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Feeling Fantastic Again:

Passions, Appearances and Beliefs in Aristotle.*

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1 Introduction

This paper is concerned with Aristotle's view of human passions such as anger, pity, fear and shame, and specifically how he characterised the representational aspect of those passions.

Consider the following remarks about pity (*eleos*):

Let pity be a pain at apparent harm that is destructive or painful befalling one who does not deserve it, and which one could foresee being suffered by oneself or one of one's own, and where this appears near. (*Rhetoric* 2.8, 1385b13-16)

In thinking about the representational aspect of Aristotelian passions, we might

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distinguish a number of distinct questions.

1. Through the exercise of what psychological faculty do passions have their representational contents?
2. What type of attitude towards their representational contents do passions themselves involve (for the subject herself, for a part of her soul)?
3. If passions involve *phantasia*, to what extent can Aristotle's views on the correct regulation of the passions be explained by reference to the role of (evaluative and non-evaluative) *phantasia* in the psychology of humans and other animals?
4. What kinds of conflict between passions and beliefs does Aristotle recognise, and what resources does he have for explaining these?

Addressing these questions involves engaging with a recent debate about whether for Aristotle the representational state involved in human passions is belief (*doxa*) or appearance (*phantasia*).¹ Distinguishing these questions, however, already represents

1 For the view that Aristotelian passions involve *phantasia*, see e.g. J.M. Cooper, 'An Aristotelian Theory of the Emotions' ['Theory'], in ed. A.O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Berkeley, 1996), 238–257; J. Sihvola, 'Emotional Animals: Do Aristotelian Emotions Require Beliefs?' ['Emotional Animals'], *Apeiron* 29, no. 2 (1996), 105–44; G. Striker, 'Emotions in Context: Aristotle's Treatment of the Passions in the Rhetoric and His Moral Psychology' ['Emotions in Context'], in ed. A.O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Berkeley, 1996), 286–302; P. Nieuwenburg, 'Emotion and Perception in Aristotle's Rhetoric' ['Emotion and Perception'], *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 80, no. 1 (2002), 86–100; A. Price, 'Emotions in Plato and Aristotle' ['Emotions'], in ed. P. Goldie, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, *Oxford Handbooks in Philosophy* (Oxford, 2009), 121–142; J. Moss, *Aristotle on the Apparent Good: Perception, Phantasia, Thought, and Desire* [Apparent Good], *Oxford Aristotle Studies* (Oxford, 2012), ch. 4. For arguments against the view that such passions can involve merely uncommitted appearance, see e.g. J. Dow, 'Feeling Fantastic? – Emotions and Appearances in Aristotle' ['Feeling Fantastic'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 37 (2009); and for the view that they must involve *doxa*,

significant progress towards resolving this disagreement.²

I have changed my mind on the role of *phantasia* in Aristotelian passions, and now defend the following view. According to Aristotle, being in a passionate state constitutes an affirmation by the subject herself (not only by a part of her soul) of the way things are represented as being the way things are, and that the representations involved are the result of exercising a capacity he calls *phantasia* (roughly, “appearances”).³ Thus, it is part

see e.g. M.C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire - Theory & Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* [Therapy] (Princeton, 1994); W.W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion*, 2nd edn. (London, 2002). Fortenbaugh’s view is unusual in that he insists that it is not the passions themselves but their causes that have representational content, cf. J. Dow, ‘Aristotle’s Theory of the Emotions – Emotions as Pleasures and Pains’ [‘Aristotle’s Theory’], in ed. M. Pakaluk and G. Pearson, *Moral Psychology and Human Action in Aristotle* (Oxford, 2011), 47–74, 58-9, for criticism of this view.

2 They were not adequately distinguished in the conclusion of Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’. Many of those who canvass the involvement of appearances and *phantasia* are principally concerned with identifying the psychological capacity involved (e.g. Nieuwenburg, ‘Emotion and Perception’; Price, ‘Emotions’; Moss, *Apparent Good*), whereas those who canvass the view that passions involve belief are concerned to stress that the subject takes things to be as they are represented (e.g. Nussbaum, *Therapy*; Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’) – thus these concerns need not conflict. The issue is complicated, however, by arguments that link the two questions. Cooper (‘Rhetoric, Dialectic, and the Passions’ [‘Passions’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1993), 175–198, 191-2; ‘Theory’, 246-7; *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* [Reason and Emotion] (Princeton, 1999), 416-7), Striker (‘Emotions in Context’, 291) and Sihvola (‘Emotional Animals’, 59-60) all suggest that a central reason why Aristotle saw passions as involving *phantasia* was that he wanted to allow for the possibility of passions completely unendorsed by their subject (the suggestion is resisted in Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’). In general, the distinction highlighted above is obscured by too close an association between the psychological faculty of *phantasia* and cases of *mere* appearance to which the subject gives no endorsement, such as the sun’s appearing about a foot across when it is known to be huge. These issues and the relevant passages in Aristotle are discussed in greater detail below.

3 I defended a somewhat different view in Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’. The kind of “affirmation” intended in this claim will be specified further below.

of feeling pity that the subject affirm that the object of their pity is suffering undeservedly: it is this suffering that makes them an object of their distress,⁴ and pity typically gives the subject some inclination to behave in ways that are appropriate only if these representations are true (perhaps to alleviate the suffering).

I also contend that the *phantasmata* involved in the passions fall within the scope of what Aristotle says should happen when *phantasia* conflicts with another psychological faculty. For Aristotle, the animal as a whole should affirm (or “act according to”) the way things are represented by the more authoritative faculty. The kind of *phantasia* relevant to the passions, where things are represented as pleasant and painful, also falls within the purview of Aristotle’s insistence that the non-reasoning parts of the soul should listen to reason, as to one’s father or friend (*EN* 1.13, 1102b25-33). That is, that *phantasmata* of this kind should have their content regulated by what correct reason affirms. Aristotle’s explanations of how passions can conflict with reasoned beliefs can thus draw on his resources for explaining how in general appearances can diverge from beliefs, and specifically how pleasures and pains can persist in conflict with what the subject believes is truly pleasant or painful.

Aristotle seems to think that – except in highly unusual cases – adult humans simply do not have persisting passions whose contents they wholly repudiate. Aristotle thinks that in general human passions are aroused either where the subject’s beliefs afford them some

4 Cf. e.g. 1385b13-16, and Dow, ‘Aristotle’s Theory’, for the view that pity just *is* this distress.

support or where the subject's reasoning is disabled (for example, through sleep or drunkenness). Of course, Aristotle's view that the passions involve an exercise of *phantasia* opens up the possibility of conflict with *doxa* (belief), but the kind of conflict he seems to recognise as actually occurring is largely confined to cases where reason endorses the passion as warranted, while rejecting it as an *overall* response to the situation, i.e. cases like Odysseus's anger against the servant girls in *Odyssey* 20 (cf. *EN* 7.6, 1149a25-34),⁵ or like pleasure-*akrasia*, where reason endorses *phantasia's* appraisal of the object as pleasant, but repudiates its overall verdict on the object's goodness and pleasantness (cf. *DA* 3.10, 433b5-10). Where a person believes that (say) fear is *wholly* unwarranted, i.e. that there is *nothing* genuinely fearsome present, Aristotle seems to think they will not feel fear, despite the presence of *phantasmata* representing fearsome things: those appearances will leave them unmoved (*DA* 3.3, 427b21-4).

2 What is the significance of these claims?

This account of the representational aspects of Aristotelian passions, I contend, not only fits best with Aristotle's views on biology, ethics and rhetoric, but also gives him a philosophically attractive position.

⁵ This is distinct from the additional role for reason in *thumos-akrasia* that Aristotle recognises at 1149a25-6, 33.

Firstly, the claim that the passions involve an exercise of the capacity *phantasia* makes possible for Aristotle a view in which the passions of human adults, children and non-human animals all deploy the same kinds of processes. For children and most non-human animals, certainly all of those Aristotle mentions as experiencing passions,⁶ have representational capacities that are, in his view, limited to *aisthêsis* (sensation) and *phantasia* (sensory impressions), and certainly do not include the capacities for belief (*doxa*), supposition (*hypolêpsis*) or conviction (*pistis*).⁷ If human and non-human passions involve the same kinds of capacities, not merely *analogous* capacities, then the former are continuous with (differing “by the more and the less”) the latter, as seems to be Aristotle’s view in *History of Animals* 8.⁸ It is also plausible in its own right. Passions very much like anger, fear, jealousy and so on, seem to be experienced by creatures cognitively less complex than adult humans, so it is a merit of one’s biological and psychological views to have an account of such passions that is largely common across adult humans, children and non-human animals.

A second merit of the claim that passionate representations are provided by *phantasia* is that it is consistent with the ethical works about how the passions are independent from reason, are capable of agreeing with reason (in virtuous cases) or disagreeing (in cases of

6 The evidence for Aristotle’s attribution of passions to non-human animals is presented and discussed in W.W. Fortenbaugh, ‘Aristotle: Animals, Emotion and Moral Virtue’ [‘Animals’], *Arethusa* 4 (1971), 137–65; R. Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals – the Origins of the Western Debate* (London, 1993), ch.4; and Sihvola, ‘Emotional Animals’.

7 Cf. e.g. *De Anima* 3.3, 427b7-8, b11-14, 428a21-24.

8 *HA* 8.1, 588a18-30.

akrasia or *enkrateia*), and belong to the non-reasoning part of the soul.⁹ Aristotle emphasises that the part to which the passions belong “heeds” reason (*epipeithes logôi*, EN 1.7,1098a4), is “in a way persuaded by reason” (EN 1.13, 1102b33), by nature “is persuaded by”, “listens to” and “follows” reason (EE 2.1, 1219b30f., 1220a10f.). Thus the passionate part is independent from the reasoning part, does not itself undertake reasoning, but is representational and can and should conform its evaluative representational content to that endorsed by the reasoning part, though in reality it does not always do so. This is confirmed by a comparison between the behaviour of this part of the soul in the self-controlled person and its behaviour in the virtuous: in the self-controlled, it submits to (*peitharchei*, EN 1.13, 1102b26) reason, whereas in the virtuous, it is “more heedful still” (*eti euêkoôteron* b27), for “it agrees with reason in everything” (*panta gar homophônei tôi logôi*, b28).¹⁰

A third merit of the proposed interpretation is that it is consistent with what Aristotle says about the use of emotion-arousal in rhetoric. On this view, Aristotelian passions can be felt

9 Cf. J. Moss, ‘Akrasia and Perceptual Illusion’ [‘Akrasia’], *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie* 91, no. 2 (2009), 119–156; Moss, *Apparent Good; Price*, ‘Emotions’.

