

## The introduction of the moral psychology in the *ergon* argument

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, I discuss in detail one of the first conclusions drawn by Aristotle in the *ergon* argument. The paper provides an in-depth approach to *Nicomachean Ethics'* lines 1098a3-4, where one reads: “λείπεται δὴ πρακτικὴ τις τοῦ λόγου ἔχοντος”. I divide the discussion into two parts. In the first part, I put under scrutiny how one should take the word “πρακτικὴ” and argue that one should avoid taking this word as meaning “practical” in the passage. I will argue in favor of taking it as meaning “active”. The exegetical inconvenience of taking “πρακτικὴ” as meaning “practical” is the fact that it restricts the results achieved in the *ergon* argument by excluding the possibility of contemplation being considered a *eudaimon* life. In the second part, I discuss the expression “λόγου ἔχον” and provide some arguments to take it as preliminarily introducing the criterion of division of the virtues that will be spelled out in *EN* I.13 so that the λόγου-ἔχον part of the soul here also makes reference to the virtue of the non-rational part, i.e., virtue of character. I offer a deflationary view by showing that the moral psychology is developed in *EN* I.7 within the limits imposed by the *ergon* argument.

**Keywords:** *ergon* argument; moral psychology; virtues; Aristotle; *Nicomachean Ethics*.

## A introdução da psicologia moral no argumento do *ergon*

**RESUMO:** Neste artigo, eu discuto em detalhes uma das primeiras conclusões apresentadas por Aristóteles no argumento do *ergon*. O artigo traz uma discussão pormenorizada da afirmação “λείπεται δὴ πρακτικὴ τις τοῦ λόγου ἔχοντος” nas linhas 1098a3-4 da *Ética a Nicômaco*. Eu divido a discussão em duas partes. Na primeira parte, eu coloco em discussão como se deve entender a palavra “πρακτικὴ” e argumento que se deve evitar tomá-la como significando “prática”. Eu argumentarei em favor de entendê-la como significando “ativa”. O inconveniente exegético de tomar “πρακτικὴ” com o significado de “prática” é

que tal leitura restringe os resultados alcançados no argumento do *ergon* ao excluir a possibilidade de a vida contemplativa ser considerada uma vida *eudaimon*. Na segunda parte, eu discuto a expressão “λόγον ἔχον” e forneço alguns argumentos para entender a expressão como preliminarmente introduzindo o critério de divisão de virtudes que será apresentado em *EN* I.13 de modo que a expressão “λόγον ἔχον” na passagem discutida deve ser entendida como também fazendo referência à virtude da parte não-racional da alma, a saber, à virtude do caráter. Eu apresento uma interpretação deflacionária, argumentando que a psicologia moral é desenvolvida em *EN* I.7 tendo em vista os interesses argumentativos do argumento do *ergon*.

**Palavras-chave:** argumento do *ergon*; psicologia moral; virtudes; Aristóteles; *Ética a Nicômaco*.

## Introduction

In the *ergon* argument, one of the first conclusions drawn by Aristotle is that the proper activity of the human being consists in the exercise of the part of the soul that has reason. In the Greek language, he formulates his point in the following way: λείπεται δὴ πρακτικὴ τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος. In this paper, I intend to offer a detailed discussion of this phrase. In order to do so, I will divide the phrase into two parts. Firstly, I will discuss what Aristotle meant with “πρακτικὴ τις”, for it is not completely clear how this expression is to be taken. I will argue against the possibility of seeing in this expression an exclusive reference to the practical life in opposition to a life devoted to contemplation. If “πρακτικὴ” is understood in the sense of “practical”, two irreconcilable views on *eudaimonia* seem to be held by Aristotle within the *EN*. In *EN* X.6-8, he flatly affirms that contemplation is a *eudaimon* life. However, if the *ergon* argument is interpreted in a restrictive way so that the human proper activity (and, by consequence, happiness) consists exclusively in the kind of activity involved in the practical life, the results attained in *EN* X.6.8 would be in disagreement with what was established in *EN* I.7. I will argue in favor of a view that advocates a broader meaning to the word “πρακτικὴ” by taking it as meaning “active” in the passage. This option has the advantage of reconciling the two supposedly opposing views. At the second moment, my attention will be focused on the expression “τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος”. I will argue in favor of the view that takes one of the ways of being said “λόγον ἔχον” as already introducing the kind of rationality proper to the virtue of character in *EN* I.13. Against Fortenbaugh, I will defend the claim that the part of the soul that is characterized as obedient to reason in *EN* I.7 should not be understood as being part of the rational part of the soul that is rational strictly speaking.

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### 1. *EN* I.7: the moral psychology vocabulary

The *ergon* argument is considerably built around Aristotle’s moral psychology. The argument is put forward as an attempt to provide a preliminary account of the concept of *eudaimonia*, which constitutes Aristotle’s leading investigative interest in *EN* I and which will see the end of its investigation only in *EN* X.6-8. The moral psychology that emerges in *EN* I.7 needs to be adequately grasped because it is a prelude of the classification of virtues in *EN* I.13 and a correct construal of the passage plays a decisive role in providing a proper characterization of the virtues of character and of thought.

