Aristotle's Ethics of Goodness: A Study of the Self in Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*

by

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To

The Dorje Dradül of Mukpo

Jampal Trinley Dradül of Mukpo

and

My Parents—

My Family Lineage

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Abstract

      Aristotle's assumptions about the structure of the self and its relationship to society differ greatly from those which are prevalent in modern European philosophical discourse. This can be an obstacle to understanding Aristotle's thought when categories based on a modern understanding of the self, such as the language of "egoism" and "altruism," are anachronistically employed in modern Aristotle scholarship. This thesis attempts to outline the details of Aristotle's view of the self and society through a close reading of sections of the *Nicomachaean Ethics, Eudemian Ethics*, *De Anima, Politics*, and *Metaphysics*, comparing this view to the conception of the self articulated during the European Enlightenment. This comparison serves both to deepen an understanding of Aristotle's thought and point to ways in which certain problematic aspects of the modern understanding might be fruitfully re-imagined by looking outside, both temporally and geographically, of the modern European tradition.

List of Abbrevations Used

EE   Eudemian Ethics

NE   Nicomachaean Ethics

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is about Aristotle and his ethical and political thought. While the focus is an exegesis of Aristotle's own writings, a consideration of modern ethical philosophy is present throughout by way of comparison. This comparison of Aristotle's thought with modern philosophical views helps to clarify some key aspects of Aristotle's works, which can be missed without an examination of how certain of his basic assumptions about reality differ from a modern understanding. Aristotle was writing in a very different cultural context than that of the 21st century Euro-centric world.[1] As Charles Kahn writes in his 1981 article "Aristotle and Altruism": "It will be convenient to discuss [Aristotle's theory of friendship] in terms of egoism and altruism, but since this introduces the risk of anachronistic assumptions and associations, let me begin with a precautionary word about the terminology."[2] The inspiration for the work of this thesis is related to just this issue: how does using terms like "egoism" and "altruism" to discuss Aristotle's ethics and politics impede an understanding of Aristotle's work by importing assumptions about how ethics itself, and by extension human nature itself, work in the first place? Furthermore, how does Aristotle himself view human nature? What began as a simple question quickly ballooned into a very large undertaking, as it became clear that the terms "egoism" and "altruism" have their roots in a very particular and now incredibly wide-spread view of human nature, which began (in many respects) in the peculiarly harsh and turbulent culture of early modern Europe and found its fullest articulation in the

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[1] "Euro-centric" refers to the way in which traditionally European systems of thought have become privileged throughout the world in the age of globalisation.
[2] Kahn, 20.

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rationalistic philosophies of the European Enlightenment. In this view of human nature, the individual is pre-dominant and society is seen as field of strife, competition, and unnecessary stress on the individual. Notably, the idea of the radical separateness of the individual co-evolved with the philosophical conclusion, based on innovations in the concept of free will, that humanity is bad, or evil, at its root. This is seen especially in the philosophy of Kant and has its roots in the thought of Augustine of Hippo. These ideas were not shared by Aristotle, but have had a profound influence on the basic assumptions about what is even ethically *possible* in modern ethical philosophy. That is to say, once it is assumed that self and other are fundamentally *independent*, it is impossible to envision the same kind of ethical models as those based on viewing self and other as fundamentally *dependent* on one another. One such example of this is the profound dichotomy between self and other assumed in the above-mentioned terms "egoism" and "altruism." In this way, in order to better understand Aristotle, it became clear that it would be necessary to re-visit his ethical and political works with a view to understanding how he viewed the nature of the individual—the self—and the nature of society in a way that differs from the modern view. This topic is tremendous in scope and so this thesis will serve in many respects as a mere overview of the issue. In order to have a reference point for making a sensible comparison between the view of the self that will be explored in the works of Aristotle through the body of the thesis and view of modern philosophy, this introduction will largely be devoted to defining the heretofore somewhat vaguely employed term "modern ethical philosophy" and the sense of self with which it is associated.

