decisions back to the blueprint conception of the end, which gradually changes the complexion of this conception and the desires accompanying it, as can be seen from Figure 1 (based on the model in Darnell et al. 2019):

Suppose an agent happens to be inclined towards a good end (a proper blueprint of flourishing) and, through a process of *phronetic* deliberation, wisely chooses an action that appropriately fits with the goodness of the end informing that candidate action. That subsequent choice of action contributes (particularly over time, with consistently wise repetition, across relevantly similar circumstances) to the shape of his or her character, and, so also, the ends desired, constitutive of the blueprint in the above model. In contrast, a merely instrumental deliberation would just calculate the efficient achievement of an end already in view. But *phronesis* adds a further criterion that grasps the fit between the goodness of the end and an action – particularly in light of the context of the act and other specificities of the agent – that embody the wisdom of that fit. None of this is tantamount to saying that *phronetic* activity makes the agent choose an end *in and of itself*. The choiceworthiness of the (objectively grounded) end of human life informs how the practically wise agent grasps the adequacy of a candidate action, as the most adequate and suitable choice. However, the gradual adjustments of the end in light of new experiences (as in the example above of how an adult understanding of compassion and its role in the good life will differ from a child's understanding) suffice to undermine a Humean interpretation of Aristotle's motivational theory and, by implication, a Two-System view also.

At the end of this section we are in a good position to explain what it would mean, in Aristotle's system, for an adult to act spontaneously on the intuition of an emotion like compassion. It means acting on a cognition: here (for compassion) the thought that

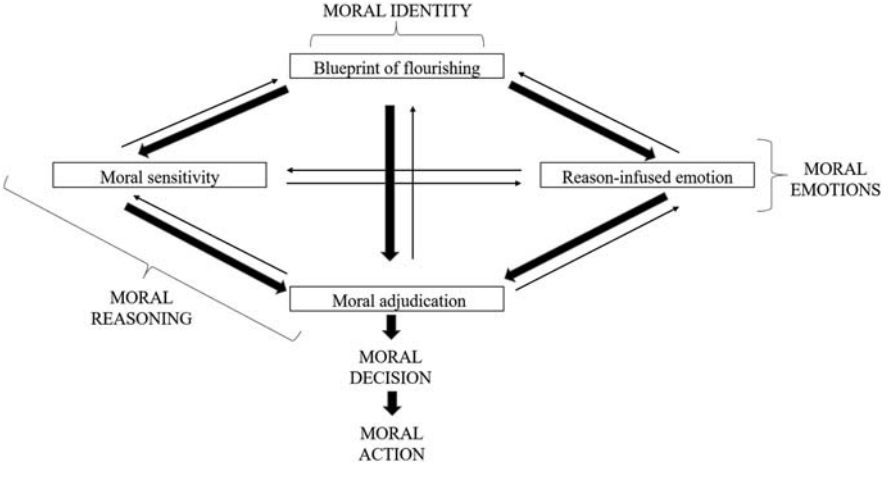

Figure 1. A Neo-Aristotelian Model of Wise (Phronetic) Moral Decision-Making.

someone has suffered undeserved misfortune. It means acting on a cognition that has been formed by reason (be it mainly other people's reason or your own reason or a combination of both). It means being 'jointly morally responsible' for the trait underlying the intuition. And it means acting on an intuition, the foundations of which have been deliberatively revised and reformed by your *phronesis* (if you are a fully virtuous person). That the reaction and action happen quickly and spontaneously does not mean they have been activated by a unique decision-making system, somehow bypassing reason. Messi shooting spontaneously at goal on an off-chance is not exercising essentially different footballing skills from Messi shooting reflectively at goal after a pre-planned attack. The margin of error is probably larger in the first case, but there are not two radically different systems at work. *Mutatis mutandis* for Aristotelian intuitive *pathe* versus reflective choices motivated by *pathe*.

3. A brief critique of the Two-System theory and its hijacking of Aristotle

I offered a capsule account of the Two-System-theory view of moral intuitions in Section 1. Given how much publicity this theory garnered in recent years, I allow myself to be equally brief about its general presuppositions – just relying on some received wisdoms from its high-profile proponent Haidt (see further in Kristjánsson 2016).