10 This last phrase confirms that we should think of the passionate part here as exercising a *representational* capacity that can agree in content with the reasoning part, and not merely as exercising a *motivational* capacity in ways that coincide with the prescriptions of the rational part. Such a view is also suggested by the allusion to *akrasia* in DA 3.10, 433b7-10, where it is suggested that *nous* and *epithumia* each make assertions, which differ in the akratic case (because of *epithumia*’s inability to consider the future as *nous* can). Cf. J. D’Arms and D. Jacobson, ‘The Moralistic Fallacy: On the ‘Appropriateness’ of Emotions’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXI, no. 1 (2000), 65–90, 65-90; M. Salmela, ‘True Emotions’, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 56, no. 224 (2006), 382–405, on standards of appropriateness and correctness for emotions.

precisely *because* they are epistemically reasonable to feel in the light of the agent's beliefs. If the agent then draws conclusions based on the way things seem to him in his passionate state, it seems plausible to suppose that those conclusions will inherit the epistemic credentials of the passionate state that gave rise to them.¹¹ For example, if I am justified in envying someone's undeserved prosperity, my consequent disinclination to believe that they are the undeserving victim of serious harm will also be justified.¹² In this way, arousing the passions of an audience can be a way of giving them proper grounds for conviction.¹³

By contrast, if passions do not involve any endorsement of their representational contents, and the subject remains uncommitted to them, then it is hard to see how they can provide a source of epistemic justification for any conclusion inferred from them, just as a premise that is merely hypothesised can contribute no epistemic merit to a conclusion inferred from it.

Thus, the proposed account fits well with Aristotle's views on biology, ethics and rhetoric.

11 This seems to me implied in the claim that the passionate part of the soul "has reason" in a way that is derived from the successful reasoning of the rational part (*EN* 1.13, 1102b30-32).

12 Cf. *Rhet* 2.9, 1387a3-5, b16-21; 2.10, 1388a27-30. The move from envying someone (as enjoying prosperity) to being unable to pity them (as not suffering undeservedly) seems to be made inferentially.

13 Cf. e.g. *Rhet* 1.1, 1355a3-6; 1.2, 1356a1-4; 2.1, 1377b20-24, 1378a19-20. "Proper grounds for conviction" is a gloss of Aristotle's term πίστις in the *Rhetoric*, and is defended in J. Dow, 'Proof-reading Aristotle's Rhetoric' ['Proof-reading'], *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie* (forthcoming 2014) and J. Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* [Passions and Persuasion], *Oxford Aristotle Studies* (Oxford, forthcoming 2014).

It also has considerable philosophical merits. Some of these can be seen by focusing on the question, “what kind of attitude towards their representational contents does Aristotle think is involved in the passions?” In contemporary philosophy and psychology, an important test of the merits of answers to this question is how well they account for ‘recalcitrant emotions’,¹⁴ i.e. cases where the subject’s emotion arises or persists despite being in recognised conflict with their better beliefs or knowledge.¹⁵ Recalcitrant emotions present an interesting set of *desiderata* for any account of the type of attitude towards their representational content that emotions involve.¹⁶

1. It should not render such cases impossible or exceptional.

14 The terminology is from M.S. Brady, ‘Recalcitrant Emotions and Visual Illusions’ [‘Emotions and Illusions’], *American Philosophical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2007), 273–284; ‘The Irrationality of Recalcitrant Emotions’ [‘Recalcitrant Emotions’], *Philosophical Studies* (2008). In psychology, one might consider the debate between Robert Zajonc R.B. Zajonc, ‘On the Primacy of Affect’, *American Psychologist* 39, no. 2 (1984), 117–123, and Richard Lazarus ‘On the Primacy of Cognition’, *The American Psychologist* 39, no. 2 (1984), 124–129. In philosophy, examples include P. Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons* (New York, 1988); R.M. Gordon, *The Structure of Emotions: Investigations in Cognitive Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1990); B.W. Helm, *Emotional Reason - Deliberation, Motivation and the Nature of Value* [Emotional Reason] (Cambridge, 2001); M.C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001); J. Prinz, *Gut Reactions – a Perceptual Theory of Emotion* [Gut Reactions] (New York, 2004). A similar strategy is also evident in T.S. Gendler, ‘Alief and Belief’, *Journal of Philosophy* 105, no. 10 (2008), 634–663, in defending a thesis that ranges considerably beyond the emotions.

15 Some have argued that Aristotle saw the passions as involving *phantasia* because of how this enabled him to explain recalcitrant emotions on the model of visual illusions. E.g. Cooper, ‘Theory’; Sihvola, ‘Emotional Animals’; Striker, ‘Emotions in Context’; criticised in Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’.

16 Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’, discusses the problems these present for judgement- or perceptual appearance-based theories of emotion.

2. It should explain why emotions usually *are* responsive to the subject's better beliefs.
3. It should account for the conflict / inconsistency in which they implicate the subject.
4. It should account for the failing involved in having recalcitrant emotional responses.
5. It should not overstate the failing involved in having recalcitrant emotional responses.

The first and second *desiderata* require that the psychological system that generates emotions be distinct from and (at least to some extent) independent of the reasoning processes for forming and regulating beliefs. The third *desideratum* goes beyond the observation that the representational content of a recalcitrant emotion is inconsistent with what the subject believes. For there can be "inconsistency" of that kind between imaginings and beliefs without any sense that the subject is conflicted or holds inconsistent attitudes.¹⁷ A theory of emotion must provide (or allow for) an explanation of the fact that the subject of recalcitrant emotions is in some sense "pulled in different directions".¹⁸ The fourth and fifth *desiderata* together present the requirement *both* to

¹⁷ Helm, *Emotional Reason*, 41-46. Cf. also G. Pitcher, 'Emotion', *Mind* 74 (1965), 324-346, 324-346. Prinz (Gut Reactions, 237-240) attempts to address such concerns, in response to Pitcher, but fails to do so satisfactorily. See also S. Döring, 'Explaining Action by Emotion' ['Explaining'], *The Philosophical Quarterly* LIII, no. 211 (2003), 214-230, and Salmela, 'True Emotions'.

¹⁸ This can, but need not, be understood as having conflicting practical motivations. Cf. J. Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind* (Cambridge, 1999); J. Elster, 'Emotions and Rationality', in ed. A.S.R. Manstead, N. Frijda, and A. Fischer, *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam Symposium* (Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction) (Cambridge, 2004), 30-48; C.S. Sripada and S. Stich, 'Evolution, Culture and the Irrationality of the Emotions', in ed. D. Evans and P. Cruse, *Emotion, Evolution and Rationality* (New York, 2004),

explain how the subject of recalcitrant emotions fails to comply with some norm of rationality that is successfully met by the person whose fear of the spider is extinguished by better knowledge,¹⁹ and to avoid assimilating their irrationality to that exhibited by someone who simultaneously judges both something and that thing's negation.²⁰

In the final section below (section 7), I argue that, with respect to these *desiderata*, the view I am attributing to Aristotle has considerable merit as an account of the emotions. But we may note immediately that if the passions involve an exercise of *phantasia*, this obviously allows for the possibility of conflict with the subject's considered beliefs (which are an exercise of *doxa*).

First, however, I attempt to show that the proposed view is indeed Aristotle's.

3 Aristotelian Passions involve exercising *Phantasia*

Although it is the *Rhetoric* that contains Aristotle's most developed treatment of the

133–158. This approach seems to me unpromising, since it is obviously possible to experience emotions that are clearly recalcitrant but where the motivations they generate happen to be congruent with the agent's goals.

19 Cf. Brady, 'Emotions and Illusions'; Brady, 'Recalcitrant Emotions'; in line with a tradition going back to Pascal (*Pensées*, 2.82); Hume (*Treatise*, ch.26). Others affirm these *desiderata*, but restrict their scope to those passions over which the subject has control, e.g. Döring, 'Explaining', 223; Prinz, *Gut Reactions*, 236-239; Salmela, 'True Emotions', 396; enlisting (implausibly, to my mind) Hume to their cause.

20 Cf. Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons*, 17-20; Helm, *Emotional Reason*, 41-2; Döring, 'Explaining', 223.

passions, his concerns there are primarily those relevant to an orator wishing to arouse them. So, we do not find careful and explicit answers to questions about how the passions fit into Aristotle's wider views about the psychological capacities of humans (and non-human animals). So we must look wider – mostly to the *De Anima*, and the ethical works – for evidence of his views, and then check the picture developed from this wider set of texts for consistency with his remarks in the *Rhetoric*.²¹ My principal concern in this section, then, is to argue that for Aristotle, the representational aspect of the passions is an exercise of *phantasia* – a capacity to store and use sensory representations.²²

For some interpreters, notably John Cooper, the evidence is staring us in the face, from the text of the *Rhetoric* itself. Aristotle, throughout *Rhetoric* 2.2-11, uses the terms *phantasia* (appearance) and *phainomenos* (apparent) in his explanations of the distinctive outlook, and hence the distinctive representational contents, involved in each type of passion that he discusses. One example is the definition of pity given above. Another is his account of anger.²³

21 One cannot, of course, simply *presuppose* that Aristotle's views are consistent across all his works. But it is appropriately charitable to seek a single consistent interpretation; and, if one can be found, it seems reasonable then to use one work to elucidate another.

22 Cf. esp. S. Everson, *Aristotle on Perception* [Perception] (Oxford, 1999); V. Caston, 'Why Aristotle Needs Imagination', *Phronesis* 41 (1996), 20–55; V. Caston, 'Aristotle and the Problem of Intentionality', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58, no. 2 (1998), 249–298; Moss, *Apparent Good*; and bibliography there.

