Classical Quarterly 62.2 553–566 (2012) Printed in Great Britain
doi: 10.1017/S000983881200016X

ARISTOTLE AND MENANDER ON HOW PEOPLE GO WRONG

Several studies have been produced on the alleged influence that Peripatetic philosophy had on Menander's comic production.[1] Some scholars have attempted to analyse Menandrian plots and characters on the basis of Aristotle's ethical or aesthetic thought.[2] My article is an attempt to take this line of research further: I will not try to demonstrate the direct philosophical influence of Aristotle on Menander; my general aim is to show that there are significant analogies between the two authors that reveal a shared thought world and to explore the implication of these analogies on subjects ranging from theory of knowledge to ethics. Within the scope of this paper, it will not be possible to examine all these implications in detail; however, I will offer an example of how Aristotle's thought remarkably enhances the understanding of certain Menandrian passages and how, in his turn, Menander provides, with his comedies, illustration of the human material about which Aristotle is talking in his works, in sharp contrast with the themes and tones of Old Attic comedy. The broader research hypothesis linked to these observations is that, if Menander and Aristotle actually shared ideas about human nature and psychology, these ideas might not be limited to these two authors, but might also be common to the thought world of fourth-century B.C. Athens.

Here I shall focus on Aristotle's and Menander's presentation of emotions and, especially, of the way that emotions are involved in ethical choice. The shared feature in this presentation is that ethical choice is seen as dependent on i) the context of the action, ii) the way this context affects the agent and iii) the agent's ability to reason about the situation in order to perform the ethically right action. As a consequence, practical life also depends on how we perceive particular situations and how well we understand them, taking into account the different emotional reactions that these circumstances produce in different people. People's emotions are, therefore, important for determining how we act: but what happens when these emotional reactions are overwhelming and prevent correct rational discourse? Practical understanding is, therefore, challenged in several ways by the perception of actual particulars. Specifically, this perception i) might be deceptive or ii) might be influenced by the agent's reactions to a given perception. My aim is to show that Aristotle and Menander share this way of thinking about the psychological processes involved in practical action. My argument will be developed in two parts.

[1] See M. Thiernay, 'Aristotle and Menander', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 43 (1935), 241–54; T.B.L. Webster, *Studies in Menander* (Manchester, 1950); A. Barigazzi, *La formazione spirituale di Menandro* (Torino, 1965); K. Gaiser, 'Menander und der Peripatos', *AA* 13 (1967), 8–40.

[2] L.A. Post, 'Aristotle and Menander', *TAPhA* 69 (1938), 1–42; W.W. Fortenbaugh, 'Menander's *Perikeiromene*. Misfortune, vehemence, and Polemon', *Phoenix* 28 (1974), 430–43; D. Munteanu, 'Types of *anagnorisis*: Aristotle and Menander. A self-defining comedy', *WS* 115 (2002), 111–26; A. Scafuro, 'When a gesture was misinterpreted: *didonai titthion* in Menander's *Samia*', in G.W. Bakewell and J.P. Sickinger (edd.), *Gestures: Essays in Ancient History, Literature and Philosophy presented to Alan L. Bolgehold* (Oxford, 2003), 113–35.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the first part, I will discuss Menander's *Samia*, focussing on the actions and reactions of two characters: Moschion and Demeas, son and father. In the second part, I will consider how those characters can be better understood by analysing them through the perspective of Aristotle's ethical thought and philosophy of action.

Looking first at the plot of the *Samia*, we can summarize the situation as follows: a young man, Moschion, raped a girl during the festival of Adonis and now she has given birth to his child. He wants to marry her and he must ask his father, Demeas, for his permission. However, Moschion is ashamed of what he has done and would like to keep secret the fact that he now has a baby from the girl: he decides to leave Demeas' *hetaira*, Chrysis, nursing the child, pretending that she and Demeas were its parents. Demeas wrongly believes, instead, that the child is that of Moschion and Chrysis, and he drives Chrysis from his house. What I am interested in seeing here is i), first of all, how Demeas forms his incorrect belief. This misunderstanding is due partly to lack of factual knowledge: Moschion and Chrysis lie about the identity of the child and, in doing so, they provide Demeas with a misleading account of the situation. However, Demeas' altered state of mind prevents a thorough inquiry about what has happened: his reconstruction of the situation is reasonable, given how he has been misled, but it is wrong and this affects the quality of his behaviour with regard to the other characters. In fact, his misconception of what really happened leads him to act wrongly and misjudge Chrysis and Moschion. In addition, ii) I will analyse Moschion's behaviour in order to understand why, in his case, despite his correct knowledge of the facts, he fails to behave properly. In general terms, he knows in theory what it is right to do and he is also aware of the particulars involved in the action; however, when facing the actual circumstance he fails to do so. Thus, Demeas fails to understand what has happened and, in a state of anger, his perceptions and judgement lead him astray: he thus misunderstands everything and acts wrongly. On the other hand, Moschion has a clear understanding of how things stand but his perception affects him so deeply that he fails to apply his judgement in the act of deciding what it is best to do in a given circumstance. The two of them are presented as characters who would normally know what is right to do and, at the end of the comedy, their regret confirms this; however, faced with the specific circumstances involved, they fail to do so.