Haidt's general position can best be summed up by saying that he considers recent empirical work in moral psychology to have left the rationalist (Kantian-cum-Kohlbergian) creed about moral motivation – that moral judgement is *generally* or at least *ideally* caused by moral reasoning – tattered and torn. Objective research, freed from the trammels of customary beliefs, shows that, when presented for example with a test case of consensual sibling sex, 'intuition comes first, strategic reasoning second' (Haidt 2013, 286). Most of us find the idea of such sex appalling; only after our implicit snap intuition has been pumped accordingly do we start to look for justifications to confirm it. Haidt's common refrain here is that the emotional dog wags its rational tail, rather than vice versa; the affective system has primacy, time-wise, strength-wise and development-wise, over the reasoning one (Haidt 2001). Moreover, the implicit affective reactions are usually good predictors of moral judgements and behaviours, which is more than can be said about explicit moral reasons (Haidt 2007). The affective system is essentially innate – we are all born equipped with an intuitive ethics – although culture later modifies its content (Haidt and Joseph 2004).

This is a pretty clear general motivational theory. The devil lies, however, in the detail, and we need to look more closely at the intuition–reason dichotomy underlying it. Haidt defines *moral intuition* as the sudden (quick, effortless, automatic, non-reflective, non-reason-infused) appearance in consciousness of an affectively valenced moral judgement: a gut feeling of approval or disapproval (2001, 818). He further hypothesises that such intuitions come about as evolutionary adaptations, built into regions of the brain and body. Yet, they need shaping from a particular culture, which enhances the further development of some of them but suppressed others, through immersion in custom complexes and peer socialisation. Intuition is thus 'both innate and enculturated' (2001, 826–827).

What about *reasoning*, then? Haidt (2001) unflinchingly understands reasoning in a Kantian sense as a conscious, intentional and controllable mental activity of ratiocination and reflection, whereby one evaluates arguments (in this case, moral) and reaches a

conclusion/decision (2001, 818). He is, however, radically un-Kantian in his views on its scope and power. Moral reasoning is, as evidenced by empirical studies, 'rarely the direct cause of moral judgement' (2001, 815) or the wellspring of behaviour. Rather it presents us with slow *ex post facto* rationalisations that help us confirm and explain our intuitive judgements. We illusorily think, however, that our reasons have *caused* our judgement.

Put together, this view of the affective, temporal primacy of moral intuition versus moral reasoning amounts to the sort of dual-process model for which Haidt has gained fame. The automatic mode of System 1 calls the shots by means of moral gut reactions of savvy emotional push buttons, at best, biases and stereotypes at worst; whereas System 2, with its logic, stats and moral rationalisations/justifications, is brought in retrospectively to clean up the mess – or for self-gratulatory, but equally confabulatory, purposes if our intuitive choices are seen as having been warranted. This theory is too well known to require further rehearsals here; so are the common objections to it. It is thus standardly urged that (a) there is no inherent incompatibility between automaticity and rationality, nor an essential compatibility between automaticity and emotionality; (b) far from being 'brute', intuitions are typically educated by experience and teaching and rely on large banks of implicit knowledge; and (c) there is a world of difference between naïve and well-formed intuition (see e.g. Narvaez 2010; Sauer 2017).

For present purposes, it is more relevant to ask why the new sentimentalists think they can enlist Aristotle as an ally. Although Haidt sometimes suggests that we abandon the Greek worship of reason wholesale (2001, 822), at other times he wants to co-opt Aristotle to his camp. He understands and appreciates the idea of the 'automaticity of virtue' in Aristotle. He likes the idea that virtue *qua* second nature is but 'a refinement of our basic nature, an alteration of our automatic responses'; and he absolutely 'loves' Aristotle's 'emphasis on habit'. In general, Haidt considers virtue ethics the moral theory that best accords with recent findings in moral psychology (Haidt and Joseph 2004, 61–62; Haidt 2012a, 2012b).