23 Similar terminology is used in the definitions of calmness (1380a10-12), fear (1382a21-25), confidence (1383a16-19), shame and shamelessness (1383b12-15), indignation (1387a8-9), envy (1387b22-25), emulation (1388a32-35), as well as elsewhere in the detailed treatment of the various types of passion.

Let anger be a desire-cum-pain for apparent (φαινομένης) revenge on account of an apparent (φαινομένην) slight against oneself or one of one's own, from someone with no business doing so. *Rhetoric* 2.2, 1378a30-32.

These interpreters take this as Aristotle indicating that the psychological faculty involved in such passions is *phantasia*, or at least that these texts create a presumption in favour of this view.²⁴ This seems to me mistaken, stemming from a failure to take seriously the context (an explanation of rhetorical techniques) in which these texts are found. I give my preferred interpretation of these texts below, but mention them now to set them aside: I do not think they constitute *any* evidence for the view that passions involve *phantasia*. The most one should say is that the use of the words *phantasia* and *phainesthai* as technical terms in the psychological works does not present an obstacle to their use here, since Aristotle does in fact think that the passions involve the capacity of *phantasia*.

Instead, I present two arguments – each convincing alone, but together certainly decisive – for the claim that the representational aspect of the passions is, for Aristotle, an exercise of *phantasia*.²⁵

24 E.g. Cooper, 'Theory', 246-7; Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 416-7; Nieuwenburg, 'Emotion and Perception'; more cautiously, Price, 'Emotions', 133-5; and now Moss, *Apparent Good*, 70; I argue against this view in Dow, 'Feeling Fantastic', 151-5.

25 My understanding here owes a considerable debt to Price, 'Emotions' and Moss, *Apparent Good*, and to exchanges with their authors. I leave aside here some other arguments from Nieuwenburg, 'Emotion and Perception' and Moss, *Apparent Good*. The fact that the pleasures of anger are signalled as exercises of

(a) Passions and parts of the soul.

The first argument is that for Aristotle the passions belong to a “part” of the soul whose representational capacities include sensation and *phantasia*, but not reason or intellect. Since the representational content of most passions is not given by a current sensory experience, in at least these cases (and arguably in all cases), the representational element of the passions must be an exercise of *phantasia*.

Aristotle is often cautious about speaking of “parts” of the soul. His preferred approach involves identifying and distinguishing psychological capacities.²⁶ In *De Anima* 1, he identifies some capacities as clearly involving the body, and others as candidates for involving the soul alone (1.1, 403a3-10). Anger, confidence, appetite and perception are among the former (a7), to which shortly afterwards he adds “all the passions” (a16), whereas thinking is an example of the latter (a8), though even thinking will require the body if it turns out (as Aristotle thinks it does) that thinking involves *phantasia* (a8-10). It is evident from this that he considers *phantasia* a capacity whose exercise clearly involves the

phantasia (*Rhetoric* 2.2, 1378b9-10) can be readily agreed by someone who denies that *phantasia* is involved in the way the objects of the passions are represented. There is no inconsistency involved in supposing that anger requires *believing* one has been slighted, even if it requires no more than *imagining* getting revenge. More promising is *Rhet* 2.8, 1386a29-b1, in which Aristotle advocates various kinds of acting in order to make misfortunes seem “near” (pity’s objects are represented as near, 1385b15), but one might still insist that these techniques work because they influence the audience’s *beliefs*.

26 Cf. *DA* 2.2, 413b13-32; 3.9, 432a22-b7; 3.10, 433b1-4; *EN* 1.13, 1102a26-32; *EE* 2.1, 1219b32-36.

body. Aristotle, then, thinks that passions involve the body, but in addition, his account of anger at 403a26-7 suggests that he thinks specifically that the representational aspects of the passions are themselves instantiated in the bodily processes associated with each passion. Thus, anger is the boiling of blood and hot stuff around the heart, because of such-and-such, for the sake of such-and-such.²⁷ The representation of revenge as an object of desire, and probably also of the slight that occasioned the angry response, are also here seen as bodily processes. If so, it is clear that these aspects of the passions cannot be an exercise of thinking processes that, at this stage in the *De Anima*, Aristotle allows are possible candidates for separation from the body. Of the body-involving capacities listed in *De Anima* 1.1, there are two that are clearly representational: sensation (*aisthêsis*) and *phantasia*. If the passions involve an exercise of one of these, it must be *phantasia*, since the objects of passions are frequently not objects of current sensory experience.²⁸

The same view is evident in the ethical treatises. There he recognises a wholly

27 The general form of Aristotle's preferred account is given in a26-27, and the specific details for anger are fleshed out somewhat in a30-b1, cf. D. Charles, 'Desire in Action: Aristotle's Move', in ed. M. Pakaluk and G. Pearson, *Moral Psychology and Human Action in Aristotle* (Oxford, 2011), 75–93.

28 Aristotle's *prima facie* puzzling implication at 403a7 that anger, confidence and appetite are species of perception can be read as confirming this conclusion. For Aristotle thinks that *phantasia* is a particular type of exercise of the perceptual capacity (cf. *De Insomn.* 459a16-17; *DA* 3.3, 428b11-17; and note how at *DA* 3.3, 428a9 he is careful to reject only the possibility that *phantasia* and *aisthêsis* are identical "in actuality", which leaves open the possibility that the potentiality for *phantasia* is identical with the potentiality for *aisthêsis*), cf. discussion in *Everson, Perception*, 157-8; and J.E. Whiting, 'Locomotive Soul: The Parts of Soul in Aristotle's Scientific Works' ['Locomotive Soul'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002), 141–200, 154-163. The claim that such an exercise of *phantasia* is not merely a part but the whole of a passion is a stronger claim, but seems required by the most natural reading of 403a7.

non-reasoning part – the nutritive part, and two other parts that “have reason” - one that itself exercises reason, i.e. engages in reasoning, and one that does not itself engage in reasoning, but “has reason” in the sense that it is able to be guided by reason.²⁹ Aristotle clearly locates the passions³⁰ (and related excellences)³¹ in this latter “part” of the soul. But now the representational resources of this part of the soul do not extend to capacities (such as *doxa*, or *pistis*) that involve reasoning,³² and seem to be limited once again to *aisthêsis* and *phantasia*, of which the latter is the suitable candidate for involvement in the passions.³³

Likewise, when Aristotle, in *Rhetoric* 1.10, distinguishes kinds of motivation for human action, he identifies anger (ὀργή) and appetite (ἐπιθυμία) as kinds of non-reasoning desire

29 *EN* 1.13, 1102a27-1103a3; *EE* 2.1, 1219b26-1220a4.

30 *EE* 2.1, 1220a8-12; 2.4, 1221b27-34; *EN* 1.13, 1103a3-8.

31 *EN* 2.6, 1106b16-23; *EE* 2.2, 1220b5-14; 2.3, 1220b34-1221b17; 2.5, 1222b4-14; *Pol* 1.5, 1254b2-9, noting “the passionate part” (τῷ παθητικῷ μορίῳ, b8).

32 Cf. *DA* 3.3, 428a18-24.

33 If when Aristotle refers to the “desiderative” part (τὸ ὀρεκτικόν), his terminology indicates (perhaps among other things) that this part is seat of the passions (as Moss (Apparent Good, 72) suggests, plausibly, on the basis of *EE* 1221b31 and *EN* 1102b30), then the conclusion above receives some confirmation from the apparent reference to one and the same faculty as “perceptive and desiderative” (*EE* 2.1, 1219b23), and from his assertion at *DA* 3.7, 431a12-14 that the bearer of the capacities of desire and aversion is not a different thing (οὐχ ἕτερον) from the bearer of perceptual capacities, though its being is different (ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶναι ἄλλο). Cf. also, relatedly, *Phys* 7.3, 246b20-247a19, discussed below. The proposal in Whiting, ‘Locomotive Soul’, that practical νοῦς (e.g. *DA* 433a9, 14) also stands in the same relationship – sameness in number, difference in being – to this perceptive / imaginative / appetitive / passionate part would not undermine the argument above, at least insofar as it rests on texts that make use of a contrast between reasoning and non-reasoning “parts” of the soul, and locate belief (δόξα) in the former and perception, *phantasia* and the passions in the latter.

(ἄλογοι ὁρέξει, 1369a4). If Aristotle endorses this classification,³⁴ he cannot think that these states essentially involve the exercise of reasoning-based representational capacities, which seems once again to reduce the possible candidates for the capacity involved to sensation and *phantasia*.

(b) Passions, pleasure and pain

The second argument proceeds from the view that for Aristotle passions essentially involve pleasure and pain.³⁵ This seems clear from a number of passages about the passions in general.

The passions are those on account of which we change and differ in our judgements, and which are accompanied by pleasure and pain, for example, anger, pity, fear and others of this kind, and their opposites. (*Rhet* 2.1, 1378a19-22)

By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hatred, yearning, emulation, pity and in general the things that are accompanied by

³⁴ One might doubt this, on the basis that *Rhet* 1.4-15 provides merely reputable materials for rhetorical arguments (cf. 1.2, 1356b28-1357a1; 1359a26-9). But that this particular section (1368b28-1369b29) represents (also) Aristotle's own views is strongly suggested by a use of the first-person singular (1369b23), and a forward reference to *Rhet* 2.2 for an account of anger – since he must think the latter not merely reputable but true, given its purpose of facilitating anger-arousal (cf. 1378a22-6).

³⁵ Cf. Dow, 'Aristotle's Theory', for the stronger claim that Aristotelian passions *are* pleasures and pains.

pleasure or pain. (*EN* 2.5, 1105b21-3)

By passions I mean such things as anger/spirit (*θυμὸν*), fear, shame, appetite and in general the things that in themselves are accompanied for the most part by sensory pleasure or pain. (*EE* 2.2, 1220b12-14)

It is also clear from how Aristotle describes the particular kinds of passions. His definition of pity is given above, equally typical is his definition of fear.³⁶

Let fear be a certain pain or disturbance from the appearance of destructive or painful harm in the future. (*Rhetoric* 2.5, 1382a21-2)

In the *Rhetoric* and elsewhere Aristotle takes pleasures and pains to require, and perhaps simply to be, exercises of perception and *phantasia*.³⁷

Since feeling pleasure is in the perceiving of some condition, and *phantasia* is a kind of weak perception, there would always be in the person remembering or looking forward some *phantasia* of the thing he is remembering or looking forward to. And

³⁶ In Aristotle's list of types of passion in *Rhetoric* 2.2-11, there are some that seem to be exceptions to the claim that all passions involve pleasure or pain. These are discussed in some detail in Dow, 'Aristotle's Theory', and I leave them aside here.

