

The Akratic Gap.
Remarks on the Book VII of Nicomachean Ethics in Walter
Burley's Commentary

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Walter Burley's Commentary to the Nicomachean Ethics is commonly considered little more than an expositio littere. Nevertheless, in some notanda he raises open questions about the crucial gap between the conclusion of the practical syllogism and action. Within the interpretative framework of Saarinen's and Wood's works, I will focus on Burley's analysis of akrasia in book VII. The first point will be some questions related to a notandum, concerning the gap between intellect and will as typical of akrasia. Secondly, I will analyze it in the light of Burley's semantics, where conceptual tools developed in one science prove useful in solving problems of another discipline, in this case ethics. Finally, I'll address the Commentary's brief gloss about heroic virtue, as example of Burley's first steps in the use of measure languages in ethics, by analogy with the Oxford Calculators' techniques.

Keywords: *Walter Burley, Akrasia, Aristotle, Practical Syllogism, Semantics.*

1. Introduction

In his 1999 article *Walter Burley on akrasia: Second Thoughts*, Risto Saarinen complained about the little scholarly attention devoted to Burley's commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*¹. Twenty years later, the situation has not changed much: a critical edition of the *Expositio super libros Ethicorum Aristotelis* (dated around 1333-1341) is still sorely needed – despite the fact that we do have an excellent manuscript tradition – and the secondary literature is equally lim-

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Risto Saarinen, *Walter Burley on akrasia: Second Thoughts*, «Vivarium», 37 (1999) 1, pp. 60-71: p. 60. On *akrasia* and weakness of will in Walter Burley and the fortune of his commentary to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see also Fabrizio Amerini, *14th-century Reactions to Burley*, in Alessandro Conti (ed.), *A Companion to Walter Burley. Late Medieval Logician and Metaphysician*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2013, pp. 377-409; Iacopo Costa, *The Ethics of Walter Burley*, in Conti, *A Companion to Walter Burley*, pp. 321-46; Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought. From Augustine to Buridan*, Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln 1994, pp. 131-46; Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011, pp. 30-1; Rega Wood, *Willing Wickedly: Ockham and Burley Compared*, «Vivarium», 37 (1999), 1, pp. 72-93.