Unfortunately, Haidt's sporadic Aristotelianism is largely based on misunderstandings. He seems, for instance, to labour under the common illusion that 'natural virtue' in Aristotle is a primitive stage of virtue with which we are born and later refine. 'Natural virtue' is anything but that in Aristotle. It is actually a somewhat infelicitous name for a stage of habituated but non-*phronetic* virtue (see Curzer 2012, 305–307). There is, indeed, not a hint of the idea of any innate natural virtue in Aristotle. For while we are adapted by nature to receive virtue through being endowed with its raw materials, virtue does not 'arise in us […] by nature' (Aristotle 1985, 33 [1103a23–26]), and we are born neither good nor bad. Furthermore, when writers on Aristotle mention 'habit', that term is actually used as an (unhelpful) rendering of his notion of *hexis*. A *hexis* is a dispositional state of character, incorporating emotion *and reason* as well as action; it is not the site of a spontaneous knee-jerk reaction. Haidt's Aristotle thus constitutes a lean counterpart, if not a caricature, of the real Aristotle (see further in Kristjánsson 2016).

There is not just a single misunderstanding at stake here, but rather a series of misunderstandings. One of them it to locate the starting point for a moral intuition in Aristotle in 'automatic', episodic, occurrent emotions rather than in emotions that are not episodic, but instead arise from more stable states: namely, ones that generate reason-receptive occurrent emotions and desires. Another misunderstanding is driven by a view of

moral intuitions that is too bifurcated from a process of a wise deliberation and moral judgement that is integral to understanding those intuitions. The Aristotelian emotion theory, which I tried to summarise earlier, explains how a virtuously stable emotional disposition enables the occurrent emotion to be reason-receptive, and so, friendly to wise deliberations that will issue in moral judgement and action. However, it seems the social intuitionists misunderstand this dispositional anchoring of our moral intuitions as amounting to a habitual source of 'brute' moral intuitions.

Someone could object, however, that I overlook a possible compatibility between the early, uncritical stages of cultural habituation in Aristotle and the 'social' part of Haidt's 'social intuitionism'. Now, there is a line of thought according to which there is no 'early' stage of heteronomous conditioning in Aristotle's theory of moral development; such development (ideally at least) taps into the learner's reasoning faculties from the word go. Sherman (1989), for example, has made that argument, mostly for substantive rather than exegetical reasons: namely, in order to make Aristotle's developmental theory more coherent and psychologically plausible by today's standards. However, let us rely here on the standard textual interpretation of Aristotle (e.g. Burnyeat 1980), according to which a period of autonomous *phronesis* development follows upon the heels of pretty mindless enculturation or socialisation into habits. Is there a corollary here to Haidt's model?

The first obstacle to answering that question in the affirmative is that, as Sauer (2017, 123–124) drily notes, 'social intuitionism isn't very social at all: the moral agent […] is a radically unencumbered, monadic subject'. To be sure, Haidt and his colleagues have not given a very systematic account of 'what', 'where' and 'how' socialisation adds to the subject's pre-programmed intuitions. Nevertheless, it is possible to tease out of their account a number of tasks that socialisation performs (see esp. Haidt and Bjorklund 2008), and the authors explicitly ask us: 'Please don't forget the social part of the model' (2008, 181)! Despite the affective and motivational primacy of pre-social intuitions, socialisation exerts 'normative governance' on those intuitions by helping us steer those into conformity with dominant familial or cultural norms. Socialisation thus (a) polishes our personal judgements to make them align better with what others in our 'parish' believe; (b) helps with moral decision-making where intuitive judgements come into internal conflict in ways that require adjudication, thereby turning sets of intuitions into coherent virtues; (c) enables us to take a stand on issues where our own intuitions happen to be weak. All this 'assisted externalisation' helps us tune our genetically programmed intuitions up and down, but it cannot reverse them completely (as shown by the downfall of various utopian educational efforts, see 2008, 201).

While it is no doubt possible to identify certain similarities between this social-intuitionist account of socialisation and Aristotelian habituation (on Burnyeat's 1980 standard account), those will be dwarfed by significant differences. Haidt and his colleagues make socialisation in one sense much less demanding and in another sense much more demanding than Aristotelian habituation. It is *less demanding* in that it does not create new intuitions; it just polishes pre-existing ones. In the Aristotelian model, however, the main goal of habituation is to pick up new reason-infused intuitions from external role models through a process of emotional sensitisation. It is *more demanding* in that it sees socialisation as helping with the task of moral decision-making – because what

comes pre-programmed are just the individual emotional judgements, not mechanism for turning those into a system of pragmatic, politically coherent decisions representing complex, unified virtue traits. By contrast, for Aristotle (on the standard interpretation) the integration and adjudication process does not start to kick in until the early habituation period has been mostly completed. 'A fully encultured person is a virtuous person', Haidt and Bjorklund say (2008, 216). For Aristotle, the 'fully encultured person' stands at the brink of virtue, ready to embrace it – but is as yet *not* virtuous because she has not subjected the content of the enculturation to the arbitration of her own autonomous reason (Darnell et al. 2019).