³⁷ e.g. *DA* 3.7, 431a10-11. Notice that in *EE* 2.2, 1220b14, Aristotle specifies that it is sensory (*αἰσθητική*) pleasure and pain that is involved in the passions. In the relevant texts, Aristotle ignores the pleasures of thought that he mentions in *EN* 10.5, 1175a21-28.

if so, it is clear that as people remember and look forward they will simultaneously also have pleasures, since perception too is present. (*Rhetoric* 1.11, 1370a27-32)

So, Aristotle sees the passions as involving sensory pleasure and pain, which itself involves an exercise of *phantasia*, itself a particular kind of exercise of the capacity for sensation (*aisthêsis*).

That this reasoning is Aristotelian is confirmed by its appearance at *Physics* 7.3. He is defending the claim that virtues are not alterations, but allows that their acquisition is accompanied by alterations of the sensitive part. He explains that the virtues of the soul³⁸ involve being in a good condition with regard to its proper affections (*πάθη*, *Phys.* 247a4), and acquiring them (therefore?) results from alterations of the sensitive part (*τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ μέρους*, a6-7).

For all moral excellence is concerned with bodily pleasures and pains, which again depend either upon acting or upon remembering or upon anticipating. Now those that depend upon action are determined by sense-perception, and are moved by something sensible; and those that depend upon memory or anticipation are likewise to be traced to sense-perception. Thus all pleasure of this kind must be produced by sensible things; and since the presence of defect or excellence involves the presence of pleasure or pain ... , and pleasures and pains are alterations of the

38 He has in mind character virtues here, and moves on to intellectual virtues at 247b1.

sensitive part, it is evident that the loss and acquisition of these states too [viz. character virtues] must be the result of the alteration of something. (*Physics* 7.3, 247a7-18)

Since Aristotle sees the passions as involving (sensory) pain and pleasure, he sees them as involving an exercise of the sensitive part of the soul in either *aisthêsis* or *phantasia*.³⁹

(c) Arguments appealing to visual illusions

The view that, for Aristotle, the passions involve an exercise of *phantasia* has been defended by appeal to a comparison between recalcitrant passions and visual illusions.⁴⁰ For example, John Cooper comments as follows on Aristotle's use of "*phantasia*" in the definitions of the types of passion in *Rhetoric* 2.2-11.

It seems likely that Aristotle is using *phantasia* here to indicate the sort of nonepistemic appearance to which he draws attention once in *De Anima* 3.3 (428b2-4), according to which something may appear to, or strike one, in some way

³⁹ One might reasonably suppose that what is said about the pleasures and pains that accompany the *acquisition* of virtues in the *Physics* passage applies equally to the pleasures and pains involved in the *exercise* of virtues. Cf. *EN* 2.1, 1103b13-21; 2.3, 1105a13-16.

⁴⁰ The similarity between recalcitrant passions and perceptual illusions is endorsed by Moss, but doesn't form part of her argument for the involvement of *phantasia* in the passions (*Moss, Apparent Good*, 65 and ch.5 *passim*).

(say, as being insulting or belittling) even if one knows there is no good reason for one to take it so. If so, Aristotle is alert to the crucial fact about the emotions, that one can experience them simply on the basis of how, despite what one knows or believes to be the case, things strike one – how things look to one when, for one reason or another, one is disposed to feel the emotion. Being unable to control an emotion is, partly, taking as a ground of it something that you know was not one at all.⁴¹

Cooper invokes the comparison between recalcitrant passions and visual illusions in a way that raises a number of other issues. He here clearly claims or implies all of the following.

- i. That the term “*phantasia*” carries in *Rhetoric 2* the same meaning as it does in *De Anima 3.3*.
- ii. That Aristotelian passions involve “non-epistemic” appearances.
- iii. That Aristotelian emotions can be wholly repudiated by their subject.
- iv. That Aristotle’s view that passions involve *phantasia* was developed partly in order to account for recalcitrant emotions of this kind, analogously to visual illusions.

All except the second of these claims seem to me misguided in one way or another.

Against i, I discuss in section 4 below the sense of “*phantasia*” as it is used in *Rhetoric 2*.⁴²

Against claims iii and iv, I consider in section 6 below the kinds of conflict between

41 Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 417. Similar lines of argument are presented in Cooper, ‘Passions’, 191-2; Striker, ‘Emotions in Context’, 291; and Sihvola, ‘Emotional Animals’, 59-60. These arguments, and particularly the appeal to *DA 3.3*, is resisted in Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’.

42 This builds on the earlier discussion in Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’, 151-5.

passions and reasoned beliefs that Aristotle recognises, and which one might reasonably take to have shaped his views on the passions. However, the second claim is our immediate concern, in which Cooper characterises the appearances involved in the passions as “non-epistemic”, since it is this that is central to the comparison with visual illusions. How should we understand this claim?

- i. “Non-epistemic” may here be simply a synonym for “non-doxastic”, such that Cooper’s claim is just that passionate appearances do not involve beliefs.
- ii. Claiming that passionate appearances are “non-epistemic” may be a claim that they are not apt targets of epistemic evaluation, or that the subject is not liable to epistemic evaluation as a result of this kind of passionate experience. This kind of exemption from epistemic evaluation is typical of states in which the subject is uncommitted to the truth of their representational contents (e.g. supposing, imagining and – crucially – having a perceptual appearance).

If the latter is what Cooper intended, the issues raised are those discussed in sections 4 and 5 below. I set aside that possibility here, and will take Cooper to be proposing that Aristotle’s view of the role of *phantasia* (rather than *doxa*) in the passions arose from a comparison between recalcitrant passions and visual illusions.

If Aristotle thought about such a comparison,⁴³ then he might have considered it good

43 Jessica Moss argues that he saw weakness of will as analogous to being taken in by what one knows is a visual illusion in Moss, ‘Akrasia’. That weakness of will involves the kind of conflict we are considering here, i.e. between, on the one hand, the representation involved in the appetitive or spirited state and, on

grounds for supposing that passions and beliefs involve different faculties of the soul.

Consider the following passage from the *De Insomniis*.

And these [viz. appearances as of animals on the walls, experienced by fevered persons] sometimes combine with their condition in such a way that, if they are not excessively ill, it does not escape their notice that here is something false, but if their condition is more severe, they even move towards them. The explanation for these things' coming about is that the cognitions (τὸ κρίνειν) of the controlling part and the one that produces the appearances (τὰ φαντάσματα) do not involve the same faculty (δύναμιν). (460b13-18)

Aristotle's view seems to be that certain kinds of psychological conflict demand explanation in terms of distinct psychological capacities or faculties. In the moderately-fevered person, neither the appearances nor their considered beliefs are incoherent, as they would be if just one capacity were being exercised. Rather, the appearances are of animals on the wall, and their beliefs are that there are no animals, merely patterns (cracks, blemishes, or shapes?). Furthermore, the pattern of conflict may provide additional grounds for concluding that two capacities are involved. For Aristotle observes that in the more severe case, where presumably the reason-involving capacity for forming or using considered beliefs is disabled, the appearances are not thereby disabled.

the other, the agent's considered belief, is strongly suggested by passages such as *De Anima* 3.10, 433b5-10 and *EN* 7.6, 1149a29-34.

It is just so with the passions when they conflict with considered beliefs: fear involves representing the spider as threatening some harm, but the subject has a coherent belief to the contrary. And the fact that a person's reason-involving capacity for exercising (and acting in accordance with) knowledge can be disabled, in ways akin to sleep, does not thereby disable their passions.⁴⁴ It looks as though the reasoning that led Aristotle to suppose that conflicts between sensory appearances and considered beliefs should be explained in terms of distinct psychological capacities could have led him to conclude that the passions involve the exercise of a capacity distinct from those involved in considered beliefs.

Immediately after the passage quoted above, Aristotle presents the example of the sun's appearing a foot across, when we know it is much larger (*De Insomn.* 460b18-20), as further evidence for (σημεῖον, b18) the claim that appearances result from the exercise of a capacity distinct from that responsible for our considered judgements. He uses this example here simply to argue from the conflicting representations to the distinctness of the capacities involved.

These passages suggest that Aristotle would have explained the possibility of conflict between a person's passions and their considered beliefs by reference to the fact that beliefs and passions involve distinct psychological capacities. We should also agree that

⁴⁴ Cf. *EN* 7.3, 1147a10-18, b6-9. Moss, 'Akrasia', plausibly argues for the view that in these passages it is the passions and appetites themselves that play a role in disabling reason, a possibility that Aristotle himself clearly recognises in *DA* 3.3, 429a7.

phantasia is responsible both for the appearance of the sun as about a foot across and for the representational contents of the passions. However, there are important differences between the exercises of *phantasia* involved in the small visual appearance of the sun, and those involved in the passions. For when the latter persist in the face of conflicting beliefs, Aristotle will want to say the subject *is* implicated in inconsistency in the case of recalcitrant passions in a way that he supposes does not occur in the case of recognised visual illusions.⁴⁵ This is most evident in his treatments of *akrasia* and *enkrateia*, where it is clear (whatever else may not be) that he sees their subject as having passions that persist directly *in conflict* with the deliverances of their reasoning.⁴⁶ And it is equally clear that this renders the subjects *themselves* conflicted.⁴⁷ This is in significant measure why virtue is better than *enkrateia*.

The inconsistency in which the subject of recalcitrant passions is implicated is, I claim, the result of a quite general feature of Aristotelian passions. That is that having a passion

45 Cf. Dow, 'Feeling Fantastic', 155-63: I argue there that the argument of *DA* 3.3, 428a2-9 turns on Aristotle's plausible observation that the subject of a recognised visual illusion is *not* thereby implicated in inconsistency. There is a difficulty faced by perceptual theories of emotion generally in accounting for the inconsistency involved in having recalcitrant emotions, cf. above p.10 and n. 17.