In the second part of this discussion, I will compare the *Samia* with Aristotle's ideas on analogous subjects. The topic I will consider is how error can arise in practical circumstances and what role emotions play in this context. I will start with *De anima*, considering Aristotle's view of how, in general, it is possible to go wrong in drawing inferences from sensory evidence. The correct perception of sense data is a process internal to the agent and, therefore, depends on the subject's state of mind. This is why one can claim that the appropriate management of emotions is also relevant to the correct working out of this process. Having clarified this, I will then explain how this relates to practical action. Sometimes, in Aristotle, choice is analysed by the correct working out of a syllogism.[3] In this

[3] This is so whether we consider the practical syllogism as the actual reasoning undertaken by the agent or as an explanation of human action that specifies the relevant factors that might influence practical decision. See M.C. Nussbaum, *Aristotle's* De Motu Animalium (Princeton, 1978), 165–220; A.J. Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory of Will* (New Haven, CT, 1979); D. Charles, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Action* (London, 1984), 86–149; N.O. Dahl, *Practical Reason, Aristotle, and Weakness of the Will* (Minnesota, 1984); S. Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford, 1991),

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

syllogism, the first premise is an opinion that relates to what would be generally considered good to do; the second premise relates to the particular circumstances of the action to which the first premise applies. This process of reasoning is, therefore, context-dependent and is also dependent on the agent's state of mind.[4] Consequently, the accurate completion of the syllogism can go wrong in one of two ways. It is possible to be mistaken i) at the level of the first premise (what would be generally considered good to do in this type of situation) and ii) at the level of the second premise (the understanding of what the particulars of the actions are). The agent's insight in this matter may be negatively affected by his emotional reactions to these two factors.

MENANDER

Moschion's concealment of the truth, at the beginning of the *Samia*, is the cause of the other characters' ignorance and it is from this action that a series of misunderstandings arise, among which the case of Demeas is the most complex and interesting. He is, in fact, the character with the lowest level of information and the one who urgently needs to have a clear understanding of what happened in his household while he was away. In the third act of *Samia*, Demeas comes out in a state of desperation.[5] He says i) that he has just heard a nurse referring to the child – which he thought was his own child with Chrysis – as being Moschion's and ii) that he has seen Chrysis nursing the child. On the basis of these two separate pieces of perceptible evidence he infers, hastily, that the child's parents are Moschion and Chrysis. His inference is partly justified as, at the beginning of the comedy, we know Demeas has been informed that Chrysis gave birth to a child of which Demeas was said to be the father. Moschion's lie about the child's parents provides Demeas with a version that closely matches the interpretation of what he has heard and seen. However, it is clear that Demeas is in a state of confusion caused by what he has just experienced through his perceptions.

In a first attempt to analyse carefully what he has just seen and heard, Demeas asks the audience to examine the credibility of what he has inferred and whether he has inferred this throughout a rigorous process of interpretation.

> *Δη*: *ἦ 'στ[ὶ] πιθανόν; σκέψασθε πότερο[ν εὖ φρονῶ*
> *ἢ μαίνομ', οὐδέν τ' εἰς ἀκρίβειαν [τότε*
> *λαβὼν ἐπάγομαι μέγ' ἀτύχημα;*

DEMEAS: Is this plausible? Please consider whether I am sane or mad! Am I bringing a great misfortune on myself by not interpreting anything precisely?[6]

He then explains how he formed his belief about the present situation. His reasoning seems not to be rigorous and the audience is called by Demeas himself to be the

214–19; J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford, 1993), 87–91; N. Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue* (Cambridge, 1997), 255–83.

[4] See M.C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (Cambridge, 2001) and A.W. Price, *Contextuality in Practical Reason* (Oxford, 2009), 139–41.

[5] See A.W. Gomme and F.H. Sandbach, *Menander: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1973), 564.

[6] Men. *Sam*. 216–18. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

silent judge of his mistaken reasoning:[7] as Scafuro notes,[8] Demeas, like most of the Menandrian characters, displays his reasoning to the audience in a discourse that includes proofs and arguments as if he was settling a lawsuit. The aim of his address is not to find out the truth of what has happened but to convince the audience of his version of the story. His reasoning unfolds as follows: Demeas tells the audience that, in the store room, he has heard (*ἀκούω*) the nurse taking care of the child and addressing him as 'son of Moschion'.[9] After that, coming out from where he was, he says that he has seen (*ὁράω*) Chrysis nursing the child.

Δη: *αὐτὴν δ' ἔχουσαν αὐτὸ τὴν Σαμίαν ὁρῶ*
ἔξω καθ' αὑτὴν <καὶ> διδοῦσαν τιτθίον·
ὥσθ' ὅτι μὲν αὐτῆς ἐστι τοῦτο γνώριμον
εἶναι, πατρὸς δ' ὅτου ποτ' ἐστίν, εἴτ' ἐμὸν
εἴτ' –

Demeas: Outside, I see her, the Samia, holding him close to her and giving him her breast. So now the fact that this is her [child] is obvious, but who the father is, either me or –[10]

Therefore, he infers that it is definite, knowable, *γνώριμον*,[11] that the child is Chrysis'.

From the first piece of audible evidence, Demeas learns that he might be not the father of the child – as he has been told – and that the child might be Moschion's. However, he seems to be willing to investigate this further: in fact, he says that, after having heard the nurse, he remains calm and, maybe, willing to investigate the matter of the child's paternity.[12] The critical point comes when he sees Chrysis holding the child close to her breast: the vivid perception of the woman he loves holding what he has heard to be his son's child affects him powerfully. However, seeing Chrysis, he just has confirmation of what he was told at the beginning of the play – that Chrysis was the child's mother. Nevertheless, it is when he links this last perception to what he has heard from the nurse that that he is completely driven out of his mind (*ἐξέστηχ' ὅλως*).[13] This state of confusion diverts him from inquiring further to discover who is the child's father and causes his wrong inference.