The *ergon* argument starts out by introducing the idea of the proper activity of the human being (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) (*EN* 1097b24-25). In what follows, Aristotle illustrates his point by saying that the crafts (*EN* 1097b25-26

and 1097b28-29) and the animal organs (EN 1097b30-31) have their own proper activity. And, in such cases, the good and the doing well (τάγαθόν και τὸ εὖ) of these things reside in the excellent performance of their proper activity (EN 1097b27-28). This last argumentative step is developed further in EN 1098a7-12 (see also EN 1106a15-24). That said, Aristotle proceeds with the task of finding out what is precisely the proper activity of the human being (EN 1097b33). The investigation proceeds in the following way:

**T1 (i)** τὸ μὲν γὰρ ζῆν κοινὸν εἶναι φαίνεται καὶ τοῖς φυτοῖς, ζητεῖται δὲ τὸ ἴδιον. ἀφοριστέον ἄρα τὴν τε θρεπτικὴν καὶ τὴν αὐξητικὴν ζωὴν. ἐπομένη δὲ αἰσθητικὴ τις ἂν εἴη, φαίνεται δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ κοινὴ καὶ ἵππῳ καὶ βοῖ καὶ παντὶ ζώῳ. λείπεται δὲ πρακτικὴ τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος: **(ii)** τούτου δὲ τὸ μὲν ὡς ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ, τὸ δ' ὡς ἔχον καὶ διανοούμενον. διττῶς δὲ καὶ ταύτης λεγομένης τὴν κατ' ἐνέργειαν θετέον: κυριώτερον γὰρ αὕτη δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι. **(iii)** εἰ δ' ἐστὶν ἔργον ἀνθρώπου ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου [...] (EN 1097b34-1098a8).

**(i)** For being alive is obviously shared by plants too, and we are looking for what is peculiar to human beings. In that case we must divide off the kind of life that consists in taking in nutriment and growing. Next to consider would be some sort of life of perception, but this too is evidently shared, by horses, oxen, and every other animal. There remains an active/practical life of what possesses reason; **(ii)** and of this, one part 'possesses reason' in so far as it is obedient to reason, while the other possesses it in so far as it actually has it, and itself thinks. Since this life, too, is spoken of in two ways, we must posit the life in the sense of activity; for this seems to be the more proper sense. **(iii)** Now if the function of man is an activity of soul based on reason or not without reason [...] <sup>1</sup>

In the whole step **T1.i**, Aristotle discriminates the different *kinds of life* in order to find out the proper activity of human beings. As life is shared by natural beings at distinct levels<sup>2</sup>, his efforts will be concentrated in establishing what kind

<sup>1</sup> All the translations of EN's passages were taken from Broadie and Rowe (2002). I made some changes in the translations when I considered that it had philosophical implications. The Greek text is from Bywater's edition (1894).

<sup>2</sup> What Aristotle means by "kinds of lives" is made clear in some passages from *De Anima*: "by 'life' we mean that which has through itself nourishment, growth, and decay" (ζωὴν δὲ λέγομεν τὴν δι' αὐτοῦ τροφήν τε καὶ αὐξήσιν καὶ φθίσιν) (*De Anima* 412a13-15, Shield's translation) and "but living is spoken of in several ways. And should even one of these belong to something, we say that it is alive: reason, perception, motion and rest with respect to place, and further the motion in relation to nourishment, decay, and growth" (πλεοναχῶς δὲ τοῦ ζῆν λεγομένου, κἂν ἓν τι τούτων ἐνυπάρχη

of life is proper to human beings. With this purpose in mind, he rules out the life of nutrition (θρεπτική ζωή) and growth (αύξητική ζωή), which are plainly shared even by plants. In what follows, he does the same concerning the life of perception (αἰσθητική ζωή), which, in spite of not being shared by plants, is shared by animals and, in reason of that, cannot be classified as a proper feature of human beings. After this argumentative move, Aristotle is left with a rational kind of life: an active/practical life of what possesses reason. In the formulation in Greek: λείπεται δὴ πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος. Aristotle's phrasing is quite puzzling and has given rise to some pressing exegetical questions, as I show in the following sections. The conclusion attained by him is compactly formulated. In what follows, I would like to argue that the details of the last sentence of the passage T1.i are fleshed out in the passage T1.ii, in other words, the latter passage should be taken as making explicit the results achieved in the former one.

What is, I think, hardly open to disagreement among the interpreters is that the word “ζωή” is implicit in the line 1098a3 in the expression “πρακτική τις”, as well as in the line 1098a2 in the expression “αἰσθητική τις”. The word is employed in the line 1098a1 and, then, taken for granted in the sequence of the passage<sup>3</sup>. The agreement, however, ends here and there are plenty of divergences in the interpretation of the details.