46 Cf. for appetitive *akrasia*: *EN* 7.3, 1147a31-b3, noting *ἐναντίας* (b1) and *ἐναντία* (b3); for *akrasia* from spirit/anger: 7.6, 1149a29-34, noting that the conclusion of θυμός that "δεῖ τῷ τοιούτῳ πολεμεῖν" (a33-34) is clearly supposed to be in conflict with reason's "ἐπίταγμα" (a31); for conflict between reason and the appetites: *DA* 3.10, 433b5-6, b7-10, noting "ἐναντία" (b5, 6), and 433a10-11, 22-29, where the conflict is diagnosed to the production of conflicting evaluative representations. That the accounts of *akrasia* in *DA* 3.10 and *EN* 7.3 are consistent, and indeed complementary, is defended in Moss, 'Akrasia'. For evidence that *epithumia* is for Aristotle a type of passion, see *DA* 1.1, 403a7; *Rhet* 2.1, 1378a3-5.

47 *EN* 7.2, 1146a9-16; 7.9, 1151b32-1152a3.

constitutes a kind of affirmation by the subject that things are the way they are represented in their passionate experience. It is this feature of the passions that means that where the contents of a person's passions are inconsistent with the contents of their beliefs, that person holds (to that extent) inconsistent attitudes about how things are in the world. In the following section, I defend the attribution of this view to Aristotle.

4 What kind of attitude do Aristotelian passions involve towards their representational contents?

We should suppose, then, that the representational aspect of the passions involved, for Aristotle, "appearances" presented by *phantasia*. Several scholars have suggested that Aristotle saw similarities between visual illusions and conflicts between passion and reason, and this might be taken to imply that Aristotelian passions need involve no inclination to take their contents as being the way things are (recall Cooper's characterisation of the passions as involving "non-epistemic appearances"). In this section, I claim that the exercises of *phantasia* involved in Aristotelian passions constitute a kind of affirmation by their subject of their representational contents.

(a) Affirming the representational contents of *phantasia*

It is important to clarify what is meant in this context by “affirming” these representational contents. This is best elucidated by considering two passages. One is the end of *De Anima* 3.3.

Because they [viz. exercises of *phantasia*] remain within, and are similar to sensations, animals perform many actions in accordance with them, in some cases, such as brutes, because they do not have thinking (*voûς*), and in others, such as humans, because their thinking is sometimes covered over by passion or by diseases or by sleep. (429a4-8)

Aristotle here thinks of brutes and some humans as “acting according to *phantasia*”, by which he presumably means that they treat *phantasia* as representing the way things actually are. The implied contrast is with fully-functioning human adults, who do not act according to *phantasia*, but presumably act according to *nous*. Such humans may often have states of *phantasia* whose contents differ from the contents of their *nous*-derived beliefs, but it is the contents of their beliefs, not their *phantasmata*, that guides both how they act, and also what further beliefs they might be inclined to form by making inferences. I shall say that such fully-functioning humans “affirm” the contents of their beliefs, but do not “affirm” the contents of their *phantasmata*, whereas the brutes and the diseased or sleepy (or drunk, or immature) humans do “affirm” the contents of their *phantasmata*. I do not

intend this use of “affirm” to imply that there is some further psychological activity (the activity of affirming) over and above the exercises of *phantasia* and *nous* taking place in any of the animals Aristotle is considering. Rather, animals are simply disposed to treat the representational contents of *phantasia* as giving the way things are, unless *nous* is operating effectively, in which case it is the beliefs generated by *nous* that are taken to give the way things are. Whether the contents of *phantasia* are affirmed is thus a relational matter – a matter of whether something else within the animal’s psychology takes on the role they would otherwise play.⁴⁸

The second passage brings to light two possible ways in which the contents of sensation or *phantasia* might be “affirmed”. They are, in a sense, “affirmed” by the capacity (or part of the soul) that presents them. But they may also be “affirmed” by the person as a whole. The claim defended here is that, in virtue of being in a passionate state, the *subject* of the passions affirms the representational contents of their passions in this latter way. The issue is thus not about whether these contents are affirmed *by the capacity for phantasia itself*, but whether they are affirmed by the *person* whose capacity it is. For Aristotle sometimes writes as though there is a kind of conversation going on internally between the various capacities.

48 Moss, *Apparent Good*, 92-3, similarly highlights what is in common between beliefs in normally-functioning adult humans and exercises of *phantasia* in those that lack the functioning of νοῦς – her preferred term is “acceptance”. Her account and mine differ in that hers addresses only the question of what should be said about sub-personal parts (rational or non-rational), whereas I address, and take there to be Aristotelian material relevant to, the further question of what should be said about the subject as a whole.

... it is due to touch announcing (εἰσαγγέλλειν) two movements that we believe one thing is two. For, in general, the origin affirms (φησιν) what comes from each sense, unless another more authoritative [sense] (κυριωτέρα) contradicts (ἀντιφῆ). (*De Insomn.* 3, 461b2-5)

Aristotle is discussing how a single object touched with crossed fingers feels like two objects (460b20-22).⁴⁹ He is happy to say that the senses themselves can “announce” and “contradict” and to that extent there is something within the agent that affirms the content of the illusion. But he takes it as obvious that if we are aware of the illusion, we are not tempted actually to believe there are two objects. Indeed, he is explicit at 460b21 that “we do not affirm two”, and he offers the explanation recapitulated in the passage above that “sight is more authoritative (κυριωτέρα) than touch” (b21-2). So, the *subject* of these sensory experiences is – I suggest – completely uncommitted to the sensory representations provided by touch⁵⁰ in this example, indeed the subject explicitly rejects them as false. The crossed-fingers case from the *De Insomniis* thus clarifies the precise sense in which subjects (as contrasted with their sub-personal capacities) can affirm or be uncommitted to the contents of *phantasia*.

49 He describes a similar case later in the same work, where a single object appears visually to be two if the observer presses under their eyeball with their finger (461b30-462a2).

50 Aristotle clearly takes this to generalise to *phantasia*, since in this part of the *De Insomn.* he is explaining using these sensory examples why typically dreams – for Aristotle, exercises of *phantasia* – are convincing to us when asleep, but not when we are aware that they are mere dreams.

Two qualifications should be noted. The claim that the subject of a passionate state thereby affirms its representational contents should not be understood to preclude that same subject's affirming, perhaps by having a reasoned belief, something else simultaneously. If the contents of the belief and the representations involved in the passion are inconsistent, the subject in such a case would be conflicted. Recalcitrant passions will be of this kind – the subject is conflicted because she simultaneously affirms (albeit with different psychological capacities) inconsistent assessments of (say) the danger posed by the spider. Secondly, in such a case, the influence of passions and reasoned beliefs on the subject's behaviour and thinking may not be equal. I discuss below (section 5) evidence that Aristotle thought a person's reason could be inhibited to varying degrees. If so, the extent to which their behaviour was determined by what was affirmed by the non-reasoning part of the soul would also vary.

The remainder of this section is concerned with showing that for Aristotle, the subject of the passions affirms, in the sense just identified, the representational contents of their passions.

(b) Aristotle's use of *phantasia* and *phainesthai* in the *Rhetoric*

The most important evidence for this claim is the use of cognates of *phainesthai* ("to

appear”, esp. *phainomenos* and *phantasia*) in *Rhetoric* 2.2-11.⁵¹ In context, these do not – as Cooper and others have supposed⁵² – signal that the psychological capacity involved in the passions is *phantasia*, rather they indicate that this is how – in having a passion of the type under discussion – the subject of the passion *takes things to be*.⁵³ *Phantasia* and cognates are important words in the *Rhetoric* as a whole, and are used to indicate how the listener takes things to be, which – of course – may be incorrect. A good illustrative example is Aristotle’s phrase ‘*phainomenon enthymêma*’ (1356b2-3) which means something that a listener *thinks* is a piece of good rhetorical reasoning (lit. ‘apparent enthymeme’), even if it is not.

This view of terms like *phantasia* in *Rhetoric* 2.2-11 receives confirmation from their context. They occur within a set of instructions about how a speaker might arouse passions of various types as part of convincing an audience. Against this background, the directions Aristotle gives for how to arouse each type of passion can only plausibly be understood on the view that passions involve their subject affirming that things are the way they are represented.

51 We may ignore the suggestion that these mean ‘conspicuous’ or ‘manifest’. Cf. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion*, 97-100; pace E.M. Cope, *Commentary on the Rhetoric of Aristotle* (Cambridge, 1877), on *Rhetoric* 2.2, 1378a30f., who is followed by translators W. R. Roberts (in J. Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle – The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton, 1984)); and G.A. Kennedy, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York, 1991).

52 Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 416-7; Sihvola, ‘Emotional Animals’, 59-68, 70-1; Striker, ‘Emotions in Context’, 291; Nieuwenburg, ‘Emotion and Perception’, esp. 89-94. Moss, *Apparent Good*, ch.4 is more cautious.

53 The argument is made in more detail at Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic’, 151-5, and is broadly in line with Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion*, 95-100; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, ch.3; and M.C. Nussbaum, ‘Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion’ [‘Aristotle on Emotions’], in ed. A.O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle’s Rhetoric* (Berkeley, 1996), 303–323; on this point.

Aristotle indicates his approach as follows.

For each passion, we should make a division into three, I mean, for example, with anger how we are disposed when we get angry, at whom we tend to get angry, and on what grounds. If we were to have one or two of these, and not all three, it would be impossible to arouse anger. (*Rhet* 2.1, 1378a12-14)

This sets the context for the accounts of the various types of passion that follow.