Menander is interested in portraying a character who is not only misled by others but whose own temper also complicates the situation. Emotions arising from this given perception mislead Demeas, as they prevent a thorough inquiry into what really happened. In fact, when Demeas comes out of the house, he is evidently in a state of confusion and is no longer sure that he can see and reason properly.[14] The apparent possibility that Chrysis has had a child with Moschion has a devastating effect on Demeas and prevents him from inquiring thoroughly into the identity of the child's father – which he was resolved to do before seeing Chrysis. In this

[7] A. Traill, *Women and the Comic Plot in Menander* (Cambridge, 2008), 85.
[8] A. Scafuro, *The Forensic Stage* (Cambridge, 1997) and Scafuro (n. 2), 114.
[9] Men. *Sam*. 245–54.
[10] Men. *Sam*. 265–6.
[11] 'Here Demeas means "that this is her child is something that can be *known*", as opposed to the mere hypotheses about paternity. It is comic irony that he is mistaken on the one point he believes to be certain' (Gomme and Sandbach [n. 5], 569).
[12] Men. *Sam*. 262–4.
[13] Men. *Sam*. 279.
[14] See Men. *Sam*. 213.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

way, he accepts a persuasive – but wrong – version of the story that appears to his thinking to be right at the moment when he processes the perceptual data. Demeas' error lies in the space between i) what Demeas hears from the nurse and the sight of Chrysis holding the child and ii) the conclusion that he draws from these perceptions. In accordance with this wrong interpretation, Chrysis is driven from Demeas' house on the unjust accusation of having seduced Moschion.[15]

What I have pointed out here is how Demeas' misunderstanding develops. According to my analysis, the potential place for error, in his evaluation of the circumstances, lies in the reasoning that constitutes the transition between the acquisition of perceptions, *αἴσθησις*, and the formation of a judgement about the circumstances. Demeas fails to understand the situation properly because what he sees affects him powerfully, and this unleashes emotions that he fails to handle adequately and that prevent a thorough inquiry. As a consequence, he makes a mistake in judging Chrysis and Moschion.

A further passage may serve as evidence of this process. When Demeas attempts to interrogate Parmenon in order to be sure of his assumption about Chrysis, the child and Moschion, he is prevented from knowing the truth by his excited state of mind. In Parmenon's presence Demeas claims that he is not just guessing (*οὐ γὰρ εἰκάζων λέγω*); he knows with certainty what happened (*εἰδότα γ' ἀκριβῶς*): Moschion is the father of Chrysis' child and he just wants confirmation of this.

Δη: *εἰδότα γ' ἀκριβῶς πάντα καὶ πεπυσμένον*
ὅτι Μοσχίωνός ἐστιν, ὅτι σύνοισθα σύ,
ὅτι δι' ἐκεῖνον αὐτὸ νῦν αὕτη τρέφει.
Πα: *τίς φησι;*
Δη: *πάντες. ἀλλ' ἀπόκριναι τοῦτό μοι·*
ταῦτ' ἐστίν;
Πα: *ἔστι, δέσποτ', ἀλλὰ λανθάνειν* –
Δη: *τί 'λανθάνειν'; ἱμάντα παίδων τις δότω*
ἐπὶ τουτονί μοι τὸν ἀσεβῆ.

DEMEAS: I know everything accurately and I have found out that [the child] is Moschion's, that you also know about this and that she [Chrysis] is nursing it now for him.
PARMENON: Who says this?
DEMEAS: Everyone! But now answer this question for me: is it true?
PARMENON: It is sir, but … it escapes notice that …
DEMEAS: What [is this] 'it escapes notice'? Some one among you slaves, give me a leather strap for this sacrilegious person![16]

Parmenon tries to explain to Demeas what Moschion wished to keep hidden; if Parmenon had had the chance to speak, he could have given Demeas important items of information which would easily have resolved the situation. However, Demeas refuses to listen; hence, his attempt at inquiry fails and the misunderstanding will continue. Demeas is highly influenced by his state of mind: anger and deception prevent rigorous reasoning and lead him to construct a parallel scenario from which a series of events develop.[17] Menander insists on Demeas' lack of

[15] Men. *Sam*. 333–42.
[16] Men. *Sam*. 316–23.
[17] See Scafuro (n. 2) and Traill (n. 7). A.H. Groton, 'Anger in Menander's *Samia*', *AJPh* 108 (1987), 437–43 declares that Demeas' anger is contagious and, in particular, Niceratus will

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

knowledge, caused partly by his anger, and on how difficult his anger makes it to inform him about his erroneous inferences.

We will find confirmation of what we have said at the end of the comedy. There, in the fifth act, Demeas will explain his own error with a significant series of verbs, strongly accentuated by asyndeton.