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## 2. The Greek Adjective “πρακτική” in line 1098a2: a controversy

The meaning of the word “πρακτική” in the line 1098a3 is a matter of dispute and has been a cause for controversy. If the Greek adjective is roughly transliterated into English, one obtains the word “practical”, a word tends to be easily associated with the idea of actions. This association should not be taken for granted, however. As I intend to show, this word has a broader meaning, which should not be restricted to the idea of actions and ultimately of moral actions.

In his translation, Rowe (2002) opts to render the passage in the following way “a practical sort of life of what possesses reason”. In his French translation, Tricot (2007) suggests a solution similar to Rowe's: “une certaine vie pratique de la partie rationnelle de l'âme”. Although the word “practical” is not present in Crisp's translation (2000), he renders the text in such a way that the kernel of the passage is built around the idea of action: “a life, concerned in some way with action”. Similarly, Irwin (1999) translates “some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason”. The problem of associating the Greek word

μόνον, ζῆν αὐτό φαμεν, οἷον νοῦς, αἴσθησις, κίνησις καὶ στάσις ἢ κατὰ τόπον, ἔτι κίνησις ἢ κατὰ τροφήν καὶ φθίσις τε καὶ αὔξεισις) (*De Anima* 413a22-25, Shield's translation).

<sup>3</sup> All the translations consulted read the passage in that way: Gauthier and Jolif (1958), Irwin (1999), Crisp (2000), Broadie and Rowe (2002), Ross revised by Lesley Brown (2009). In the same vein, Stewart's (1892, p. 99), Burnet's (1900, p. 35), and Joachim's (1951, p. 51) comments.

“πρακτική” with the English words “action” and “practical” (or “pratique” in French) is the disconcerting implication that these options carry to the *ergon* argument. If one assumes that at this point Aristotle’s intention is to restrict the human *ergon* to the life of action, i.e., the kind of practical life implied in the moral life, there will be the difficulty to reconcile this result with the conclusion reached in *EN X.7*, according to which human happiness (εὐδαιμονία) also consists in contemplation. Given this scenario, it becomes clear that the translations quoted end up inconveniently constraining the reading of *EN I.7* and make it clash with the conclusions about εὐδαιμονία drawn in *EN X.7*<sup>4</sup>.

Even though the Greek word “πρακτική” and its cognates are undeniably linked to the idea of action in a strict sense, I mean, in the sense of moral action (a couple of pieces of textual evidence for this view: *EN* 1140b21, 1141b17, 1143b24, 1143b27, 1144a11-12, 1146a8, and 1152a9), I would like to argue for a different meaning to this word in *EN I.7*. I will side with those translators who prefer to translate “πρακτική” as “active” (Burnet 1900, p. 35, Joachim 1951, p. 51, Gauthier and Jolif 1958, p. 15, and 1959, p. 56 (“active” in French), and Ross revised by Lesley 2009, p. 11). For Burnet, Gauthier, and Jolif, the word does not rule out the activity involved in contemplation and should be taken in a broad sense which includes θεωρία. The general idea conveyed by the translation “active” is that the part possessing reason must be regularly exercised, so that one may safely say that reason has an active life, in contrast to an inactive life. In such a reading, the association of the word “πρακτική” to the notion of moral actions is weakened, but it is not completely dismissed. An active life of the part possessing reason also involves the exercise of reason in the practical sphere, but the practical rationality is no longer the primary focus of the argument. Trying to keep the translation of “πρακτική” as “action”, Stewart paraphrases the passage in the following way: “a life consisting in the action of the rational part” (1892, p. 99). The idea behind Stewart’s translation is acutely akin to the one imparted by “active”: the proper activity of human beings consists in the *action* of their reason, in other words, in an *active* life of reason. An additional point to be made is that, in the entry “πρακτικός, ἢ, ὄν”, *Liddell & Scott* (9<sup>th</sup> edn. 1996, p. 1458) lists “active” and also “effective” as possible translations.

One of the advantages of taking “πρακτική” as having the meaning of “active” is that, by doing so, Aristotle does not commit himself to a specific sort of rational activity at this moment of the *EN*. And that is a good exegetical

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<sup>4</sup> Lawrence uses the following translation of the passage: “a practical life of the part having reason”, and it leads him to the same set of questions as I am advancing. He proposes a very sketchy construal of the passage to address the questions. According to him, the sense of action involved in the passage is strongly related to the idea of rational choice (προαίρεσις), for not even gods make rational decisions in the sense that human beings do, and, even when humans beings contemplate, it may be done based on a decision (Lawrence 2001, p. 459). In his view, Aristotle singles out a feature that is proper to human beings and so finds the kind of feature demanded by the *ergon* argument.

outcome, for, had he argued otherwise, he would be advancing more than the occasion allows. The inquiry is at the very beginning and Aristotle is still in need of investigating adequately the notion of virtue, something which is done from *EN* I.13 to VI.13, when the virtues of character and of thought are put under scrutiny. Moreover, Aristotle himself points out that the *ergon* argument plays the role of providing a sketchy delimitation of εὐδαιμονία (*EN* 1098a20-23). Consequently, it should come as no surprise that its results are formulated at a general level and that its details will be spelled out later in the sequence of the investigation. Additionally, this translation does not clash with the philosophical conclusion drawn in *EN* X. 6-8, which establishes that the life of contemplation is also a *eudaimon* life.