Let anger be a desire-cum-pain for *apparent* revenge on account of an *apparent* insult to oneself or one of one's own from one who should not have insulted. (*Rhet* 2.2, 1378a30-32)

Let calmness be the settling and abating of anger. If people are angry at those who insult them, and insulting is voluntary, it is clear that they are calm towards those who do none of these things or do them involuntarily or *appear* to be of this kind. (*Rhet* 2.3, 1380a8-12)

What things we fear, and whom and in what condition will be clear as follows. Let fear be some kind of pain or disturbance from the *appearance* of future harm that is damaging or painful. (*Rhet* 2.5, 1382a20-22)

It seems obvious that the representational state involved in these passions (signalled by *phantasia* and cognates, translated ‘apparent’ or ‘appearance’ above) must be one in which the way things are represented is affirmed as the way things are. For it is extremely implausible to suppose that Aristotle intends here to allow for the possibility that you could produce anger in your audience merely by bringing about the (potentially uncommitted) *appearance* of insult, or by getting your audience to *entertain the thought* of someone’s insulting them. An uncommitted *phantasia* is clearly inadequate for the job that Aristotle is recommending to the orator. The case is even clearer with calmness, where Aristotle describes how to soothe the anger of an audience. He says that people calm down from anger towards those who didn’t do what they were originally thought to have done, or towards those who did involuntarily what they had been thought to have done deliberately, or (crucially) people who *appear* thus (1380a10-12). Can Aristotle really be supposing that people’s anger can abate merely by entertaining the thought of someone’s innocence, without endorsing that? Surely not. Anger abates precisely by the subject’s *affirming* that the original accusation was either false, or the deed done involuntarily. What is the force of “apparent” in such cases? It is to emphasise that when a person calms down because the object of their anger appears now to be innocent after all, they may not be correct.⁵⁴ A false belief in someone’s innocence is as effective as a true belief in causing anger to abate. But an unendorsed thought or appearance is obviously not, and it is outlandish to suppose that Aristotle would have thought so.

54 Cf. Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 83-6; *pace* e.g. Cooper, ‘Theory’, 247; Striker, ‘Emotions in Context’ 291.

Correctly interpreted, then, Aristotle's "appearances" terminology in the *Rhetoric* constitutes a powerful reason for thinking that Aristotelian passions involve the subject's affirming their representational content. Paradoxically perhaps,⁵⁵ by using *phantasia* and cognates in his accounts of the passions, Aristotle explicitly asserts that having a given passion involves things appearing to be (i.e. being affirmed to be) a certain way.

(c) *Phantasia, passions and paintings in De anima 3.3*

Further support for this claim may be found in *De Anima* 3.3.

That it (*phantasia*) is not the same [type of thinking] as judgement (*hypolêpsis*) is obvious. For this condition is up to us whenever we wish (it is possible to put something before the eyes, as do those who use images as an *aide-memoire*), whereas believing (*doxazein*) is not up to us, of necessity we either do so falsely or truly.

Furthermore, whenever we believe something terrible or fearsome, we immediately experience a passion, and likewise if it is something encouraging. Whereas with *phantasia* we are as if we were looking at terrible or encouraging things in a

⁵⁵ Of course, this is only paradoxical to *us*. Since, as has been argued above, Aristotle thinks that these representations involve an exercise of a capacity for which his technical term is φαντασία, the fact that the word might have carried this connotation to some of his audience merely means that this presented no obstacle to its use to signify that passions involve taking things (whether truly or falsely) to be a certain way.

painting. (DA 3.3, 427b16-24)

This passage does not rule out the possibility that passions themselves involve *phantasia*. Its purpose is to establish that *phantasia* and *hypolêpsis* are not identical. All Aristotle needs to show is that some cases of *phantasia* are not cases of *hypolêpsis*: he invites the comparison between uncommitted exercises of *phantasia* (what we call “imagination”) and believing to show this.

His claims in this passage are that (a) believing, *doxazein*, is sufficient to cause passions, but (b) uncommitted *phantasia* is not. These claims suggest the view that passions are responses to certain supposed features of the world (things that are pitiful, fearsome, etc.), and hence lend support to the claim that the subject affirms the representational contents of their passions as the way things are. This is because supposing that passions involve affirming their representational contents provides a ready explanation of Aristotle’s claims, whereas supposing that passions can be entirely uncommitted leaves unexplained and rather puzzling the facts to which Aristotle adverts, i.e. that passions are reliably caused by beliefs but are not by mere imaginings. To *believe* that there is (say) something terrible or fearful (b21-2) is to be in a state in which, from that person’s perspective, there *is* something terrible or fearful. It is obvious why such a situation would tend to bring about a further, passionate, response from the subject of a kind that involves recognising that here is something terrible or fearful. However merely to entertain the thought of something terrible or fearful (in a way that is uncommitted as to whether it is actually the

case) is not thereby to be in a state in which, from the subject's perspective, there is some object or state of affairs that calls for passionate response. Clearly, if the passions involve affirming their contents, they are responses that the subject makes to (supposed) objects or states of affairs actually obtaining. And this readily explains why beliefs but not imaginings would typically give rise to passions. Whereas if passions can involve merely uncommitted representations of objects or states of affairs, it is unclear why beliefs should be any more potent to bring them about than imaginings, since both involve presenting the subject with relevant representational content.

This passage, thus, provides a second argument in support of the view that Aristotelian passions involve their subject taking things to be the way they are represented.

5 *Phantasia* and the regulation of the passions.

I now seek to trace some implications for the regulation of the passions of Aristotle's view that they involve an exercise of *phantasia*. I briefly highlight two features of *phantasia*, before applying them to the passions. One is the way in which the proper role of *phantasmata* within the organism depends on the presence or absence of more authoritative information from other psychological faculties. The other is the way in which evaluative *phantasia*, where things appear good or bad in some way, involves pleasure and pain, and has motivational consequences.

(a) Two features of *phantasia*

The first feature concerns the role of the representations presented by *phantasia*. On almost any view of the role of *phantasia* in an Aristotelian subject,⁵⁶ there are exercises of *phantasia* whose contents are affirmed, others towards whose contents the subject is entirely uncommitted, and still others where the subject is conflicted in relation to them.

The crossed-fingers case from the *De Insomniis*, discussed above, provides a clear example of uncommitted *phantasia*. An even clearer example is the following.

For this condition [*phantasia*] is up to us whenever we wish (it is possible to put something before the eyes, as do those who use images as an *aide-memoire*) ... (*De Anima* 3.3, 427b17-20)

Conversely, there are clearly some exercises of *phantasia* that *are* affirmed by the subject. At the end of *De Anima*'s chapter on *phantasia*, Aristotle says:

56 E.g. M.C. Nussbaum, *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium* [De Motu] (Princeton, 1978); M. Schofield, 'Aristotle on the Imagination', in ed. A.O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (Oxford, 1978); M.V. Wedin, *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle* (New Haven, 1988); *Everson, Perception*; H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* [The Brute Within] (Oxford, 2006); and *Moss, Apparent Good*.

Animals perform many actions in accordance with *phantasia*, in some cases because they do not possess thinking, e.g. in brutes, and in others because thinking is covered over sometimes by passion or disease or sleep, e.g. in humans. (*DA* 3.3, 429a5-8)

Aristotle thinks that in animals, and in some human behaviour, action is guided by *phantasia*.⁵⁷ This passage also highlights what I take to be, in Aristotle's view, the correct and normal functioning of animals, such that the role of *phantasia* (i.e. whether what it represents is "affirmed" by the subject such that they "perform actions in accordance with" it) is determined by whether some more authoritative faculty is present and active.⁵⁸ In properly-functioning adult humans, where their reasoned thinking (*voūς*) is active, it is the deliverances of the latter, rather than of *phantasia* that are "affirmed" and guide action.

The second feature of *phantasia* to highlight is that evaluative appearances have

57 *Phantasia* can seemingly do so by providing (to put the point in terms of Aristotle's distinction from *De Motu* 7, 701b23-5) the premise of the possible, e.g. *De Motu* 7, 701a32-3 and cf. M. Schofield, 'Phantasia in *De Motu Animalium*', in ed. M. Pakaluk and G. Pearson, *Moral Psychology and Human Action in Aristotle* (Oxford, 2011), 119–134; or the premise of the good, e.g. *DA* 3.10, 433a26-9, and arguably *De Motu* 8, 702a18-19, cf. Moss, *Apparent Good*, ch. 3.

58 The explanation of why the contents of some *phantasmata* are affirmed and others not is much more difficult on Lorenz's view (*The Brute Within*, esp. ch 9) that *phantasia* can present an animal with "prospects" to be realised. On this view, non-rational animals regularly have *phantasmata* whose contents are not affirmed, as well as *phantasmata* whose contents are affirmed. The explanation above for why some are not affirmed, that makes reference to more authoritative capacities, is not applicable to the "prospects" cases, and so leaves puzzlingly unexplained why the contents of some *phantasmata* are affirmed and others not.

motivational consequences. This appears to hold regardless of any conflict with reasoned beliefs.

Now the origin of motion is, as we have said, the object of pursuit or avoidance in the sphere of action. Of necessity the thought and *phantasia* of these are accompanied by heating and chilling. For the painful is avoided and the pleasant pursued, and the painful and the pleasant are nearly always accompanied by chilling and heating (although we do not notice this when it happens in a small part). (*De Motu* 8, 701b33-702a2)⁵⁹

Since Aristotle has already explained (7, 701b2-17) that it is by internal heating and chilling that locomotion is initiated, the passage above effectively indicates that evaluative *phantasmata* of the pleasant and the painful are “necessarily” accompanied by the kind of (motivational) states that give rise to locomotion.⁶⁰ The intriguing implication is that the activity of a more authoritative psychological capacity is insufficient to prevent some level of influence on the subject’s behaviour in the case where *phantasia* is of the pleasant and the painful. The *phantasmata* involved in the passions are of course of just this kind.

59 Text and translation are from Nussbaum, *De Motu*, omitting from the translation Nussbaum’s explanatory interpolation.

60 This conclusion may need to be tempered in the light of the *caveat* “nearly always” (a1), although Moraux’s transposition of the parentheses to where they appear above, if correct, has Aristotle backpedalling on this *caveat*, reinstating the necessity claim of b34. Cf. Nussbaum, *De Motu*, *ad loc.* and Moss, *Apparent Good*, 24-5.

(b) The “covering over” of reason.