In what can truly count as fortunate developments for Aristotelian moral psychology, recent findings in affective and behavioural neuroscience seem to support Aristotle's theories but undermine the Two-System model. The picture of the intuitive system that is emerging is of an experience-based, statistically sophisticated and reason-friendly, even positively reason-stimulating, learning system that attunes us, in collaboration with our intellect, to reality (for overviews, see esp. Railton 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Sauer 2017). The affective system seems to be constantly active in the business of evaluating and adjudicating alternatives – and in doing so, it draws on previous experiences and stored implicit knowledge. It thus recruits the human capacity for meta-cognition. What is more; it does not only do so at crunch moments when we meet with unexpected quandaries; rather, more like the Google search engine, it prepares 'answers' to 'possible questions' long before we ask them – by processing all the information that is already in the system: metabolising the past to simulate possible futures (Railton 2016a, 45–46; 2016b).

Even more significantly from an Aristotelian perspective, recent empirical research into moral decision-making processes indicates that the essential purpose of (moral) emotions is not to elicit action directly but to stimulate reflection (Baumeister et al. 2007). The intuitive/emotional system implicitly invokes what Aristotle would call 'intellectual virtues' to simulate, predict and evaluate future outcomes. As with the Google search engine, this happens so quickly that we become tempted to conclude that the moral motivation just arises here and now (like an answer to a fortuitous Google query), without any prospective preparation. However, far from being the case (just as in the example of Google), the intuitive system has already simulated and predicted the risks of, say, consensual sibling sex – so when the 'temptation' arises, we feel a deep intuitive urge to refrain from it that we tend to explain away as a non-rational, morally dumbfounding gut reaction, when it is actually the outcome of a long-standing preparatory process (Railton 2016b, 240–245).

The quickest of glances at the most recent findings from brain research thus seems to indicate that the 'new synthesis in moral psychology' (Haidt 2007) is not so new after all, but rather empirically outdated. Emotions that trigger moral action are not non-cognitive, intuitive thrusts but rather mechanisms that are infused with reason and experience: mechanisms that both draw prospectively on intellectual considerations and stimulate further reflections as new situations evolve (cf. Sauer, on how reason figures in the acquisition, formation and maintenance of 'educated intuitions', in his 2017 book, which is quite Aristotelian in its orientation although Sauer does not mention Aristotle as much as once). Obviously, empirical brain research cannot corroborate directly Aristotle's taxonomy of intellectual virtues or their role in moral decision-making, but it should encourage

us to take a fresh look at his system and ask how it can aid understanding of the interplay between intuition and reason in people at different developmental and qualitative levels of moral functioning.

4. Intellectual virtues and developmental levels in aristotle: how is intuition informed and adjudicated?

The lesson to be drawn from the preceding section indicates that Aristotle was, for all intents and purposes, a One-System theorist with respect to the relationship between intuitive emotion and reason – although he realised that the reason infusing and integrating with emotion might be of varying quality for various external and internal reasons. One can have good reasons for believing external evidence which turns out, later or on closer inspection, to be wrong. For example, there was good reason to believe until recently that only fat but not sugar is responsible for clogging arteries, and to adjust one's diet accordingly. Or true information may be taken in but not processed correctly internally for various psychological reasons, including self-deceptions. So, a One-System theory offers as such no more guarantees than a Two-System one of getting the moral decision right.