> *Δη*: *οὐ δικαίως ἠιτιασάμην τί σε·*
> *ἠγνόησ', ἥμαρτον, ἐμάνην.*

> DEMEAS: I accused you wrongly; I did not know, I made a mistake, I was out of my mind.[18]

He wrongly accused his son and Chrysis because he did not know the real situation (*ἠγνόησα*), he made a mistake (*ἥμαρτον*) and he behaved like a madman (*ἐμάνην*). Absence of knowledge is not the only reason for his wrong behaviour; misinterpretation of his perceptions is also a very important element, and his bad temper helps to extend this misunderstanding for a considerable part of the action. In the same play, we can identify another character, Moschion, for whom emotions play an important role in matters of ethical choice. At the beginning of the play, Moschion decides not to tell Demeas the truth about the child he had by Niceratus' daughter:[19] what is interesting here is the process of his deliberation. He describes his relationship with his adoptive father Demeas as being strong and as allowing open discussion.[20] He knows he does not need to feel ashamed to talk to him about what he has done; however, he decides to conceal the truth. Moschion's shame prevents him properly understanding Demeas' character and clearly judging what he should do in the present situation.[21]

The young man seems to have found himself in a similar state of mind at the moment of the young girl's rape, but the kind of dominating *pathos* involved was different. In this respect, it is worth recalling the way Moschion admits his error. In fact, at the beginning of the play he says '*ἡμάρτηκα γάρ*',[22] referring to the rape of Niceratus' daughter. Moschion's error is different from that of Demeas: it is not an error caused by misunderstanding of material facts or circumstances. Moschion clearly knows where he is and with whom he is celebrating the festival of Adonis.[23] In his case, error depends on a moral flaw: Moschion, led by sudden passion for the girl, cannot restrain his erotic desire and he makes a mistake in raping the girl. He is overwhelmed by the circumstances and the opportunities

be affected by it. In Groton's opinion the arousing of the characters one after another not only generates humour but also serves the function of organizing, energizing and unifying the plot.

[18] Men. *Sam*. 702–03.

[19] Goldberg offers a convincing interpretation of the reasons that guide the young man to lie and to create a misleading situation for Demeas. The source of difficulty seems to lie in Moschion's inability to see beyond his own limited perspective. Moschion's description of Demeas' personality is made solely with reference to himself; his identity depends on Demeas' having adopted him: 'he offers himself as a measure of what Demeas is'; see S.M. Goldberg, *The Making of Menander's Comedy* (London, 1980), 94.

[20] Men. *Sam*. 16–22. Moreover, the fear that Demeas would have refused the wedding is hardly justified: Niceratus and Demeas seem to be on good terms. In Act 1, they come on stage talking amicably as they return together to Athens from Byzantium and the Black Sea; see H.D. Blume, *Menanders Samia. Eine Interpretation* (Darmstadt, 1974), 54–5.

[21] See Blume (n. 20), 12–15; Goldberg (n. 19), 94.

[22] Men. *Sam*. 3.

[23] Men. *Sam*. 38–46.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

provided by the situation: he quickly loses his grip on himself and, from being a spectator, he becomes one of the protagonists of the festival.[24] Clearly, at that moment erotic desire influences his thoughts as to what he should do, just as shame influences his choice about how to deal with his adoptive father.

To sum up, Demeas and Moschion represent two different kinds of cases in which characters' perceptions and emotions affect their insight about what the right course of action is. In Demeas' case, his understanding of the situation is influenced by his overwhelming emotional reaction at what he thinks he has perceived. Demeas would be right to be angry with Chrysis and Moschion if they had really had an affair; however, this is not the case. Demeas attaches importance to his relationship with his adoptive son and his courtesan and he is clearly vulnerable to the emotional intensity that this generates: a few scattered pieces of information make him angry and unable to conduct a rigorous analysis of what has really happened. The case of Moschion is different: the emotions aroused both by the sight of the girl and by his adoptive father eclipse any other ethically good reason he can think of in deciding what has to be done.

ARISTOTLE

If we turn now to Aristotle, we realize that he is interested in dealing with very similar human material. The description that Aristotle gives of the psychological and ethical processes that we experience when we form opinions from perceptions and respond emotionally to circumstances can be used to analyse what happens to Moschion and Demeas on the stage. In Aristotle, we find the claim that the difference between ethically right or wrong choice depends on how we perceive[25] (αἰσθάνομαι) the particular facts of the situation in which we act.[26] The success of this process of evaluation relies significantly on the subject's ability to grasp the various aspects of the circumstance he is in and to respond adequately to this grasp.[27] It is now relevant for us to consider the steps involved in the practical decision and the way that emotions and perceptions might influence the agent's practical insight in this process.

According to Aristotle's description of the practical syllogism, to act virtuously the agent must understand exactly the circumstances in which he finds himself;

[24] See M. Detienne, 'Violentes "eugénies". En pleines Thesmophories: des femmes couvertes de sang', in id. and J.-P. Vernant (edd.), *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec* (Paris, 1979), 183–214.

[25] I am here using the verb 'to perceive' in the sense of 'to apprehend what is not present to observation; to see through'; see C.T. Onions (ed.), *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (London, 1983), s.v.

[26] The principles of practical understanding are not universal but context-dependent; see M.C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1986), 298–306. This does not mean that Aristotle is a relativist; action is concerned with particulars, and they are relative to a specific situation; see T. Chappell, '"The good man is the measure of all things"', in C. Gill (ed.), *Virtue, Norms and Objectivity* (Oxford, 2005), 223–56.