These observations about *phantasia* have implications for the regulation of the passions. In the *properly-functioning* adult human, reasoning capacities (νοῦς) should be active and determine the subject’s actions. This might include endorsing certain passionate responses. But where reasoned beliefs are in conflict with how things are represented by passionate *phantasia*, it should be the former that determine how the subject behaves. We see this normative picture expressed in Aristotle’s explanation of various ways in which humans may *fail* to function correctly.

We might recall that reason can be “covered over” or disabled (*DA* 3.3, 429a7), allowing passionate *phantasia* to exert greater influence over the subject’s behaviour than it should, if it is at odds with their reasoned beliefs. However this comes about (e.g. through sleep, drink, or disease), this constitutes a disabling of the proper functioning of the person.

However, we should also notice that the passions themselves can disable reason from performing its proper role. Aristotle describes in the *De Insomniis* how reason can be disabled by fevers. The lines preceding this passage, in which he describes some (related) ways in which passions can distort cognition, suggest that he thinks strong passions too can have this effect.

This is why sometimes also to those with a fever animals appear on the walls, from a slight similarity of the markings combined together. And these sometimes combine with their condition (*tois pathesin*) in such a way that, if they are not excessively ill, it does not escape their notice that it is something false, but if their condition is more severe, they even move towards them. (*De Insomn.* 2, 460b11-16)

De Anima 3.3, 429a5-8 (discussed above) confirms explicitly that passions are among the things that can “cover over” reason in this way.⁶¹ When reason is thus disabled, appearances (*phantasmata*) that would normally be treated in an uncommitted way, because of the more authoritative deliverances of reason, are now affirmed by the subject. And they act accordingly.

Of course, we need not suppose the covering-over of reason is an all-or-nothing affair, such that Aristotle would hold implausibly that individuals experiencing passions were either uncommitted to the way their passionate *phantasia* represented things or wholly unable to exercise their capacities of reason. The *De Insomniis* passage above clearly presents the disabling of reason by disease as a matter of degree (“if they are not excessively ill ... if their condition is more severe ...” 460b14-15), and it is natural to think that Aristotle would have seen the effects of passions similarly.⁶² Depending on their strength, Aristotelian passions can impede reason’s proper functioning to different

61 Cf. also *De Sensu* 447a14-17, and for a defence of the view that this is what accounts for *akrasia* in *EN* 7.3, cf. Moss, ‘Akrasia’.

62 Cf. Moss, *Apparent Good*, 126-7 and references there.

degrees, and so persist when they should be extinguished, and generate motivational conflict where there should be none, despite the subject's recognition that they involve a misrepresentation of how things are.

(c) *Phantasia* and 'listening to reason'

The second feature of passion-related *phantasia* highlighted above, that it has motivational effects, even when the subject has reasoned beliefs in conflict with it, may explain a further feature of Aristotle's views about the proper regulation of the passions. As noted in section 2 above, Aristotle thinks that, when it comes to the kind of *phantasia* that is pleasurable or painful, i.e. to the kind of appearances involved in the passions, *phantasia* can and should represent things as being the way that correct reason says they are, though in reality it may sometimes fail to do so. It is a mark of virtue that these evaluative appearances "completely concur with reason" (*EN* 1.13, 1102b28), at least in the case when reason is getting things right. It is noteworthy that Aristotle recognises no corresponding requirement for non-evaluative *phantasia* (e.g. that involved in memory, imagining, dreams, sensory appearances) to be conformed to what correct reason says. The explanation for why evaluative *phantasmata* are subject to this kind of regulation is, I suggest, that unlike their non-evaluative counterparts they will exert a degree of motivational influence on the subject regardless of the presence of more authoritative

reasoned beliefs.⁶³

The way evaluative *phantasia* should listen to reason seems to me nicely illustrated by the passage from *De Anima* 3.3 (427b21-24) about how imagining terrible or frightening things leaves us unmoved, as we would be if we had seen such things in a painting. The passage has puzzled interpreters, on two grounds.⁶⁴ Firstly, it has seemed puzzling that Aristotle would suppose we are left unmoved by the arts, especially given how central he thinks the arousal of pity and fear is to tragedy. Secondly, it seems puzzling how one could represent things as terrible or frightening with the non-reasoning part of the soul and not *ipso facto* be distressed – surely for Aristotle no more is needed for the non-reasoning part to be distressed than for it to represent something as terrible or frightening? Both puzzles are dispelled if we see this as a case where evaluative *phantasia* concurs (as Aristotle thinks it should) with reason. The result is very specific.

We are in the same condition as we would be if we were looking at terrible or encouraging things in a painting. (427b23f.)

The comparison with painting is, I suggest, not making some implausible point about how we are left emotionally unmoved by the arts in general. Rather it draws on a point made

⁶³ See further section 6 below.

⁶⁴ e.g. E.S. Belfiore, *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion* (Princeton, 1992) 242-5; R. Polansky, *Aristotle's De Anima: A Critical Commentary* (Cambridge, 2007) 412; Moss, *Apparent Good* 90-1.

specifically about painters in *Republic* 10, 596d-e.⁶⁵ *In a way*, the painter makes the objects he depicts, but strictly speaking, he only makes the appearances of them. Aristotle's claim here, I suggest, is that when we know that these representations are merely imagined, we do not mistake them for the real thing. In a way what *phantasia* represents is terrible or encouraging things, but strictly what is represented is 'what terrible or encouraging things look like'. There is a subtle change in the representational contents of *phantasia*, akin to recognising the images in a painting *as images*. As such, I suggest, this is a case where *phantasia* has successfully concurred with reason.⁶⁶

6 Resources for explaining conflict between passions and reason

I have claimed that an Aristotelian passion involves an exercise of *phantasia* whose representational contents are affirmed by its subject. I have also claimed that in

correctly-functioning humans, firstly evaluative *phantasmata* will have representational

⁶⁵ This does not acquit Aristotle of claiming that we are (sometimes) left emotionally unmoved by paintings.

Presumably he has in mind vase paintings. If – charitably – he may be taken not to be denying that we can *ever* be moved by paintings, but to be asserting that sometimes (often, perhaps) the recognition that this is a painting and not the real thing so distances us from what is depicted that we do not respond to it emotionally, then his point seems to me not at all implausible.

⁶⁶ Conversely, it seems Aristotle's view is that passionate responses to the right kind of tragic plot and to certain kinds of music *can* be endorsed by reason – as though reason's verdict is that here is something worthy of fear, pity, anger, and so on. Cf. *Poetics* 13 and 14, esp. 1352b30-1353a5; *Politics* 8.5, esp. 1340a14-b7. The issues involved are complex and cannot be explored here.

contents that concur with what their reason concludes, but secondly – if any evaluative *phantasmata* did persist that are at odds with reason's verdicts – although their contents would be affirmed by the subject, the person would act in accordance with what correct reason says, affirming reason's verdicts, reflecting the greater authority of reason in comparison to *phantasia*.

Correspondingly, Aristotle thinks that, in adult humans, recalcitrant passions, i.e. passions that persist in recognised conflict with the subject's considered beliefs, involve some *defect* or *failure* of correct functioning. And this, I argued in section 2, is a strength not a weakness of a view of the passions – it meets one of the *desiderata* for a theory of emotions that emerged from reflection on recalcitrant emotions.

Specifically, on an Aristotelian view, there are two malfunctions involved in recalcitrant passions. Firstly, the way these passions represent their objects as pleasant and painful is not determined by what reason correctly prescribes. Secondly, if that fails and the subject has passionate appearances persisting in conflict with their reasoned beliefs, the subject's actions and inclinations should be wholly determined by their reasoned beliefs, and they should be comparatively uncommitted to the contents of *phantasia* (reflecting belief's proper status as the more "authoritative" psychological faculty), just as usually subjects are uncommitted to sensory appearances they know to be false (the appearance of the sun as about a foot across, or of one object as two in the finger and eyeball experiments described above). The second failure in the recalcitrant case, then, is that the *phantasma*

involved in the passion, despite its being less 'authoritative' than the reasoned beliefs with which it is in conflict, nevertheless remains affirmed by the subject as representing the way things are, and continues to exert motivational pressure on the subject to act accordingly. This is a failure of proper psychological functioning according to which reason should determine the content of the subject's evaluative *phantasmata*, and the deliverances of more authoritative faculties should trump those of other, less authoritative faculties.

If we think that recalcitrant passions are a reasonably commonplace occurrence, we might be puzzled at the implication of this view that humans so frequently suffer the malfunctions just described, and suppose that this requires some explanation. This should start from the kinds of conflict between passions and reasoned beliefs that Aristotle himself recognises.

In some ways the clearest cases are those discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.6, 1149a21-b26 involving conflict between anger/spirit (*θυμός*) and reason. On Aristotle's diagnosis, the conflict arises not from any disagreement about whether a slight (*ὀλιγωρία*) has occurred, but over whether one should fight for vengeance. Aristotle may have in mind Odysseus's anger against the servant girls in *Odyssey* 20, where reason does not repudiate the anger itself, nor denies the correctness of having some impulse towards vengeance.⁶⁷ Reason simply disagrees with anger's verdict that "one should fight such a thing" (a33-4), on the

⁶⁷ Homer, *Od.* 20.9-24, an incident that Plato had used to illustrate the motivational conflict between spirit and reason (*Rep.* 4, 440e-441b).

grounds that – all things considered – it is better to do something else. The kind of *akrasia* from anger that Aristotle considers here is where the person *acts* from anger, against his reasoned judgement: the conflict is not over whether anger represents its objects correctly.

Similar is the type of case analysed in *DA* 3.10, of conflict between appetite and reason, where appetite's verdict on its object, that it is "unqualifiedly pleasant and unqualifiedly good" (433b9), conflicts with reason's verdict. Aristotle is talking here about cases where immediate pleasure should be sacrificed because of greater longer-term benefits (b5-10): so, reason does not wholly repudiate the representation (by *phantasia*) of appetite's object as pleasant and good, in the ways to which appetite is sensitive. Rather reason sets these against competing longer-term goods, and judges that all-things-considered it is better to forgo the immediate pleasure. Because appetite's verdict does not distinguish between *pro tanto* and all-things-considered pleasantness or goodness, it is opposed by reason to the extent that it motivates its subject to act as though its object were not merely *pro tanto* pleasant and good, but unqualifiedly so.⁶⁸

The key point for us is that, in both of these cases, the way the passions in question represent their objects is not contradicted directly by reason. Rather, reason recognises the passionate response as a correct but partial response to features of the subject's circumstances.