In order to dispel the objection that “πρακτική” is *invariably* related only to moral actions, let me quote a passage from Aristotle’s *Politics*:

**T2** ἀλλ’ εἰ ταῦτα λέγεται καλῶς καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν εὐπραγίαν θετέον, καὶ κοινῇ πάσης πόλεως ἂν εἴη καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον ἄριστος βίος ὁ πρακτικός. ἀλλὰ τὸν πρακτικὸν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πρὸς ἑτέρους, καθάπερ οἴονται τινες, οὐδὲ τὰς διανοίας εἶναι μόνας ταύτας πρακτικάς, τὰς τῶν ἀποβαινόντων χάριν γιγνομένας ἐκ τοῦ πράττειν, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον τὰς αὐτοτελεῖς καὶ τὰς αὐτῶν ἕνεκεν θεωρίας καὶ διανοήσεις: ἡ γὰρ εὐπραξία τέλος, ὥστε καὶ πρᾶξις τις (*Politics* 1325b14-21).

If this is well said, and we should assume that *eudaimonia* is good activity, then the active life is best both collectively for the whole city and also for each individual. But it is not necessary for the active life to be one lived in relation to others, as some believe, nor are those thoughts alone active which we have in order to get results from action; much more active are those contemplations and thoughts that are complete in themselves and for their own sake. For good action is the end, and therefore a certain kind of action is also the end (Kraut’s translation).

In this passage, both the life of actions and the life of contemplation, which is described as “contemplations and thoughts that are complete in themselves and for their own sake”, are openly recognized as πρακτικοί βίοι. The passage is very enlightening in relation to *EN* I.7. First, it gives to the Greek adjective “πρακτικός” the meaning for which I have argued, encompassing θεωρία, and, by this reason, settles the question about whether “πρακτική” in *EN* I.7 must be

*necessarily* associated to moral actions<sup>5</sup>. Given the textual evidence quoted, the answer to this question is clearly negative. Second, Aristotle emphasizes that both contemplation and moral action have as their goals a successful performance (εὐπραξία). By doing so, Aristotle endorses the claim that εὐδαιμονία consists in the excellent *performance* of such activities, a point assumed in outline at the very start of the passage just quoted when he says: τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν εὐπραγίαν θετέον. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that what is at stake in 1098a3 in the *EN* is an attempt to emphasize, with the Greek adjective “πρακτική”, that the human *ergon* consists in the *exercise* of reason and *not* only in its possession. It is not enough to possess reason, but, in order to be *eudaimon*, it is necessary to make it active through its use. I think that a decisive argument in favor of that point is provided in the step **T1.ii**.

In step **T1.ii**, Aristotle claims that the life of the λόγον-ἔχον part is said in two ways (*EN* 1098a5) – even though he presents only one of them – and then lays down which one he is arguing for (*EN* 1098a6). In my view, what Aristotle is doing is an attempt to emphasize and state clearer what was previously expressed by the use of the adjective “πρακτική”: the life of the λόγον-ἔχον part, he adds, is said in the sense of *activity* (κατ’ ἐνέργειαν). As Aristotle does not say which opposition he had in mind, one of the options is to assume that the opposition intended was between activity (ἐνέργεια) and disposition (ἔξις). Gauthier and Jolif (1959, p. 57-58), as well as Stewart (1892, p. 99-100) and Burnet (1900, p. 35), take the passage in that way. Such an approach is backed up by a passage taken from the chapter that comes right after the *ergon* argument:

**T3** τοῖς μὲν οὖν λέγουσι τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἀρετὴν τινα συνωδός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος: ταύτης γὰρ ἐστὶν ἢ κατ’ αὐτὴν ἐνέργεια. διαφέρει δὲ ἴσως οὐ μικρὸν ἐν κτήσει ἢ χρήσει τὸ ἄριστον ὑπολαμβάνειν, καὶ ἐν ἔξει ἢ ἐν ἐνέργειᾳ. τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἔξιν ἐνδέχεται μηδὲν ἀγαθὸν ἀποτελεῖν ὑπάρχουσιν, οἷον τῶ καθεύδοντι ἢ καὶ ἄλλως πῶς ἐξηρηγκότι, τὴν δ’ ἐνέργειαν οὐχ οἷόν τε: πράξει γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης, καὶ εὖ πράξει. ὥσπερ δ’ Ὀλυμπίασιν οὐχ οἱ κάλλιστοι καὶ ἰσχυρότατοι στεφανοῦνται ἀλλ’ οἱ ἀγωνιζόμενοι (τούτων γὰρ τινες νικῶσιν), οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἐν τῶ βίῳ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν οἱ πράττοντες ὀρθῶς ἐπήβολοι γίνονται (*EN* 1098b33-1099a7).