[27] See Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 1143a35–b5; see also R. Sorabji, 'Aristotle on the role of intellectual virtue', *PAS* 74 (1973), 107–29; T. Irwin, 'First principles in Aristotle's ethics', *Midwest Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 3 (1978), 252–72; M. Woods, *Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics* (Oxford, 1986); and M.M. Walsh, 'The role of universal knowledge in Aristotelian moral virtue', *APhQ* 19 (1999), 73–88.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

and he should think about what is generally considered good to do in these circumstances. In order to choose what has to be done, it is important that the agent handles his emotions correctly at both stages. I will consider, first, how an agent reasons in drawing together actual pieces of evidence; this process has not only epistemological relevance but also ethical implications: the correct working out of this process shapes the agent's understanding of the circumstances in which his action is involved. Secondly, I will discuss why accurate management of the agent's emotions is fundamental to this process.

In Aristotle, inference from perceptions is a complex procedure that, in order to be correct, requires the accurate evaluation of items of evidence and the way they are connected. In the third book of *De anima* we find an explanation of how this process of inference from perception works. Aristotle states that perception, in human beings, implies thinking (*νοεῖν*) and judging (*φρονεῖν*).

Ἐπεὶ δὲ δύο διαφοραῖς ὁρίζονται μάλιστα τὴν ψυχήν, κινήσει τε τῇ κατὰ τόπον καὶ τῷ νοεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι, δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ὥσπερ αἰσθάνεσθαί τι εἶναι (ἐν ἀμφοτέροις γὰρ τούτοις κρίνει τι ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ γνωρίζει τῶν ὄντων).

Having said that, there are two different characteristics by which the soul is mainly defined: i) movement in space and ii) thinking, judging and perceiving. To think and to judge are thought to be a sort of perceiving (since the soul, in both of these states, forms a judgement and becomes acquainted with something existent).[28]

However, because of the possibility of error in judging sensory experience, *φρονεῖν* and *αἰσθάνεσθαι* are not the same because *φρονεῖν* is always right; that is to say, it already implies a right judgement. Mere perceiving (*αἰσθάνεσθαι*), however, could produce false thinking (*μὴ ὀρθῶς νοεῖν*) or false beliefs (*μὴ ὀρθῶς δοξάζειν*). However, at the same time, perceiving differs also from thinking (*νοεῖν*) and from having an opinion (*δοξάζειν*). Indeed, the perception *per se* is always true and is found in all animals, whereas it is possible to think falsely, and thinking is found in no animal which does not have reason (*λόγος*).[29] It seems that, for Aristotle, the possibility of cognitive failure arises in the reasoning that accompanies perceptions which are internal and dependent on the subject. Thinking and believing can be right or wrong and human beings have the specific capacity for reasoning on the basis of their perceptions. This is why judgement (*φρόνησις*) and knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) are always true and differ fundamentally from thinking (*νοεῖν*) and belief (*δόξα*), which might be false.

It would, therefore, be interesting to discuss how it is possible for the subject to form a wrong opinion. According to the *De anima*, conviction is necessary in order to be able to form an opinion. Thus, opinion seems to require that the subject reasons about sensations and persuades himself of his own reasoning.

[28] Arist. *De an*. 427a17–21. Translation adapted from D.R. Hicks (ed.), *Aristotle:* De Anima (Cambridge, 1907) for all passages from the *De an*. Here, *φρονεῖν* is not a technical term as in *Eth. Nic.*: it is more general and appropriate to the discourse of the person who holds one thought to be as correct as another (Hicks, ad loc.); therefore, I suggest the translation 'to judge' as better fitting this meaning.

[29] Arist. *De an.* 427b6–16.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

γίνεται γὰρ δόξα καὶ ἀληθὴς καὶ ψευδής, ἀλλὰ δόξῃ μὲν ἕπεται πίστις (οὐκ ἐνδέχεται γὰρ δοξάζοντα οἷς δοκεῖ μὴ πιστεύειν), τῶν δὲ θηρίων οὐθενὶ ὑπάρχει πίστις, φαντασία δὲ πολλοῖς. ἔτι πάσῃ μὲν δόξῃ ἀκολουθεῖ πίστις, πίστει δὲ τὸ πεπεῖσθαι, πειθοῖ δὲ λόγος·

Opinion may be true or false. But opinion is attended by conviction, for it is impossible to hold opinions without being convinced of them: but no brute is ever convinced, though many have imagination. Further, every opinion implies conviction, conviction implies that we have been persuaded, and persuasion implies reason.[30]

However, persuasion and reasoning also depend on the individual state of mind: this is made clear in *Rhetoric*. Aristotle explains that, in order to produce persuasion, the speaker must understand the character of the audience and frame his discourse to produce the right kind of emotions.[31] In an ideal setting, anyone would be able to reason correctly; however, it is possible that situations, emotions and desires influence how things appear to us.[32] We form false opinion about perceived particulars because we not only perceive things passively but process them actively according to our states of mind, inclinations and affections. We do not just have passive αἴσθησις of things but we retain and actively process perceptions, a process that Aristotle associates with φαντασία.[33]

Accordingly, the reasoned understanding of the circumstances of an action, in the form of belief,[34] might be affected negatively by the agent's emotions[35] as sense perception itself might be vitiated by the individual's state of mind in processing what is perceived. Consequently, a wrong interpretation of the particulars involved in the action can easily lead one to act wrongly: indeed, as I have pointed out, for Aristotle, in order to perform an ethically good action, we necessarily need to know the context in which we are acting. A clear judgement of this kind might be difficult for human beings who naturally respond emotionally; and Aristotle has a special interest in these kinds of situation: his treatment of ἀκρασία is a reflection on how practical insight might be influenced by emotion.