1.1 Defining Modern vs. Ancient Greek Ethics

Aristotle and the dominant paradigm of modern ethical philosophy view the 'self' very differently. In both systems the self is conceptually separable from the community of other selves around it, i.e. as an "individual," yet they offer quite differing accounts of the nature of those individuals and the character of the relationship between them. In his study of ancient Greek self-hood, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy*, Christopher Gill attempts to outline this difference between ancient Greek and modern models of the self. Gill's framework focuses on the influence of Post-Cartesian and Post-Kantian thinking about the self. As will be outlined in this Introduction, these paradigmatic forms of thinking about self-hood have dominated European philosophical thinking to such a degree that, cast in a generalized form, they may be said to make up a loosely unified structure of thought bearing the name "modern ethical philosophy." Although there are many divergent opinions within that structure, there are certain baseline assumptions which necessarily shape those opinions. Gill describes how even apparently divergent schools of theory like post-Kantian thought and the thought of Nietzsche or Sartre have ". . . points of interconnection . . ."[3] and argues for ". . . the pervasive presence of these strands of thought in modern thinking . . . ."[4] He sees that there are strongly commonalities throughout modern, European thought. This is in agreement with the understanding of Charles Taylor in his work *Sources of the Self*, who attempts to ". . . designate the ensemble of (largely unarticulated) understandings of what it is to be a human agent . . . which are at home in the modern West."[5] Furthermore, even

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[3] Gill, *Personality*, 8-9.
[4] Ibid, 10, note 29.
[5] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, preface, ix.

if there are radically divergent viewpoints emerging within the modern, European philosophical milieu, the pervasiveness of the notion of the radically individual self is perpetuated so powerfully in social *practice*, especially through the structures of modern consumer ecomonics, that it is very challenging for alternate views to gain any practical ground and thus they still remain on the fringes of philosophical thinking. For, even if one genuinely doesn't believe in a separate self, one is nevertheless steeped in that ideology, as, in general, one must participate in the social ceremony of individualist economics in order make a living. Just as the social practices of the world in which Aristotle lived—from daily offerings to the household gods to the City Dionysia (a festival in honor of the god Dionysus)—differed from the modern ones, so too did the philosophical assumptions about what it means to be a person.

Thus, in order to clarify the features of the modern and the ancient models respectively, Gill employs the terminology of "subjective-individualist" and "objective-participant." This terminology captures what Gill observes as two separate strands of difference between the ancient and modern: 1) "subjective" vs. "objective," and 2) "individualist" vs. "participant." The subjective vs. objective distinction relates to the philosophy of mind and the individualist vs. participant to philosophical ethics. The modern, subjective view defines personhood primarily as ". . . conscious[ness] of oneself as being an 'I', a unified locus of thought and will" and the corresponding sense that one is the ". . . possessor of a unique personal identity . . . ."[6] Conversely, the ancient Greek, objective view defines being human (and thus a rational animal) as ". . . act[ing] on the basis of reasons, though these reasons may not be fully available to the consciousness of

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[6] Gill, *Personality*, 11.

the agent" and the corresponding sense that "[t]o be human is to understand oneself as, at the deepest level, a human being." Thus, on the ancient model "[t]he fullest possible development of human rationality involves reflective understanding of what 'being human' means, and of how this relates to participation in other kinds of being, such as animal and divine,"[7] whereas the modern model "necessarily raises the question of the relationship between having a personal identity and being a human."[8] Aristotle's sense of selfhood in the *Ethics* and *Politics* is intimately tied to his conception of the human as a political animal and thus in relation to others. This is evident in his startling account of the self-sufficiency of happiness in Book I.7 of the *NE*, where he defines self-sufficiency not as living alone, but *together* with one's ". . . parents and children and wife and altogether one's friends and fellow citizens . . . ,"[9] as well as in his statement at *Politics* I.1 that ". . . the *polis* is prior in nature to the household and each of us as individuals."[10] The self for Aristotle is intimately connected to its relationships *as a human* to others, in particular the family, in a way that it is not on the modern model, wherein the self is viewed as radically separate and relationships with others are seen as, perhaps important, but fundamentally optional.