Well, our account is in harmony with those who say that *eudaimonia* is virtue, or some form of virtue; for ‘activity in accordance with

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<sup>5</sup> An important remark to be made is that what my interpretation tries to avoid is the association of the Greek word “πρακτική” with the sense of the word “practical” in the English language that excludes (or that, at least, is not obviously related to) a life of thought, i.e., a contemplative life. If “practical” is taken in the loose sense of activity, someone may eventually say that the life of contemplation is practical because it involves the activity (or action) of contemplation. I’m indebted to one of the anonymous referee for calling my attention to this point.

virtue' belongs to virtue. But perhaps it makes no little difference whether we suppose the chief good to be located in the possession of virtue, or in its use, i.e. in a disposition or in a form of activity. For it is possible for the disposition to be present and yet to produce nothing good, as for example in the case of the person who is asleep, or in some other way rendered inactive, but the same will not hold of the activity: the person will necessarily be doing something, and will do (it) well. Just as at the Olympic Games it is not the finest and the strongest that are crowned but those who compete (for the winners come from among these), so too in life it is the doers that become achievers of fine and good things – and rightly so.

In this passage, Aristotle advances the claim that εὐδαιμονία is not to be found in mere virtuous disposition but in the virtuous activity. In Aristotle's own terms, not in ἔξις but in ἐνέργεια. This passage lends support to the interpretation according to which Aristotle had in mind the opposition between ἔξις and ἐνέργεια when he affirmed that the life of the λόγον-ἔχον part is said in two ways. Disposition (ἔξις) is a fully-fledged concept in the *EN*, which is developed in book II. In a general description, it means a highly developed disposition that enables its possessor to do something in a certain way. If one endorses this opposition, the underlying idea in the passage will be that, provided that the person intends to achieve *eudaimonia*, he cannot just have a virtuous disposition (in this case a good disposition related to the λόγον-ἔχον part of the soul) and then not put it to use. The acquired disposition needs to be exercised. Another possibility, which also fits the context, is to suppose that the opposition is between ἐνέργεια and δύναμις, as Irwin's translation suggests (1999). In this case, the point is similar to the previous one, at least in its general lines: given that an individual intends to have *eudaimonia*, reason cannot be idle, I mean, it cannot be just an available capacity, it must be exercised. Regardless of the option chosen, my main point holds in both scenarios: the expression “κατ' ἐνέργειαν” plays the role of making explicit what was previously given by the word “πρακτική”<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> One of the possible translations listed by *Liddell & Scott* (9th edn. 1996, p. 1458) to the word “πρακτική” is “effective”. Even though I opted to argue in favor of “active” as a more appropriate translation, I would not discard the possibility that “effective” also captures some aspects of what is at stake in the passage. It might be perfectly the case that with “πρακτική” Aristotle also intended to introduce the claim that reason should deliver an efficient performance, I mean, a performance that is effective in attaining its aims, be it either practical or theoretical. The occurrence of “πρακτική” in *EN* I.7 seems to encode this meaning as well. This is a meaning that is at play in the definition of *phronesis* (*EN* 1141b21-22). The occurrence of “πρακτική” in the definition of *phronesis* is designed to indicate that *phronesis* performs effectively its task of carrying out what is good for human beings. I'm grateful to Lucas Angioni for calling my attention to this aspect of the word “πρακτική”. For Angioni's comments about some uses of “πρακτικός” in *EN* VI, see Angioni 2011, p. 306, 312-313, and 324-325.

### 3. The Two Meanings of “τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος”

In explaining his use of the Greek expression “τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος” in *EN* I.7, Aristotle starts out by putting flesh on the bones of his moral psychology. In *EN* I.7, Aristotle states only briefly what he means by the expression “τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος”. The brief remark is fully developed in *EN* I.13 when the classification of the virtues is officially set forth.

The division of the part possessing reason in *EN* I.7 is quite puzzling. Aristotle divides the part called “λόγον ἔχον” into two. One of them is said to be “λόγον ἔχον” insofar as it is obedient to reason and the other insofar as it possesses reason and exercises thought. That division unavoidably reminds us of the division proposed in *EN* I.13:

**T4** τὸ δ' ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικὸν μετέχει πῶς, ἢ κατήκοόν ἐστιν αὐτοῦ καὶ πειθαρχικόν: οὕτω δὴ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν φίλων φαμέν ἔχειν λόγον, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ τῶν μαθηματικῶν. ὅτι δὲ πείθεται πῶς ὑπὸ λόγου τὸ ἄλογον, μὴνύει καὶ ἡ νοουθήτησις καὶ πᾶσα ἐπιτίμησις τε καὶ παράκλησις. εἰ δὲ χρή καὶ τοῦτο φάναι λόγον ἔχειν, διττὸν ἔσται καὶ τὸ λόγον ἔχον, τὸ μὲν κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δ' ὥσπερ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκουστικόν τι (*EN* 1102b30-1103a3, highlights are mine).

