

EN 1113A12: SOME TEXTUAL REMARKS BASED ON ASPASIUS*

Abstract: In this note I argue that Aspasius provides evidence to the effect that at EN 3.3, 1113a12 ‘βούλησιν’ is a respectable reading along with ‘βούλευσιν’, the latter being accepted by both Susemihl’s (1887) and Bywater’s (1894) critical texts. Other ancient evidence goes in the same direction and adds to it. I also consider why the wavering between the two readings was philosophically significant and conclude that it falls on the interpreter to plump for either of the two *lectiones* available; the decision should be made on philosophical grounds and I marshal some arguments in favour of ‘βούλησιν’.

Keywords: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aspasius, προαίρεσις, decision, deliberation

According to Bywater’s OCT text, *Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforth EN) 1113a9–12 reads as follows:

ὄντος δὲ τοῦ προαιρετοῦ βουλευτοῦ ὀρεκτοῦ τῶν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, καὶ ἡ προ-
αίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτικὴ ὄρεξις τῶν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν· ἐκ τοῦ βουλευόσα-
σθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν.
(EN 1113a9–12)¹

Z. 1 τῶν] ἐκ τῶν K^b M^b Z. 3 βούλησιν M^b

Since what is decided on is what is desired after deliberation among the things that are up to us, decision too will be deliberative desire of things that are up to us: indeed, when we have judged as a result of deliberation, we desire it in accord with deliberation. (my translation)

Ha = cod. Marcianus 214

Kb = cod. Laurentianus LXXXI. II

Lb = cod. Parisiensis 1854

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1) The critical apparatus is my own, but is derived from I. Bywater, *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*, Oxford 1894; however, Bywater mistakenly reports that it is at line a11 that Kb and Mb read ἐκ τῶν: F. Susemihl, *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*, Leipzig 1887 (revised by O. Apelt in 1903), correctly cites this as a variant for line a10.

Mb = cod. Marcianus 213
 Nb = cod. Marcianus append. iv. 53
 Ob = cod. Riccardianus 46
 G = antiqua traductio (ed. Paris. a. 1497)

Bywater's text (1894) here remained unvaried from Susemihl's (1887). Between Susemihl's and Bywater's respective critical texts, however, in 1889 Heylbut's edition of Aspasius' commentary on the *EN* first appeared for the series of CAG.² While dwelling on the definition of προαίρεσις at 1113a9–12, Aspasius (75.10–3) comments as follows:

διό φησιν ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν· γράφεται δὲ καὶ βούλευσιν, ὡς ἂν ἀρχούσης μὲν τῆς βουλευσεως, ἐπομένης δὲ τῆς ὀρέξεως, ἐκ δὲ τούτου γενομένης τῆς προαιρέσεως.³

Z. 2 βούλευσιν corr. ex βούλεσιν Z : βούλευσιν N

That is why he says: 'indeed, when we have judged as a result of deliberation, we desire it in accord with wish'. But [sc. in accord with] 'deliberation' is also written here [instead of 'wish'], as though deliberation leads and desire follows, and as a result of this decision arises. (my translation)

Aspasius provides evidence that at EN 1113a12 two readings were clearly attested as early as the 2nd century AD, well before our earliest MSS of the *EN*; in fact, Aspasius mentions the βούλησις-reading first, and then goes on to mention βούλευσις as a variant; but on its own this hardly settles the issue of which reading to prefer. To make things worse, the two terms at stake here, viz. βούλησις and βούλευσις, are easily mistaken for one another.⁴ Be that as it may, despite the agreement of the two most widely used critical editions

2) See *Aspasii in Ethica Nicomachea quae supersunt commentaria*, ed. G. Heylbut, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 19.1, Berlin 1889.

3) The critical apparatus is, again, my own, but is derived from Heylbut (n. 2 above). Despite the variants reported in the apparatus, I take it that the context of the passage dispels every doubt as to the preferred text.

A case interestingly similar to the present is 141,7 where Sedley emends βούλευσιν to βούλησιν to make it compatible with 137,24–8 to which the passage also refers back, see D. Sedley, *Aspasius on Akrasia*, in: A. Albert / R. Sharples (eds), *Aspasius. The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*, Berlin 1999, 169.

4) For instance, Grant misreads the *lectio* of the Paraphrast as the former whereas in fact the text has the latter reading, see A. Grant, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, London 1885, 22. The text of the Paraphrast is edited in Heliodori in *Ethica*

of the *EN* on the βούλευσις-reading, a few translators plump for the first *lectio* reported by Aspasius, that is, βούλησις, present also in our manuscript M^b.⁵ I shall argue that this move is perfectly legitimate and that the interpreter has two readings to choose between; in the light of Aspasius' evidence it is clear that the βούλησις-reading is no *falsa lectio* present in some later *deteriores*, but a respectable variant of very ancient origin; it falls on the interpreter to establish for philosophical reasons which reading should be favoured. In what follows I shall marshal some arguments in favour of 'βούλησιν'.