Aristotle explains animal practical activity with reference to the psychological process that accompanies and promotes our actions: when stimulated by sense perception, human beings are imagined as going through a process of reasoning – often exemplified by a syllogism – resulting in action. This syllogism is constituted by two premises: the first, universal premise is an opinion relating to the good;[36] the second represents the particular situation or object with which we have to deal in our ethical choice.

[30] Arist. *De an*. 428a19–23.

[31] Arist. *Rh*. 1377b20–78a1.

[32] A.O. Rorty, 'The psychology of Aristotle's rhetoric', in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* (Boston, 1992), 39–79, at 74. See D. Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* (Toronto, 2006), 37.

[33] See Nussbaum (n. 3), 257; M. Schofield, 'Aristotle on the imagination', in J. Barnes, M. Schofield and R. Sorabji (edd.), *Articles on Aristotle. Psychology and Aesthetics*, vol. 4 (London, 1979), 103–32, at 111–13; D. Frede, 'The cognitive role of *phantasia* in Aristotle', in M. Nussbaum and A.O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's* De Anima (Oxford, 1995), 279–96, at 289.

[34] See Arist. *De an*. 427a1–b9 with Schofield (n. 33), 129–31 on the distinction between the concepts of *phantasia*, belief and thinking.

[35] See Fortenbaugh (n. 2), 17.

[36] D. Wiggins, 'Weakness of will, commensurability, and the objects of deliberation and desire', in A.O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley, 1981), 241–65, at 248.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

ἡ μὲν γὰρ καθόλου δόξα, ἡ δ' ἑτέρα περὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστά ἐστιν, ὧν αἴσθησις ἤδη κυρία.

[In the syllogism applied to ethical choice], one premise is a universal opinion, but the other is concerned with particulars, and over particulars sensation is a decisive factor.[37]

As a matter of fact, this is the particular to which we should be able to apply the universal statement of the first premise in order to bring the syllogism to a successful conclusion. Thus, in theory, the choice should be straightforward. In practice, the syllogistic rational process that we should undertake must deal with a particular. And, particulars are a matter where sensation (αἴσθησις) is critical.

ὅτι δ' ἡ φρόνησις οὐκ ἐπιστήμη, φανερόν· τοῦ γὰρ ἐσχάτου ἐστίν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται· τὸ γὰρ πρακτὸν τοιοῦτον. … ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἐσχάτου, οὗ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη ἀλλ' αἴσθησις, οὐχ ἡ τῶν ἰδίων, ἀλλ' οἵᾳ αἰσθανόμεθα ὅτι τὸ [ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς] ἔσχατον τρίγωνον· στήσεται γὰρ κἀκεῖ. ἀλλ' αὕτη μᾶλλον αἴσθησις ἢ φρόνησις, ἐκείνης δ' ἄλλο εἶδος.

It is evident, then, that judging in the matter of ethical choice is not knowledge; for, as we have said, it is concerned with the particular, since this is what is done. And the ultimate [particular] is not the object of knowledge but of sensation, not the sensation of proper sensibles, but like that by which we sense that the ultimate particular [in mathematics] is a triangle. And this [kind of sensation] is more similar to perception than to judgment.[38]

Assuming that one knows, in theory, how one should act, one might fail in evaluating the particular circumstances one is in: as I explained before with reference to the *De anima*, one may, for instance, produce false opinion in processing sense perception data. However, in order to act appropriately, the particular circumstance has to be clear and the agent has to be in a state of mind that enables him to evaluate the situation correctly.

In Aristotle's account, animals, including humans, move by virtue of desire (ὄρεξις) or choice (προαίρεσις) when some alteration has taken place in accordance with sense perception or φαντασία.[39] Therefore it seems that, in human beings, emotional responsiveness has a remarkable role in ethical action.[40] It seems fundamental, however, that desires should be brought in conformity with reason: if ὄρεξις is necessary to move towards action, it is also important that it is controlled by reason. Aristotle lists three kinds of ὄρεξις: βούλησις, θυμός and ἐπιθυμία.[41] The first of these is described as rational wish: it is this kind of emotional responsiveness that allows a reasoned resolution.[42] θυμός and ἐπιθυμία are *non*-rational desires that are more difficult to handle in accordance with reason.[43] I will now consider the case of θυμός, trying finally to connect these concepts with the *Samia*.

[37] Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 1147a24–6. Translation adapted from H.G. Apostle (ed.), *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Dordrecht, 1984) for all Arist. *Eth. Nic.* passages.

[38] Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 1142a23–30; see also 1109b21–3.

[39] Arist. *De motu an.* 701a4–6 (Nussbaum [n. 3]); *De an*. 433a9–17.

[40] 'Practical knowledge necessarily involves bringing the *non*rational desires to that extent into conformity with reason's settled judgments about the values of things' (J. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* [Harvard, 1975²], 249).

[41] Arist. *Eth. Eud*. 1223a26–8.

[42] Arist. *Eth. Eud*. 1226b9.

[43] Arist. *Rh.* 1369a1–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

The action stimulated by *θυμός* that does not receive enough control from reason represents a case of *ἀκρασία τοῦ θυμοῦ*.