The appetitive and in generally desiring part does participate in it [reason] in a way, i.e. *in so far as it is capable of listening to it and obeying it*: it is the way one is reasonable when one takes account of advice from one's father or loved ones, not when one has an account of things, as for example in mathematics. That the non-rational is in a way persuaded by reason is indicated by our practice of admonishing people, and all the different forms in which we reprimand and encourage them. If one should call this too 'possessing reason', then the aspect of the soul that possesses reason will also be double in nature: *one element of it will have it in the proper sense and in itself, another as something capable of listening as if to one's father*.

In that chapter, Aristotle identifies the obedient part of the soul with the appetitive-and-in-generally-desiring part, which is firstly classified as non-rational and then, a couple of lines later, as being rational to some extent. A sneaking suspicion that one may well have after comparing passages from *EN* I.7 and *EN* I.13 in their entirety is the following: is one allowed to identify the

obedient part, that is, the appetitive-and-in-generally-desiring part, in *EN* I.13 with the perceptive one introduced in *EN* I.7? As pieces of textual evidence for that, some passages from the *De Anima* where Aristotle defends the view that the presence of perception implies the presence of appetite can be quoted:

**T5** καὶ γὰρ αἴσθησιν ἐκάτερον τῶν μερῶν ἔχει καὶ κίνησιν τὴν κατὰ τόπον, εἰ δ' αἴσθησιν, καὶ φαντασίαν καὶ ὄρεξιν· ὅπου μὲν γὰρ αἴσθησις, καὶ λύπη τε καὶ ἡδονή, ὅπου δὲ ταῦτα, ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ ἐπιθυμία (*De Anima* 413b21-24).

for each of the parts has perception and motion with respect to place, and if perception, then also imagination and desire; for wherever there is perception, there is also both pain and pleasure; and wherever these are, of necessity there is appetite as well (Shield's translation).

**T6** ὑπάρχει δὲ τοῖς μὲν φυτοῖς τὸ θρεπτικὸν μόνον, ἑτέροις δὲ τοῦτό τε καὶ τὸ αἰσθητικόν. εἰ δὲ τὸ αἰσθητικόν, καὶ τὸ ὀρεκτικόν [...] τὰ δὲ ζῶα πάντ' ἔχουσι μίαν γε τῶν αἰσθήσεων, τὴν ἀφήν· ᾧ δ' αἴσθησις ὑπάρχει, τούτῳ ἡδονή τε καὶ λύπη καὶ τὸ ἡδύ τε καὶ λυπηρόν, οἷς δὲ ταῦτα, καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία· τοῦ γὰρ ἡδέος ὄρεξις αὕτη (*De Anima* 414a32-b5).

The nutritive faculty alone belongs to plants; both this and the perceptual faculty belong to others. But if the perceptual faculty, then also the desiderative faculty [...] And all animals have at least one kind of perception, touch. And that to which perception belongs, to this belongs also both pleasure and pain, as well as both the pleasurable and the painful; and to those things to which these belong also belongs appetite, since appetite is a desire for what is pleasurable (Shield's translation).

In these passages, Aristotle argues that the presence of perception implies the presence of appetite, establishing a close connexion between these two capacities. Given this textual evidence and, moreover, considering that the appetitive-and-in-generally-desiring part of the soul in *EN* I.13 can be hardly identified with the nutritive and vegetative part – which is dismissed out of hand as having nothing to do with human virtue<sup>7</sup> – and much less with the rational

<sup>7</sup> On two occasions, the nutritive and vegetative part is said to have no importance to the ethical investigation: “[...] and we should leave the nutritive aspect of the soul to one side, since it appears by nature devoid of any share in human excellence” ([...] καὶ τὸ θρεπτικὸν ἐατέον, ἐπειδὴ τῆς ἀνθρωπικῆς ἀρετῆς ἄμοιρον πέφυκεν) (*EN* I.13 1102b11-12) and “of the fourth part of the soul, the nutritive, there

part strictly speaking in the context of the threefold division of the soul proposed in *EN* I.7, the reader may well be led to infer that *EN* I.13's obedient part was surreptitiously introduced as the perceptive part in the function argument<sup>8</sup>. If that reading is in order, an important exegetical problem arises. Before saying that the human *ergon* consists of an active life of the *λόγον-ἔχον* part, Aristotle flatly ruled out the life of nutrition, growth, and *also perception* as candidates to that position. So the inclusion of this part of the soul on second thoughts as taking part in the human function in *EN*. 13 might sound unlikely.