Thus, modern philosophical schools often reject the importance of relationality, and even those that do recognize the importance of relations often reject the importance of being human. This is epitomized by the Kantian account of the self, according to which the self is no longer seen primarily in terms of its relation to others—a natural condition of one's 'humanity'—but in terms of the radical freedom of the will. As Kant

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[7] Ibid, 12.
[8] Ibid, 11.
[9] *NE*, 1097b8-11.
[10] *Politics*, 1253a19-20.

writes in the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, "[t]he will is a kind of causality belonging to living beings insofar as they are rational; freedom would be the property of this causality that makes it *effective independent of any determination by alien causes*."[11] This conception of freedom of the will as "independent of any determination by alien causes" ignores the social conditions which are always prior to and thus inform and shape the rational will of a human in society **(**this topic is taken up from the standpoint of Aristotle's *Politics* in Chapter 4). On the Kantian model any social condition that determines the will would be classified as a "heteronomy," i.e. a case in which "the will . . . does not give itself the law [i.e. autonomy], but the [external] object does so because of its relation to the will."[12] An example of this is thinking that one ". . . ought not to lie in order to maintain [one's] reputation."[13] In this case one's moral choice is based on an external object of consideration, i.e. one's status in relation to others, therefore it is not valid. Although this example involves primarily the consideration of one's own benefit, heteronomy includes *any* external consideration or factors influencing the will, whether for the alleged sake of self *or* other.[14] Thus for Kant, in order to avoid heteronomy, "[t]he moral imperative must . . . abstract from every object to such an extent that no object has an influence at all on the will . . . ."[15] In this way the self for Kant is, as Bernard Williams describes ". . . a 'noumenal' self, outside time and causality, and thus distinct from the concrete, empirically determined person that one usually takes oneself to be."[16] Being a

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[11] Kant, *Grounding*, 49 (my emphasis).
[12] Ibid, 45.
[13] Ibid.
[14] The famous example of this is Kant's suggestion in his essay *On a Supposed Right to Lie*, in *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 65, that it is immoral to lie even with the intention of preventing someone from being murdered by lying about his whereabouts to the person planning to kill him.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 64.

'self' is in many respects independent of being a situated 'human'. Although not all

modern philosophy would explicitly articulate an allegiance to this Kantian model, the

view of the self as something not essentially situated in one's relational, human life is at

work in many modern philosophical schools. Existentialism is an excellent example of

how, even when one pays homage to context and relationality, the model of the self is

one of fundamental separation from its biological, human nature. In Sartre's claim that

"existence precedes essence" and Fackenheim's "self-making-in-a-situation"[17] the view

arises that "[i]n contrast to other entities, whose essential properties are fixed by the kind

of entities they are, what is essential to a human being—what makes her who she is—is

not fixed by her type but by what she *makes* of herself . . . one's identity is constituted

neither by nature nor by culture . . . ."[18] On such a model, the self is radically divorced

from any inherent qualities, and, although it will always be somehow relational, the form

of that relation will in every case be—on a fundamental level—arbitrary.

Perhaps the most wide-spread modern view of the self is the view that the

individual is *economic* and thus ". . . characterized by *self-interested* goals and *rational*

choice of means."[19] This economic view of the self has become exceedingly prevalent

due to the self-admitted "imperialist" project of free-market economics, as economist

Jack Hirshleifer wrote in 1985: the "expansionist invasions" of economics have pushed

into the "traditional domains of sociology, political science, anthropology, law, and social

biology—with more to come."[20] While the number of articles, theories, and mathematical

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[17] Fackenheim, *Metaphysics and Historicity*, 37, quoted in Crowell, "Existentialism," section 2, "Existence Precedes Essence."
[18] Crowell, "Existentialism," section 2, "Existence Precedes Essence" (my emphasis).
[19] Hirshleifer, 54.
[20] Ibid, 53.