As mentioned, the manuscript reading ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν is M^b (Marcianus

Nicomachea Paraphrasis, ed. G. Heylbut, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 19.2, Berlin 1889. The relevant text is as follows: ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα [τι] κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν.

Susemihl avails himself of the Paraphrast to defend the βούλευσις-reading. But this is no help, for the Paraphrase formerly attributed to Heliodorus of Prusa goes probably back to the mid-fourteenth century, terminus ante quem being 1366, when the earliest manuscript is dated, and terminus post quem the commentary of Eustratios' (ca 1050–1120 A.D.) on which the Paraphrast draws. As a result, the Paraphrast could well have been influenced by our medieval MSS or Latin translations. In general, the Paraphrase hardly qualifies as evidence to settle controversies regarding the text of the *EN*.

5) Translators of the *EN* who follow Bywater's and Susemihl's text here include: C. D. C. Reeve, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Indianapolis 2014, 42; R. Crisp, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge 2012, 44; D. Ross (revised by L. Brown), *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford 2009, 45; C. C. W. Taylor, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, Books II–IV: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary*, Oxford 2006, 23; U. Wolf, *Nikomachische Ethik*, Reinbeck 2006, 106; R. Bodéüs, *Éthique à Nicomaque*, Paris 2004, 150; S. Broadie / C. Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics: Translation, Introduction, Commentary*, Oxford 2002, 129; H. Rackham, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge, Mass. 1952, 141; F. Dirlmeier, *Nikomachische Ethik*, Berlin 1956, 52; C. Natali, *Etica Nicomachea*, Roma / Bari 1999, 93; J. A. Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, Oxford 1892, Vol. I, 269.

The only exceptions are: R. A. Gauthier / J. Y. Jolif, *Aristote: L'éthique à Nicomaque*, Louvain 1970, Vol. I, 206; T. Irwin, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Indianapolis 1999, 36, but see also T. Irwin, *The Aristotelian Ethics and Aristotle's Theory of the Will* by Anthony Kenny, *Journal of Philosophy* 77/6, 1980, 338–54, 352. More recently, H. Lorenz, *Virtue of Character in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 37, 2009, 177–212, 188–89, as well as P. Donini, *Abitudine e Saggezza: Aristotele dall'Etica Eudemia all'Etica Nicomachea*, Torino 2014, 124 and n. 70.

213). Admittedly, such a manuscript is in Gauthier's words "non pas le meilleur";⁶ Bywater considers it "the least valuable of all our late MSS".⁷ More information about it can be found in Harlfinger's Überlieferungsgeschichte of the *Eudemian Ethics* (henceforth *EE*), since the latter is often transmitted with the *EN*.⁸ However, once Aspasius' evidence has been carefully considered and the βούλησις-reading rehabilitated, a case could be made to favour it over its rival for philosophical reasons. To begin with, the reading preferred by Bywater, namely ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν, makes the κατὰ-clause almost redundant since the first part of the sentence tells us exactly that προαίρεσις emerges from deliberating (ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι). Interpreters inclined to accept this reading are required to make good sense of προαίρεσις being not only ἐκ deliberation but also κατὰ deliberation. The problem has been noticed by some, and several, albeit rather unconvincing, explanations have been suggested. I shall briefly devote some attention to suggestions made by advocates of the βούλευσιν-reading.

Burnet, for instance, claims that the passage makes it clear that "appetition follows all the steps of deliberation, but in the reverse order".⁹ Admittedly, this is an Aristotelian doctrine (see *EN* 1112b16–24, *De Anima* 433a15–7), but it is far from clear how this can be understood in the passage in question where Aristotle's aim seems rather to uphold his definition of decision as 'deliberative desire'. More recently, Taylor has argued that the βούλησις-reading

6) Gauthier (n. 5 above) 206.

7) I. Bywater, *Contributions to the Textual Criticism of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, New York 1892, 7 and more generally 7–10 for his scepticism about Mb. Interestingly, he lists a number of passages, *EN* 1113a12 included, whose readings he takes to be influenced by Aspasius.

8) D. Harlfinger, *Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Eudemischen Ethik*, in: P. Moraux / D. Harlfinger (eds), *Untersuchungen zur Eudemischen Ethik*, Berlin 1971, 1–50, esp. 15–17 as well as for his stemma, that shows how Mb derives from a mixed tradition, p. 30. His comments on it are as follows (p. 17): "Die Sonderlesungen von Mb sind ziemlich zahlreich; ein großer Teil der in den Apparaten Bekkers und Susemihls für Mb angeführten Spezifika findet sich noch nicht im Rav [sc. the manuscript that Mb derives from]. Unter diesen sind sicherlich nicht wenige als Emendationsversuche anzusehen; wie groß hierbei der Anteil Bessarions [who commissioned the transcript] selbst ist, läßt sich schwer ermessen."