Aristotle's argumentative moves in *EN* I.7 lead Fortenbaugh to argue that the division proposed in lines 1098a4-5 "runs within the biological faculty of thought" (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 62, see also p. 125, footnote 22). One reason put forward by him to support his view is that emotions involve beliefs (for instance, the belief that there is a danger or that one suffers injustice), and beliefs belong to the biological faculty of thought<sup>9</sup>. In his view, had Aristotle identified the obedient part, responsible for the emotions (as it is made clear in *EN* II), with the perceptive soul, it would have been philosophically questionable. Fortenbaugh grounds his position by assuming that Aristotle is moving within the framework of his biological psychology in the first part of the *ergon* argument, which allows the reader to assume that the *λόγον-ἔχον* part of the soul is to be taken as the biological faculty of thought, within which then a further division is drawn (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 67). In Fortenbaugh's own words, "the obedient part of the bipartite soul is cognitive and therefore has a place within the biological faculty of thought" and "the sphere of moral virtue is cognitive and therefore overlaps the biological faculty of thought" (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 67).

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is no excellence of a relevant sort; for there is nothing the doing or not doing of which depends on it" (τοῦ δὲ τετάρτου μορίου τῆς ψυχῆς οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρετὴ τοιαύτη, τοῦ θρεπτικοῦ: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτῷ πράττειν ἢ μὴ πράττειν) (*EN* VI.12 1144a9-11).

<sup>8</sup> A strategy to associate the obedient part of the soul presented in *EN* I.13 with the perceptive soul presented in *EN* I.7 is insinuated by Fortenbaugh and then dismissed out of hand: "More than a century ago, Bernays recognized that lines 1103a1-3 are a supplement. His explanation is instructive: Earlier in 1.7 1098a4, the obedient element in the soul was attributed to the *λόγον ἔχον*. Therefore, at the end of 1.13, Aristotle thinks himself constrained to add that this attribution is also permissible. The reference to 1098a4 is important, for here too the passionate part of the soul is brought within the *λόγον ἔχον*, and here too the inclusion is unexpected, so that as I see it, neither in 1.7 nor in 1.13 is a gloss to be suspected. Rather, Aristotle has written both passages with a definite purpose in mind. He wants to make clear how the bipartite psychology of ethical theory relates to the biological psychology of the *De Anima*. In the early passage, clarification is certainly helpful and perhaps necessary. For Aristotle has used the psychology of the *De Anima* to determine the function of man. This use of the psychology of the *De Anima* could be misleading, so that a listener (or reader) might confuse bipartition with the biological psychology, i.e., he might believe that the divisions of the two psychologies coincide and that the obedient part of the bipartite soul is identical with the biological faculty of sensation. For that reason, Aristotle has added a note, making clear that the division of bipartition runs within the biological faculty of thought; that the obedient part of the bipartite soul and the biological faculty of sensation are not identical" (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 61-62)

<sup>9</sup> Passages presented by Fortenbaugh to justify the need of beliefs in the emotions are the followings: *EN* III.6 1115a9, *Rhetoric*. 1382a21-22, 1378a30-33, and 1380b17-18.

Before addressing Fortenbaugh's arguments, one needs to take a step back and take a careful look at how the expression "λόγον ἔχον" is employed in the *EN*. There is compelling evidence that Aristotle does not take this expression as having the same meaning throughout the *EN*. The term has its subtleties, which, in my view, rely in large measure on contextual issues. There are two occurrences of the expression "λόγον ἔχον" that represent a glaring example of the meaning shift. Whereas in *EN* I.13 Aristotle seems to allow that the appetitive-and-in-generally-desiderative part of the soul be *somehow* described as "λόγον ἔχον" (*EN* 1103a2-3), clearly adopting a broad meaning to the expression, the same expression is unexpectedly employed in *EN* VI.2 in a narrow sense in which only the properly rational parts are included. The broad meaning disappears in that chapter and the expression "λόγον ἔχον" encodes only the parts of the soul called "ἐπιστημονικόν" and "λογιστικόν". As a result, one observes a meaning shift that invites the interpreter to be careful when comparing passages. For this reason, a contextual sensitivity is important to grasp what is at play in *EN* I.7.

Back to *EN* I.7. It seems to me that the features assigned to the λόγον-ἔχον parts of the soul in lines 1098a4-5 are valuable clues that shed some light on how the expression "λόγον ἔχον" can be understood, even though at the end of the day the result delivered may not be as promising as we would expect. The descriptions might be reasonably taken as an effort made by Aristotle to discriminate the two parts called rational by assigning to each of them features that differentiate one from the other and that apply either for one or for the other, but not for both jointly. To put it another way, the features ascribed to each part has as its primary intention drawing a clear line of delimitation to each of them by means of *exclusive* features. In this view, what Aristotle does here is to contrast and oppose two ways of being said "λόγον ἔχον". One way to be said "λόγον ἔχον" is as being obedient to reason (ὡς ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ). Here Aristotle employs a metaphorical language that will be enriched throughout *EN* I.13. The other way to be said "λόγον ἔχον" is as having reason and exercising thought (ὡς ἔχον καὶ διανοούμενον). If one assumes that the latter features are *exclusive* to the second way of being said "λόγον ἔχον" (just as the former feature, that is, being obedient to reason, is proper to the first), it is plausible to take the passage as having the underlying idea that the features that belong to the first way of being said "λόγον ἔχον" should not be ascribed to the second one and also the other way around, a position that receives exegetical support from *EN* I.13, especially when one compares the parallels between that chapter and *EN* I.7. For instance, as Aristotle classifies the obedient part of the soul with a non-rational part of the soul (ἄλογος) in *EN* I.13, this may be arguably seen as evidence to deny to it the possibility of being described as "ὡς ἔχον [λόγον] καὶ διανοούμενον" and,

consequently, of being taken as having reason for itself, I mean, as having the power of exercising reasoning and language.