models of human behaviour—and by implication conceptions of human nature itself—put forth by economic theorists is vast, the economic model of humanity boils down to a crude utilitarianism.[21] As Charles Taylor explains, the utilitarian model is based on the Lockean and Humean "'bleached' sense of the person which corresponds to Locke's aspiration to a disengaged subject of rational control."[22] While this view of the self is quite superficial—as Aristotle succinctly says, ". . . it is clear that wealth is not the good being sought [viz. happiness]; for it is useful for the sake of something else"[23]—it has had a profound impact. As Eisenstein writes, "[t]he modern self . . . is a discrete and separate subject in a universe that is Other. This self is the Economic Man of Adam Smith; . . . it is the selfish gene of biology."[24] While the economic model may in some ways be contrary to Kantian ethics, as its focus on utility conflicts with the dignity of the autonomous subject, the underlying view of the self on these two models is effectively identical in virtue of its fundamental *separateness* from others, despite Kant's concession that the "essentially" separate individual is "*social in orientation*."[25] Just as the existentialist model concedes that one is always in a social context, and yet that context is arbitrary, so too the Kantian model is doomed to produce superficial connection to the social sphere as soon as a separate individual essence is assumed. The economic (and by extension ecological) consequences of this separation are all too familiar to the 21st century: "[w]hen we exclude the world from self," Eisenstein writes, "the tiny, lonely

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[21] On the connection between Economics, Game Theory, and Utilitarianism, see Ross, "Game Theory," section 2.1, "Utility."

[22] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 49.

[23] *NE*, I.5 1096a7-8: . . . καὶ ὁ πλοῦτος δῆλον ὅτι οὐ τὸ ζητούμενον ἀγαθόν: χρήσιμον γὰρ καὶ ἄλλου χάριν. All citations from the Greek text of Aristotle's works are drawn from the Oxford editions. All translations are my own, except where otherwise indicated.

[24] Eisenstein, *Sacred Economics*, 50.

[25] White, *Kantian Ethics and Economics*, 86ff.

identity that remains has a voracious need to claim as much as possible of that lost beingness for its own. If all the world . . . is no longer me, I can at least compensate by making it mine. Other separate selves do the same, so we live in a world of competition and omnipresent anxiety."[26] Although Kant's ethical model is often contested and rejected, the separateness inherent in both the Kantian and utilitarian psychological model has pervaded much of modern life.

In the domain of ethical philosophy, the subjective and objective models manifest respectively as *individualist* and *participant* ethics. Modern, individualist ethics views personhood as the ". . . [capability] of grounding one's moral life by a specially individual stance. . ." and the ability to engage ". . . in the kind of disinterested moral rationality that involves abstraction from localized interpersonal and communal attachments and from the emotions and desires associated with these."[27] This differs from ancient Greek, participant ethics, in which "be[ing] human is participat[ing] in shared forms of human life and 'discourse' about the nature and significance of . . . shared forms of life . . ." as well as being "the kind of animal whose psycho-ethical life is capable, in principle, of being shaped so as to become fully 'reason-ruled'. . . ."[28] This ancient Greek model implicitly *includes* all emotions, which are *de facto* excluded by the use of the term "disinterested" in the individualist model. Thus there are two main differences between the two views in the sphere of ethics: the view of ethical decision-making as abstract vs. embedded in community, and the view of rational ethics as an exclusion of emotions ("disinterested") vs. the rational shaping of emotions. The impact of the former

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[26] Eisenstein, *Sacred Economics*, 50.
[27] Gill, *Personality*, 11.
[28] Ibid, 12.