68 Understanding the conflict between reason and appetite in *EN* 7.3 is complicated by Aristotle's diagnosis of ignorance, but for a defence of the view that the conflict is similar to that in *DA* 3.10, followed by a disabling of reason by the passions, see the justly celebrated Moss, 'Akrasia'.

In *De Memoria* 2, 453a26-28, Aristotle recognises that anger and fear do not subside (or “settle down”, καθίστανται), despite the subject’s efforts to extinguish them. The passage is not altogether clear – perhaps he envisages that the angry or fearful person continues to represent their object as meriting anger or fear despite being convinced that there are no grounds for these passions. But I think it more likely, given the context, that he is simply highlighting that the bodily processes involved in the passions are not immediately halted when one comes to see that the passions are not called for.

A final passage⁶⁹ to consider in this context is *De Anima* 1.1, 403a19-25, in a series of arguments to the conclusion that the affections (τὰ πάθη) of the soul are enmattered accounts (λόγοι ἔνυλοι).

This is suggested by the fact that sometimes when serious and conspicuous sufferings are taking place people feel no distress or fear, whereas at other times they are stirred by small and feeble stimulations, whenever the body is angry, i.e. is in the condition it is in when a person is angry. And here is an even clearer case: when nothing fearsome is happening people find themselves with the feelings of the person who is frightened.

69 I set aside *De Motu* 11, 703b5-8, and *De Anima* 3.9, 432b29-433a3. As examples of the accidental arousal of the passions by activities of reason, they show they show the passions’ independence from reason. Still, they are not examples of passions in *conflict* with beliefs. Indeed, in the former case, there is some doubt whether they are passions at all, cf. *Nussbaum, De Motu, ad loc.*

Aristotle's principal aim is to establish that the passions involve the body. His examples are best understood as cases where the subject's passions are at odds with how they take things to be, as a result of some bodily condition. In some of these cases, we can speculate plausibly about what might produce this result: the person who is physically exhausted may be unable to feel pity or fear at what they recognise as meriting such responses. The person whose body is in the aftermath of one frightening experience may be prone to a stronger fearful reaction to some subsequent stimulus than even their own assessment of how much fear that stimulus merits. It is less easy to guess what Aristotle has in mind in his last "still clearer" case!⁷⁰ But in all cases, there seems no obstacle to supposing that he is describing divergences from the proper functioning of a human adult. Aristotle takes such cases to be familiar but unusual cases that demand an explanation such as the one he provides. On the view defended here, these are unusual because they are deviations from the normal successful functioning of adult humans in which passions occur and persist only in the absence of conflict with the more authoritative psychological capacity for reasoned beliefs.

Having surveyed the kinds of conflict that Aristotle recognises between reasoned beliefs and the passions, let us return to the question of why humans seem prone to reasonably frequent failures of proper psychological functioning in these ways. Many of these cases

⁷⁰ Could it be that he is thinking of the emotional effects of music? If so, perhaps the suggestion is that the effect on the soul of music and poetry there is such as to mimic standard cases of fear? Cf. *Politics* 8.5-7, esp. 1340a14-28.

involve a significant endorsement by reason of the contents of *phantasia*: that is to say that experiencing some passion of that kind, e.g. experiencing *some* anger, does not represent a failure. Where there is a failure, it may consist in an inability, familiar from the ethical works, of non-virtuous people to take pleasure (and pain) in all and only the things that reason correctly affirms as good (or bad), and to the degree that reason so affirms them. Proneness to such failures is partially explained in *De Anima* 3.10 as stemming from the cognitive limitations of *phantasia*, and an inability to “see the future”. But it will also be explained in significant measure by defects in upbringing and moral education.⁷¹ The failure might also result from the disabling or “covering over” of reason as a side-effect of the subject’s passions.

Some challenges for the view canvassed here remain. There is a puzzle about why for Aristotle human *phantasia* ought to “agree with”⁷² correct reason when those contents are *evaluative* (and the *phantasma* would be pleasurable or painful), whereas – as with the apparent size of the sun – he clearly does not think that it is *generally* true of *phantasia* that its contents ought to follow what reason says, where the two conflict. I speculated above that this is best explained by the fact that evaluative *phantasia* has necessary motivational consequences, whereas non-evaluative *phantasia* does not. But to be fully satisfying within Aristotle’s framework, we would wish this explanation to be accompanied by some story about why (it is good that) evaluative and non-evaluative *phantasia* are different in this

71 *EN* 2.3, 1104b3-1105a16; 2.6, 1106b36-1107a2, and cf. still M.F. Burnyeat, ‘Aristotle on Learning to Be Good’, in ed. A.O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics* (Berkeley, 1980), 69–92.

72 See above, section 2, for discussion of the passages in which Aristotle expresses this view.

way. Relatedly, the account presented here raises a challenge to explain why seemingly humans more reliably withhold affirmation from non-evaluative than from evaluative *phantasmata* when they conflict with better-grounded beliefs. Why, one might justifiably wonder, does a structural feature of human psychology (preferring more authoritative rational beliefs over non-rational appearances, when the two conflict) operate more successfully if the content is non-evaluative, despite the fact that the conflict is between *phantasia* and *doxa* in both cases? Perhaps Aristotle's recognition of the power of passionate states to disable reason goes some way to explaining this. But here again, there remains a substantial challenge to turn this into a convincing explanation of how phobic responses to dogs or heights, so prevalent in the contemporary literature on the philosophy of emotions, can arise or persist in the face of conflicting better beliefs.⁷³ For, on the face of things, the reasoning faculties of such phobics seem unimpaired.

Of course, the fact that challenges remain in understanding fully the contours of Aristotle's evaluative psychology need not impugn the progress that it is possible to make. If the proposed account is correct, Aristotle has powerful resources for explaining human passions, including the conflicts he recognises between passions and beliefs.

⁷³ Cf. Moss, *Apparent Good*, 112-8 and 126-7, for some intriguing suggestions about how such an explanation might work.

7 Some philosophical merits of Aristotle's view

The view of the passions that I have ascribed to Aristotle here seems to me to have considerable merits as a view of the emotions. In particular, it has some interesting strengths in how it accounts for recalcitrant emotions.

On Aristotle's view, recalcitrant emotions are possible because the representational capacity involved in the emotions is distinct from that involved in considered beliefs.

Assuming that there is more reason for affirming the way things are represented in the subject's considered beliefs than the way they are represented in their passion, there will be a failing involved in persisting in having the passion once the conflict between these is recognised.

We have focused on Aristotle's treatment of (typical?) cases where reasoned beliefs are epistemically better than mere appearances, but this need not always be so. Our emotional responses may, on some occasions, be more sensitive to the balance of relevant evidence than our reasoned beliefs. Consider the kind of situation in which one might correctly feel suspicious of a plausible-sounding stranger, on the basis of subtle behavioural cues that betray his fraudulent intentions, without one's being aware that one is responding to those cues, and without one's being able reflectively to identify adequate grounds for such

suspicion. Aristotle's view of course is that the passions should be conformed to what *correct* reason prescribes (EN 1107a1-2). Recalcitrant passions will thus *normally* involve a failing, since normally the subject's reasoned beliefs will be a better response to the balance of evidence available. But Aristotle seems aware (EN 1151b17-22) that sometimes the representations involved in the passions may constitute a better response to the available evidence than that person's reasoned beliefs, and if so, it is a merit that they persist in spite of their conflict with those beliefs.

Aristotle thus has a plausible account of the failing involved in recalcitrant emotions, and also avoids *overstating* this failing.⁷⁴ When a person's considered judgement and their passions are in conflict, the person endorses conflicting appraisals of their situation. If it is the reasoning part that is responding correctly to the balance of considerations available, Aristotle's diagnosis is that the passionate part has failed to discharge its function properly, and listen properly to the reasoning part. The subject's reason has also failed to exercise its *authority*. For the subject experiences motivational conflict, and is in other ways inclined to affirm representational contents that have been contradicted by a more authoritative faculty. But these failings are less significant than the fact that their reasoning has reached the correct judgement on whether emotion is warranted, and if it is this considered judgement that determines the subject's further inferences, judgements and actions, the reasoning part has *largely* succeeded in functioning as it should. Certainly, the

⁷⁴ We here leave aside the case where passions completely disable the subject's ability to reason, and to control their beliefs and actions in the light of their beliefs. Aristotle would presumably see such a loss of control by reason as a serious failure of psychological functioning.

failing involved in having recalcitrant emotions is not as serious as persisting with beliefs or judgements that are inconsistent with one's better beliefs or knowledge. This is because the reasoning part has a supervisory or 'ruling' role in the person, such that it is more important for exercises of this part to be regulated by the person's assessment of the balance of evidential considerations than it is for subordinate parts to be so regulated. The subordination Aristotle recognises of the non-reasoning to the reasoning part gives him resources for an account of the passions which meets the *desiderata* of making recalcitrant emotions a failing but one that is not too severe.

The explanation of why the passions of adult humans generally are successfully regulated by beliefs is provided in part by supposing (as Aristotle seems to have done) simply that adult humans in general function tolerably well. Having located the passions in the non-reasoning part of the soul, he can appeal to the cognitive limitations of this part to account for the particular kinds of conflict between passions and beliefs (those involved in weak-willed behaviour) to which humans are particularly prone.

8 Conclusion

Aristotle's position, I think, is this. The passions involve exercises of the capacity *phantasia* with evaluative representational contents that constitute an affirmation by the subject that things are the way they are represented as being. This explains why the passions can be

used, and legitimately used, in rhetoric. It also explains why it is important for fully virtuous agents to have the right passions – they are thereby able to make an unconflicted affirmation of the correct view of what the situation demands. Virtue is better than self-control on precisely this point, since the self-controlled person – as well as having a correct appraisal in virtue of the activity of their reasoning part – also has an incorrect appraisal in virtue of their passionate responses. Although their reasoning part exercises, in the end, the control it should over action, they also have a dissenting voice that does not construe the situation as it should. And that is a failing.

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