ἔοικε γὰρ ὁ θυμὸς ἀκούειν μέν τι τοῦ λόγου, παρακούειν δέ, καθάπερ οἱ ταχεῖς τῶν διακόνων, οἳ πρὶν ἀκοῦσαι πᾶν τὸ λεγόμενον ἐκθέουσιν, εἶτα ἁμαρτάνουσι τῆς προστάξεως, καὶ οἱ κύνες, πρὶν σκέψασθαι εἰ φίλος, ἂν μόνον ψοφήσῃ, ὑλακτοῦσιν· οὕτως ὁ θυμὸς διὰ θερμότητα καὶ ταχυτῆτα τῆς φύσεως ἀκούσας μέν, οὐκ ἐπίταγμα δ' ἀκούσας, ὁρμᾷ πρὸς τὴν τιμωρίαν.

For temper seems to listen to reason to some extent, but inattentively, like hasty servants who take off before having heard all that was said and then fail to carry out the right order, or like dogs who bark when they hear the sound of a man approaching without looking to see whether is a friend; so although temper listens, it does not, because of its excited and hasty nature, hear the order but rushes to take vengeance.[44]

θυμός is therefore a precipitate angry reaction, lacking in self-control,[45] to the perception of an offence. In this respect, it might be said to follow reason partially. It is, in fact, right to feel anger and the desire for revenge, in the right circumstances with the right person and in the right way. However, uncontrolled anger, or *θυμός*, immediately leads to revenge without the agent paying enough attention to what reason would suggest should be further consideration of the actual circumstances. Often, at the sole appearance (*φαντασία*) of an offence, *θυμός* infers (*συλλογισάμενος*) that the person has to take revenge immediately.[46] More precisely, the agent applies the first, universal premise that he knows (e.g. 'it is right to feel anger and the desire for revenge at a given offence') to a particular situation ('this is an offence'), but he does not assess this correctly because excessive temper has prevented a thorough examination of the situation, with the result that he acts wrongly. The one who is affected by anger might not see things clearly: he might interpret his perception in a distorted way 'for the affections (*πάθη*) suitably prepare the organic parts, desire (*ὄρεξις*) [prepares] the affections, and *phantasia* [prepares] the desire'.[47] We not only perceive what we experience through our sense organs (*αἴσθησις*), but different objects affect us in different ways according to the value that we attribute to them; this way of experiencing things (*φαντασία*) motivates our action. The *ἀκρατὴς τοῦ θυμοῦ* goes wrong in discerning whether the particular circumstances with which he is dealing require an angry reaction because of the way in which he experiences things (*φαντασία*); this immediately and powerfully affects his temperamental inclination (*ὄρεξις* in the form of *θυμός*), inducing him to burst out in an uncontrolled reaction. What seems to him an offence is not precisely this, but temper prevents him from exercising reason. Thus it seems that, in cases of *θυμός*, it is the correct understanding of the second premise of the practical syllogism that is at issue; namely, the premise concerned with particulars.

Looking back at the Menandrian play with the Aristotelian framework in mind, we find an analogous situation: Demeas can serve as an excellent example of these

[44] Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 1149a25–32.

[45] S. Broadie and C. Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford, 2002), 396.

[46] Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 1149a32–3.

[47] Arist. *De motu an*. 702a17–19. 'It looks as if its [*phantasia*'s] job is to present the perceived or thought object to the creature in such a way that it can be moved to act' (Nussbaum [n. 3], 233).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

passages. He is convinced by his opinions on the basis of a persuasive – but inaccurate – interpretation of his perceptions. What he has seen and heard is not adequately evaluated, and anger prevents him from performing a rigorous inquiry. Moved by sense perception or *φαντασία*[48] and desire in the form of *θυμός*, Demeas formulates an accusation that is wrong but persuasive – convincing to Demeas himself and persuasively presented to the audience. The sight of Chrysis stimulates his *θυμός* and this in turn, without the proper control of reason, makes him rush towards a reasoning which results in a wrong accusation. He would be right to be angry with Chrysis and Moschion if what he thought he understood was true; however it is not. Moreover, when he tries to make further inquiry, he is again prevented by *θυμός* from hearing the truth when stated by Parmenon. In this way he fails to achieve a more certain degree of knowledge about the circumstances in which he finds himself acting and he acts wrongly with respect to Chrysis and Moschion.

However, an agent's judgement might also be altered at another level, that of the first, universal premise. Suppose the agent knows exactly whom he is dealing with and under what circumstances; he still needs to decide what it would be better to do, given those particular circumstances. In fact, at the level of the practical syllogism, knowing exactly the content of the second premise – namely, the particulars of the action – does not exclude the possibility of being wrong in deciding how to deal with it. This might happen, for instance, when the agent does not give genuine attentive concern to the minor premise.[49] That is, he subordinates the judgement of what would be universally considered good to do in his case to the judgement of what it is good for him at that moment and to being affected by emotions and desires that a given situation might unleash.[50]

ὅταν οὖν ἡ μὲν καθόλου ἐνῇ κωλύουσα γεύεσθαι, ἢ δέ, ὅτι πᾶν γλυκὺ ἡδύ, τουτὶ δὲ γλυκύ (αὕτη δὲ ἐνεργεῖ), τύχῃ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἐνοῦσα, ἢ μὲν οὖν λέγει φεύγειν τοῦτο, ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἄγει·

'Accordingly, if there is in the soul a universal belief which forbids us to taste sweet and another belief, namely, 'everything sweet is pleasant', and if there is also before us a particular X which is sweet (and this is operative) and a desire is present in us to taste what is sweet, then the former belief tells us to avoid tasting X but desire bids us to taste X.'[51]

The attractiveness of the content of the second premise is so strong for the agent that his reasoning is put under the control of the agent's emotional reaction to the given situation and this is what produces the resulting action. This is what happens in cases of *ἀκρασία τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν*, and the kind of desire that leads to the action lacking in self-control is, in this case, *ἐπιθυμία*. *ἐπιθυμία* promotes the

[48] 'Aristotle's theory of *phantasia* attempts to deal with a large range of problems … The basic insight underlying the theory is the important one that perceptual perception is inseparable from interpretation' (Nussbaum [n. 3], at 268); this is because *phantasia* is not separable but is interdependent with sensation, and whatever appears to someone is bound with this particular someone's past, prejudices, feelings and needs (ibid. 261).