Most of this 'lesson' is not articulated *explicitly* by Aristotle; after all there were no Jonathan-Haidts at the time to argue with. Aristotle's nemesis was the radical rationalist Plato rather than sentimentalists of the post-Humean kind. What I have said above is just *implicit* in his account of the nature of emotions and emotional motivation. Aristotle himself was more interested in another sort of puzzle about emotion–reason synthesis or integration: namely, how it develops in tandem with different levels of moral functioning (cf. Sauer 2017, chs 2–3, for a modern take on similar questions). Phrasing this by saying that Aristotle was more interested in the *diachronic* rather than the *synchronic* nature of emotional intuitions would be slightly misleading, however, for Aristotle was also deeply concerned about the problem of being faced with two contrasting emotional intuitions at the same time, both informed by good moral reasons, as in the classic case of having to choose between being honest and compassionate when one option seems to exclude the other (Darnell et al. 2019). Aristotle is famous for having been 'naively optimistic' about how such tensions are resolved in the case of those who have reached the level of the fully virtuous (the *phronimoi*): those who have fully mastered the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*: 'For as soon as he has [*phronesis*], which is a single state, he has all the virtues as well' (Aristotle 1985, 171 [1145a1–2]). Unfortunately, most current Aristotelians doubt that this the unity-of-virtue thesis satisfies the principle of 'minimal psychological realism', which asserts that theorists must ensure, when constructing a moral theory or ideal, that the character, decision processing and behaviour prescribed are 'possible, or are perceived to be possible, for creatures like us' (Flanagan 1991, 32).

Various options are on table here. First, one could try to engage in some exegetical acrobatics with respect to Aristotle's texts, showing that the unity-of-virtue thesis is not as radical as it may seem: a task that is difficult but perhaps not impossible. Second, one could argue that while the claim is meant to hold for the 'fully virtuous', the idea of 'full virtue' is just an idealisation in Aristotle, for most people never reach that developmental level, and even those who do so *qua* full understanding of the nature of the good life, will be prevented through various psycho-social vulnerabilities and lack of external

resources from bringing all the virtues to successful completion. However, this does not seem to have been Aristotle's idea at all; although the *phronimoi* are a minority, they are a sizable minority, and there even exist some super-*phronimoi*, namely the so-called *megalopsychoi*, who are free of ordinary human vulnerabilities and have ample resources for virtue completion. The third option is just to bite the bullet and accept the full unity-of-virtue thesis with all its moral and psychological implications. But then we are back to square one: this thesis seems to make light of both the pre-decision ambivalences and post-decision residues of pain that blight the lives of even the most virtuous. Moreover, it also under-estimates the extent to which the virtuous may falter when thrust passively into unfamiliar situations involving strong contextual norms of behaviour, as evidenced by the recent situationist literature.

The vagaries of the unity-of-virtue thesis aside, it is perhaps more instructive for present purposes to study emotion–reason integration in people at 'lower' developmental levels: namely, the levels at which most people are actually situated (Aristotle 1985, 190 [1150a15]). A note of caution should be struck, however, before we begin to talk cavalierly about an Aristotelian stage theory. Curzer (2012, chap. 15) made a stab at defining various discrete *levels* of virtue development, ranging from that of the many (*hoi polloi*) and the generous-minded (*eleutherios*) to the incontinent, continent, those with natural (habituated but non-*phronesis*-infused) virtue, to the properly virtuous and, above them, to those with superhuman or heroic virtue. Notice that Curzer was not saying that everyone needs to progress through those levels in the same order, Kohlberg-style, without skipping any of them, or that most people's moral functioning can be 'operationalised' so as to fall overall within a given level; nevertheless being aware of those milestones would help us get a handle on the normal trajectory of moral development. However, in a more recent work, Curzer (2016) has himself problematised any stage-theory interpretation of Aristotle and now seems to consider his previous descriptions of moral levels as shorthand idealisations rather than accurate depictions of the status of real people. On this anti-idealisation reading, given that virtue comprises various different components, individuals can be strong on one (say, on proper emotion) but weaker on another (say, on putting emotion into action). Rarely will all those components align in perfect harmony in a person; thus the multi-component view casts doubt on the usefulness of any stage-theory model. Notice that even if we stick to talk of 'developmental levels', we need to be aware of the fact that incontinence and continence in Aristotle are clearly not the natural stepping stones from the generous-minded to the fully virtuous; rather incontinence and continence are detours that the well-brought up can avoid – progressing rather directly towards full virtue via habituated virtue.

As we have seen above, Aristotle abides by the One-System assumption that meta-cognition and higher order reflective processes play a central role in moral judgement (cf. Sauer 2017, 76 – although Sauer is here interpreting contemporary findings, not analysing Aristotle's texts). There is one developmental level that may seem to constitute an exception, however, and indeed provide a direct counter-example to the One-System model: namely, *incontinence*. Like the continent, the incontinent person *knows* the good (as an 'outsider', although it has not seeped into her character) and *wants* to be good for motivationally externalist reasons. Like the continent also, the incontinent has contra-moral desires and does not experience the warm glow of 'flow' upon doing the right things. Unlike the continent, however, the incontinent is overcome by the pleasures of contra-moral

temptations and fails to live up to her own ideal (Aristotle 1985, 190, esp. [1050a11–14]). The standard interpretation of this picture is that, in the case of the incontinent, the contra-moral emotional intuitions manage to *bypass reason* altogether: the incontinent acts directly on her gut reactions (followed by remorse once reason kicks in later).