I admit that saying that someone or something has reason (λόγον ἔχον) due to being obedient to reason is perhaps a philosophically unsound way to say it. Nonetheless, for the time being, it is more advisable to take Aristotle at his word, especially because the division proposed by him is only outlined in *EN* I.7 and a lengthy treatment is provided later in chapter 13. Despite that, I think it is worth noticing that Aristotle arguably employs in *EN* I.7 a broad sense of the expression “λόγον ἔχον”, which cannot be accommodated within the biological faculty of thought, as Fortenbaugh in some way proposed, without severe difficulties. It seems that only the second characterization might be appropriately said to resemble the biological faculty of thought or even to be the biological faculty of thought. The first characterization is rational only in an extended and broad sense and apparently is a characterization proper to Aristotle’s moral psychology. That characterization will appear again later in *EN* I.13 and its details will be spelled out. So I opt to take the passage as it stands in the Aristotelian text and, additionally, assume that the obedient part does not have reason properly speaking and does not exercise thought because both attributes belong exclusively to the part that is rational in the strict sense.

One last point: when it comes to the identification of the obedient part with the perceptive part of the soul, although this hypothesis may be speculated based on the textual support of some passages from *De Anima*, Aristotle, to the best of my knowledge, never claimed that explicitly in the *EN*. What we know with certainty is that the non-rational part whose good condition constitutes virtue of character is identified with the appetitive-and-in-generally-desiring part of the soul, which is influenced by reason. As far as the textual evidence in the *EN* is concerned, we need not take a step further and associate this part of the soul with the perceptive one in the threefold division found in *EN* I.7.

In step **T1.iii**, Aristotle proceeds by saying that the human *ergon* is an activity based on reason or not without reason (ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου). In my reading, the Greek word “ἢ” can be taken as proposing an adjustment to the expression “ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον” for not capturing precisely the results previously achieved, because, as I have tried to show, there is one part of the λόγον-ἔχον part that does not possess reason in the strict sense but that, even so, maintains some interplay with reason. If my reading is correct, Aristotle cannot commit himself to the claim that the human *ergon* is *exclusively* an activity of reason, for the previous results achieved compel him to state that the human *ergon* is an activity that cannot be performed without reason. This new formulation is in tune with the posterior inclusion in *EN* I.13 of the exercise of

virtues of character, which are, at least partially, non-rational<sup>10</sup>, among the activities that promote *eudaimonia*. The second formulation makes room for the inclusion of the appetitive-and-in-generally-desiring part of the soul in the human *ergon*, posing a challenge to Fortenbaugh's reading. If the twofold λόγον-ἔχον division had been drawn within the rational part strictly speaking, Aristotle would not have had to add the expression "ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου". The formulation "ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον" would have been a perfect fit for summing up his results.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

The reading I have advanced is deflationary and I think that it harmonizes with the purpose of the investigation led by Aristotle in *EN* I.7. My main point in defending a deflationary reading is that the examined passages do not have the aim of setting out the details of Aristotle's moral psychology. To put it differently, the moral psychology is not within *EN* I.7's investigative focus. Moral psychology plays a role in this chapter within the limits imposed by the *ergon* argument. So the construal of the passage is restrained by some caveats. The details of moral psychology are fleshed out in *EN* I.13, which is definitely a chapter that should take pride of place in any attempt at fully understanding Aristotle's moral psychology<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> In the secondary literature, it is not an uncontroversial claim to say that virtue of character is a good disposition of a non-rational part of the soul. Some interpreters have claimed that virtue of character is to be conceived as being partially rational in the strict sense. For the view that virtue of character is partially rational in this way, see Irwin 1975, p. 576, Engberg-Pedersen 1983, p. 169, and Lorenz 2009. For a defense of the claim that virtue of character is non-rational, see Moss 2011, p. 207-220, and 2012, p. 163-174, Oliveira 2017, 20-47.

<sup>11</sup> Previous versions of this text were delivered to audiences in sessions of the following research groups: Metaphysics, Science, and Dialectic in Aristotle (MEZA) in Campinas, Brazil, and Munich School of Ancient Philosophy (MUSAΦ) in Munich, Germany. I'm deeply thankful to all those who gave contributions by discussing my claims: Lucas Angioni, Peter Adamson, Roberto Grasso, Fernando Mendonça, Gustavo B. Ferreira, Charles Teixeira, Davi H. Bastos, and Alexander Lamprakis. I thank Masako Toyoda for her suggestions to improve my English. I'm deeply indebted to the two anonymous referees for providing me with insightful, fruitful, and helpful comments and suggestions.

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