9) J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, London 1900, 132.

“loses the point that our final desire is shaped by our deliberation”.¹⁰ But this is expressed exactly by the ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι, hence this way the risk of redundancy is hardly avoided.¹¹

By contrast, advocates of the βούλησις-reading have some points to make: as Irwin points out in his edition of the *EN*,¹² it is fairly clear from elsewhere (mainly from 1113b3–5,¹³ but see also 1111b26–29; EE 1226b2–4; EE 1226a7–15; De Anima 433a23–5) that προαίρεσις requires wish (βούλησις) and not any species of desire:¹⁴ such a restriction seems to be often in the background – for instance, wherever Aristotle denies προαίρεσις to incontinent agents (for instance, 1151a5–7), even though these might be able to deliberate (1149b13–5), or when he claims προαίρεσις to be close to βούλησις (EN 1111b19–20).¹⁵ If, moreover, προαίρεσις requires wish (βούλησις) it will also be clear why Aristotle goes on to account for the latter in the ensuing chapter of the *EN*, that is, 3.4; as a

10) Taylor (n. 5 above) 159.

11) Other attempts to uphold the βούλευσιν-reading: Stewart (n. 5 above) 269 takes βούλευσιν to be “certainly right” and obscurely refers to EN 6.2.2 [viz. 1139a21–27] where he takes logos to stand for βούλευσις. More ambiguous is Grant’s position, (n. 4 above) 22, who, as mentioned, misreads the Paraphrast as reporting the βούλησις-reading, but does not accept it. However, he goes on to argue that βούλησις would be preferable after all, for the claim that in προαίρεσις we desire κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν clashes with this latter being confined to means. Grant’s argument, as I understand it, implies that we do not desire the means but only the end; I find this doubtful. More generally, Grant finds it disturbing that the whole passage runs means and ends together. Recent and less recent scholarship, however, has shown that the distinction between means and ends should be used with care, if only because Aristotle’s preferred term for ‘means’ (τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος) is much broader than its alleged English counterpart.

12) Irwin (n. 5 above) 207.

13) Ὅντος δὴ βουλευτοῦ μὲν τοῦ τέλους, βουλευτῶν δὲ καὶ προαιρετῶν τῶν πρὸς τὸ τέλος, αἱ περὶ ταῦτα πράξεις κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἂν εἶεν καὶ ἐκούσιοι.

14) Aristotle enumerates consistently three species of desire, namely ἐπιθυμία, θυμός, and βούλησις, see De Anima 414b2; De Motu Animalium 700b22; EE 1223a26–7; 1225b24ff; Magna Moralia 1187b36–7.

15) Apart from textual reasons to think that προαίρεσις calls for wish (βούλησις) and not any desire, the issue has been discussed from a philosophical perspective, too. For instance, the two opposite approaches are advocated by Reeve (n. 5 above) 88–91, and S. Sauvé Meyer, Aristotle on Moral Responsibility: Character and Cause, Oxford 2011, 24 n. 17, both siding with Irwin, on the one hand; and, on the other, by D. Bostock, Aristotle’s Ethics, Oxford 2000, 80–1, who argues that any desire can give rise to προαίρεσις after successful deliberation.

result, the general structure of these sections will appear somewhat clearer. These considerations should be given careful attention, especially in the light of the fact that some MSS do have βούλησιν and that, hence, there would be no need to emend the text to read βούλησιν instead of βούλευσιν.¹⁶

I also wish to point out that recent scholarly advancements in the manuscript tradition of the *Magna Moralia*, the third ethical work handed down to us in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, have brought to light other independent MSS of the three ethics.¹⁷ Specifically, the Laur. 81.18 (from the end of the 12th century) features βούλησιν (f. 14r);¹⁸ this goes some way towards establishing good credentials for this reading.

I should note that some support for the βούλησις-reading could be offered by other ancient sources as well, perhaps not on an equal footing with Aspasius' evidence. First, the anonymous commentary on books II–V of the *EN*,¹⁹ which according to some scholars ultimately derives fromAdrastus of Aphrodisias.²⁰ The relevant text reads thus: εἰπὼν δὲ ὀρεγόμεθα, προσέθηκε κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν, ἐπεὶ ὄρεξις καὶ ὁ θυμὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖναι μὲν ἄλλων, ἡ δὲ ὡς ἀγαθοῦ τινοῦ ὄρεξις βούλησις (153.11–3). Hence, his MS of the *EN* clearly has βούλησιν. However, the origin of this commentary and its transmission are still debated.²¹ Again, Gau-

16) Other evidence could be gathered from Aristotle's *EE*; there, too, προαίρεσις is said to require βούλησις, see 1226b2–5.