Things are a bit more complicated than that, however. The stereotypical example of the incontinent secretary who falls to the temptation offered by her flirty boss is not on a par with that of the Haidtian agent who experiences spontaneous disgust at the thought of consensual sibling sex. Most incontinent actions require much more than just spontaneous/automatic reactions. Jumping into bed with the boss requires considerable planning and cunning. In other words, it calls for the mediation of an intellectual virtue to plan the means to the relevant end and to concoct a plausible story to satisfy the cuckolded husband who is waiting at home. As it happens, there is such an intellectual virtue in Aristotle: namely, *deinotes* or calculation which is a non-morally-tethered intellectual virtue that helps people find means to their ends (Aristotle 1985, 169 [1144a24–31]). So even intuitions motivating incontinent actions cannot work in practice without the help of some sort of reason – although in this case the reason fails to pass muster morally (since *deinotes* is essentially amoral).

There is a remaining problem in Aristotle, however, to explain which intellectual virtue the continent draw upon to keep them on the straight and narrow. To be sure, the continent could just draw on *deinotes* to find means to individual ends, but what sets the continent apart is that they lead a (reasonably) integrated moral life, in which they do not fall to temptations. In their case, it is definitely not *phronesis* that secures this integration, for *phronesis* is reserved for the integration and adjudication of virtue-based motivations (but the continent are, ex *hypothesi*, not virtuous). It is hardly *deinotes* either, for it is difficult to imagine an essentially amoral virtue securing moral integration. There seem to be a missing intellectual virtue in Aristotle: playing a role akin to that of *integrity* in some modern accounts of virtue ethics (Kristjánsson 2019). There is notably no meta-virtue called 'integrity' in Aristotle's system: indeed, this feature sets his virtue ethics apart from many of its modern (including some neo-Aristotelian) counterparts. In this case, the moderns may have got one over on Aristotle.

5. Concluding remarks

My aim at the close of the preceding section was not to play down what Rorty calls the unsettledness of incontinence because of its production of 'a sense of vertigo about the structure and stability of rational agency' (2017, 177) in people who nevertheless possess moral identity. I have simply tried to show that *even* in the case of the most likely candidate – incontinence – Aristotle's theory does not lend itself to a Two-System interpretation of the kind that Haidt and his colleagues suggest.

Neo-Aristotelians have been nervous about the Two-System theory ever since it came onto the stage. While having some sympathy for its rejection of hard rationalism, they consider the pendulum to have swung too far in the opposite direction. A theory which turns reason into a mere maid of emotional intuitions – that cleans up the mess in the room long after the intuitions have left, or at best celebrates their success by drinking the remaining booze – was never going to go down well with Aristotelians. For them,

this simply turned 'intuition' into what Kekes calls 'an obscurantist label for arbitrary choice' (1986, 91).

Faced with the neuroscientific evidence that the new sentimentalists purported to present, Aristotelians seemed to be reduced to hand-waving from their philosophical armchairs. To pile on the misery, the new sentimentalists then went on to claim Aristotle as their ally (Haidt 2012a). Replenished and buoyed, however, with even more recent neuroscientific findings, which show the prospective reason-responsiveness of emotional intuitions and their close relationships with meta-cognitions, scientifically minded neo-Aristotelians have found their sea legs again. We are back in the familiar Aristotelian territory where 'inference always presupposes intuition to provide the links in the inference, but on the other hand inference is needed to support, prepare for, and develop intuition' (Ewing 1941, 102).

Far be it from me to argue that there is a fully developed, consistent account of the interplay between intuition and reason in Aristotle's corpus. There is, for example, confusion at best, pure inconsistency at worst, about the way in which Aristotle explains the role of reason in integrating the motivations of the vicious (Kristjánsson 2019). However, what I can conclude with some conviction is that searching for a Haidtian Two-System theory in Aristotle is looking for wool in a goat's house.

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