comes through in Gill's discussion of Bernard Williams' and Alasdair Macintyre's critiques of Kantian and Post-Kantian philosophy. They both believe, in opposition to Post-Kantian thought, that theory is not sufficient to ground an ethical life. A so-called 'Archimedean' point, a mutual basis on which to engage in ethical discussion, cannot be provided by discursive rationality. That basis must be provided by shared community.[29] As Williams writes concerning Plato's political theory, "[Plato] did not take it for granted that a justification of the ethical life would be a force. He thought that the power of the ethical was the power of reason, and that it had to be *made* into a force. He saw it as a problem of politics, and so it is."[30] Accordingly, the individual ethical life, as Gill paraphrases, should ". . . be understood primarily in terms of the development of the dispositions by full-hearted engagement in the value-bearing practices, roles, and modes of relationship of a specific society."[31]

This leads to the second point about the emotions and, by extension, the body. The implication of Gill's use of the word "full-hearted" above is that one must necessarily bring the entire range of one's humanity to an ethical debate, which includes more than "disinterested" rational calculation. The importance of this point has been borne out as true in modern psychology and politics. In their introduction to *Bringing the Passions Back In: The Emotions and Political Philosophy*, Leonard Ferry and Rebecca Kingston discuss the "political apathy" and "cynicism" that mark modern politics and hypothesize that this may stem from the "side-lining" of emotions in modern political systems. In tracing the problematic roots of this "side-lining" they note that the "[t]he

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[29] Ibid, 8.
[30] Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 27.
[31] Gill, *Personality*, 7.

rational, normative vision of politics so prevalent today can be said to harbour an

incomplete, if not manifestly false, concept of the human subject. This vision is largely

derived from Kantian inspiration . . . and Kant notoriously likened passions [i.e.

emotions] to cancerous sores."[32] This deficient vision of the human self which excludes

the passions, interconnection, and likewise the body, has had significant practical

repercussions in the realm of psychology as well. For example, the rejection of the

completeness of the embodied human experience is shown in the current clinical

psychological landscape dominated by pharmacology. Bessel van der Kolk describes how

anti-depressants and anti-psychotics have become a multi-billion dollar industry in the

US: the number of people treated for depression has tripled in the past two decades, with

one in ten Americans now taking antidepressants.[33] Notably, van der Kolk finds that the

failure of drugs to successfully treat this epidemic in the long-term has to do with

ignoring the *social conditions* that contribute to mental health.[34] Thus negative emotions,

which are perhaps valid or even healthy responses to genuinely negative social situations

are treated as aberrations, failings of the "non-rational" body which are to be medicated

away. "Sadly," writes van der Kolk, "our educational system, as well as many of the

methods that profess to treat trauma, tend to bypass this emotional-engagement system

[the embodied self] and focus instead on recruiting the cognitive capacities of the

mind."[35] This purely cognitive development, which would seem to stem from the modern

subjective-individualist model, is inadequate to alleviate the embodied experience of

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[32] Kingston and Ferry, "Introduction," 3. They cite Kant, *Anthropology*, 133. It is important to note that this interpretation of Kant's approach to the passions is not entirely uncontested.
[33] Van der Kolk, *The Body*, 50.
[34] Ibid, 51.
[35] Ibid, 86.

traumatic suffering. None of these approaches necessarily involves the negation of the

sense that one is an individual, however, they do involve the re-discovery of a 'self' that

is much more embodied and relational—a 'self' that is interdependent.[36]

As mentioned above, Charles Taylor similarly takes aim at these two threads of

difference—psychological and ethical—between ancient and modern views. He sees that

conceptions of the self are inseparable from a number of other important ideas, namely,

notions of the good, narratives by which we make sense of our lives, and conceptions of

society.[37] He see the 'self' as defined relationally, not only to other people, but to visions

of the good and narratives about who we are. The self is so relational on his model that

there is no such thing as a "neutral" sense of self ". . . defined in abstraction from any

constitutive concerns and hence from any identity. . . ."[38] In the realm of psychology this

corresponds to Gill's definition of the *objective* self. However, in contrast to Gill's more

ecumenical approach (that the ancient and modern views both have their merit), Taylor

states directly that ". . . the assertion of the modern individual has spawned an erroneous

understanding of the self."[39] As for ethics, what the modern conception of the self has led

to, in Taylor's view, is an "ethics of inarticulacy." This form of ethics— manifest in the

theories of utilitarianism and Kantianism—would deny the role of human qualitative