17) M. Papatomopoulos, Pour une nouvelle édition des Magna Moralia d'Aristote, Pallas 81, 2009, 203–207, esp. 204.

18) The manuscript is available in digital format on the website of the Laurentian Library: <http://teca.bmlonline.it/ImageViewer/servlet/ImageViewer?idr=TECA0001110677&keywords=plut.81.18#page/36/mode/2up>.

19) The text is edited in Eustratii et Michaelis et Anonyma in Ethica Nicomachea Commentaria, ed. G. Heylbut, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, 20, Berlin 1892.

20) Most notably P. Moraux, Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias, Berlin 1973, Vol. II, 325–7, as well as P. Moraux, D'Aristote à Bessarion. Trois Exposés sur l'histoire et la transmission de l'Aristotélisme Grec, Québec 1970, 24–5.

21) For information about this commentary, see E. Eliasson, The Account of the Voluntariness of Virtue in the Anonymous Peripatetic Commentary on Nicomachean Ethics 2–5, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 44, 2013, 195–231, esp. 195–200.

thier and Jolif note that Averroes's *lectio* reads "cumque iudicaverimus super aliquid per consiliationem, desideramus ipsum per voluntatem".²² That this was the preferred reading in Arabic sources is confirmed by a recently edited Arabic translation of the *EN*, which features βούλησιν.²³ Indeed, this translation was used by Averroes to write his commentary on the *EN*.²⁴ But it goes without saying that we are now considering pieces of evidence from Latin and Arabic translations, hence at a significant temporal distance from the early reception of the *EN* and, moreover, at a further linguistic remove. Be that as it may, the βούλησις-reading did not make it into the Latin translations of the *EN* in the Middle Ages; neither the so-called *Ethica Vetus*, which reads "ex consiliari enim iudicantes, desideramus secundum consilium", nor Grosseteste's translation, which coincides with it in this passage, read 'per voluntatem'.

If preference is accorded to βούλευσις over βούλησις, as it seems to have happened in Greek and Latin reception of Aristotle's *EN*, a less restricted conception of προαίρεσις will result: for, if no limit is put on the desire acting as starting point of deliberation, then any species of desire, viz. also appetite and spirit, will issue in προαίρεσις, provided deliberation is successful. Significantly, that this was the crux of the matter is borne out by a scholium on our passage dating from the XII sec A.D.²⁵ This goes as follows:

Τὸ 'κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν' δοκεῖ μὲν ὡς παρέλκον ἐνταῦθα κείσθαι, οὐκ ἔστι δέ: ὀρεγόμεθα μὲν γὰρ καὶ κατὰ θυμὸν καὶ κατὰ ἐπιθυμίαν· ἀλλ' ἐκεῖ μὲν ἄλλων ὀρεγόμεθα· ἡ δὲ κατὰ βούλησιν ὄρεξις μόνου τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.

'In accord with wish' seems to have been put there as redundant, but it is not: indeed, we desire both in accord with spirit and with appetite: but in that case we desire other things, whereas the desire in accord with wish is only for the good. (my translation)

22) Gauthier (n. 5 above) 206.

23) A. A. Akasoy / A. Fidora, *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, with an Introduction and Annotated Translation by D. M. Dunlop, Leiden / Boston 2005, 202–203.

24) Akasoy / Fidora (n. 23 above) 50ff.

25) These scholia are published in *Anecdota Graeca E Codd. Manuscriptis Bibliothecae Regiae Parisiensis*, ed. J. A. Cramer, Oxford, Vol. I, 1839, 192.

The scholiast wanted to defend the more restrictive reading by siding with those interpreters that held wish to be necessary to form a προαίρεσις. However, the wording makes it clear, or at least implies, that the βούλησις-reading was still a textual variant and by no means the preferred text of the passage.²⁶ Be that as it may, this licences us to infer that the issue was still debated in the Middle Ages, despite the manuscript tradition converging upon the βούλευσις-reading.

To sum up, I have argued that Aspasius' comments on EN 3.3, 1113a12 rehabilitates βούλησις and establishes it as a perfectly legitimate reading. This evidence is flanked by other ancient sources as well as by new MSS. If both readings have good credentials, then the issue over which *lectio* to read is a question to be passed on to the interpreter, who will have to make their case mainly for philosophical reasons – as well as on the basis of Aristotle's train of thought in EN III. My suggestion is that βούλησις should be preferred, for it avoids redundancy, wards off criticisms and overall makes better philosophical sense.

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26) For, if the MSS of the scholiast read βούλησιν this could hardly be considered as redundant in the sentence ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν. Hence, I conjecture that his MSS had βούλευσις and that βούλησιν was but a variant (or written in margine, or supra lineam).