[49] D. Wiggins, 'Deliberation and practical reason', in Rorty (n. 36), 221–40, at 234.

[50] Wiggins (n. 36).

[51] Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 1147a31–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

action of pursuing the idea of what is pleasant (ἡδύς):[52] by contrast with θυμός, it does not follow reason at all, only pleasure.[53]

When we judge the circumstances in which we happen to be, our state of mind is particularly relevant. Indeed it is on the basis of the appreciation of these particular circumstances that we should form our ethical choice. It is clear that, for Aristotle, people who are under the uncontrolled influence of emotions are not able to do this and they are therefore not able to apply their potential knowledge (ἐπιστήμην) to the circumstances that they are experiencing.[54] The knowledge that they fail to apply is that of the first, universal premise. The incontinent person (ἀκρατὴς) is someone who has the potential to act according to the right evaluation of the circumstances; however, he fails to do so. His soul knows both the general statement and the particular one that affects the agent's emotions and desires. Consequently, if he fails to deal appropriately with these latter, he will fail also to apply the knowledge that he potentially has to the actual circumstances.

Moschion's case in *Samia* provides a good example in this respect. Moschion knew who the girl was that he was approaching and he knew what he should have done; his reasoning should have been:

First premise: To approach an attractive citizen girl who is not one's own wife is wrong.

Second premise: That girl who is a citizen and is not my own wife is attractive.

Conclusion: To approach that girl is wrong and I will not do that.

However, the desire for the girl and the sight of her stimulates Moschion's desire (ἐπιθυμία) and corrupts the syllogism, allowing the premise that is more desiderable for the subject in the circumstances to outweigh the correct universal premise.

First premise: I find it pleasant to approach attractive girls.

Second premise: That girl who is a citizen and is not my own wife is attractive.

Conclusion: I will approach that girl.

Summing up, I have pointed out in Aristotle two possible passages in which practical choice is challenged by the agent's perceptions and emotional reaction in a given situation. First of all, emotions might lead to a wrong understanding of people and fact: therefore, scattered items of evidence might be deceptive if they are not appropriately organized by the subject. In this respect, I have stressed that forming an appropriate insight about the particulars involved in an action is fundamental to deciding how it would be best to deal with them. Secondly, given a clear understanding of the circumstances, the emotions aroused by the perception of facts or persons involved might still influence a character's ethical choice. This would, indeed, occur spontaneously in human beings naturally disposed to

[52] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1149a35.
[53] Broadie and Rowe (n. 45), 56.
[54] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1147a10–15.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press

feeling and emotions; the difficulty arises when the kind and level of emotion is not ethically appropriate to the situation.[55] Aristotle specifically compares people who are affected by anger and erotic desire to people who are asleep, mad or drunk: anger and erotic desire affect their bodies and minds and consequently such people, by failing to apply the ethical understanding that they potentially have, do not respond adequately to situations.[56] The examples of Demeas and Moschion in Menander's *Samia* seem to reflect these sorts of ethical and psychological processes.

I do not want to tie these passages of Aristotle's ethical and psychological writings with *Samia* too closely together: my analysis has suggested that Menander and Aristotle seem to share analogous ideas on how people reason, act and form beliefs and that this material simultaneously informs their ideas and, therefore, their works. Aristotle distinguishes a critical point at which the emotions get involved in the rational process leading to ethical choice. Indeed, in that process it is the specific individual appreciation of a particular that directs our decision and this is often altered by individual specific emotions that we feel in that context. It seems again that there is a space left for error between particulars and right rational choice; and this error is conditioned by how we feel about the particular circumstances that we are experiencing individually. The behaviour of Demeas and Moschion could be taken as examples of what has been just said about Aristotle. Indeed, Menander's depiction of characters and situations has shown a special focus on how perceptions and emotions might interfere in people's rational thinking and ethical choice: it is the degree of complexity with which these issues are treated in Menander that has led me to consider the treatment of the same problematic topics in the texts of Aristotle. I hope that my interpretation of *Samia* has supported this hypothesis – namely, that Menander and Aristotle seems to apply similar approaches when treating issues related to ethical choice. These issues have been shown to be, firstly, error in the process of inference from perceptions and, secondly, the emotions inasmuch as they interfere with and alter both our perceptions and our ability to make rational ethical choices.

University of Exeter VALERIA CINAGLIA
valeria.cinaglia@exeter.ac.uk

[55] C. Gill, 'The emotions in Greco-Roman philosophy', in S.M. Braund and C. Gill (edd.), *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature* (Cambridge, 1997), 5–15, at 5–6.
[56] Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 1147a10–17.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000983881200016X Published online by Cambridge University Press