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[36] As a very specific example, Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body*, 81, emphasizes the physical underpinnings of the importance of community to the human self in his comments on the VVC ("ventral vagal complex"), a series of nerves that ". . . activate the muscles of the face, throat, middle ear, and voice box . . . and also sends signals down to our heart and lungs." He describes not only how this physical system demonstrates why "visceral awareness" is necessary for personal well-being, but how the VVC *co-regulates* the physiology of each individual in a social group and further how this co-regulation in community is vital for the rearing and education of infants; he writes, 83, "the brain is a cultural organ." This scientific view is remarkably similar to the intuitive insight of the *t* model, in which community is seen as the basis for individual development, such as in Aristotle's theory of education in Chapter 4. For more on the complex functioning of the vagus nerve see Porges and Dana, *Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory*.
[37] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 105.
[38]Ibid, 49.
[39] Ibid.

judgements in ethical reasoning and instead try to offer "basic reasons" (like Gill's

"Archimedean' points), which is to say an abstract rational argument for why you *must*

be good.[40] However, as in the case of utilitarianism, all such philosophies ultimately end

up offering a *qualitative* good, i.e a good that is chosen on a fundamentally intuitive basis

as opposed to a strictly rational one, as the basic reason or motivation for their claims (in

the utilitarian case "happiness"), while ironically denying the validity of such qualitative

distinctions.[41] This happens necessarily, as the very fabric of the 'self' is made up of such

qualitative distinctions. This is what is meant by an "ethics of inarticulacy"—modern

ethical theories which are inadequate to giving an account of their own under-pinning.[42]

The false conception of selfhood inherited from the Enlightenment has led to modern

ethical theories that are straight-forwardly incoherent.

The fact that these theories are incoherent, and yet still hold currency, itself points

to the inseparability of conceptions of the self and conceptions of goods and society. As

Bernard Williams argues in his critique of the theory that two goods cannot be rationally

weighed against one another without a common consideration in terms of which they

might be compared: this contention is

> "utterly baseless . . . [and yet] is not merely a feature of intellectual error. If it
> were then it could not survive the fact that people's experience contradicts it, that
> they regularly arrive at conclusions they regard as rational, or at least reasonable,
> without using one currency of comparison. The drive toward a *rationalistic
> conception of rationality* comes instead from social features of the modern world,
> which impose on personal deliberation and on the idea of practical reason itself a
> model drawn from a particular understanding . . . . This understanding requires in
> principle every decision to be based on ground that can be discursively
> explained."[43]

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[40] Ibid, 76-77.
[41] Ibid, 78-79.
[42] Ibid, 87.
[43] Williams, *Ethics and Limits*, 18.

The power of the "social features" of one's world is so strong as to convince a person that their inner life is structured in particular way that is in direct contradiction to their actual experience; one ignores what one's experience *is* due to socially conditioned ideas of what one's experience *should be*. What Williams implies here is that one's actual experience is not defined by the "fact" of the matter, but, to follow Taylor's model, by the qualitative distinctions (opinions about 'the good') which make up one's identity-defining beliefs ("rationality is good in itself") and to which one's experience is subsequently made to conform. This makes sense of Taylor's claim, in opposition to the idea that ethical reasoning is based on non-qualitative "basic reasons," that true ethical reasoning must have ". . . its source in biographical narrative. We are convinced that a certain view is superior because we have lived a transition which we understand as error-reducing and hence as an epistemic gain."[44] Practical reasoning is by its very nature qualitative and social.

All of this should provide a clearer picture of how Aristotle's conception of the self might differ from the conventional modern perspective and how this would have an effect on his view of the relationship between self and society. Since considerations of the self are inseparable from considerations of how that self relates to others, determining what image of the self Aristotle presents in his ethical writings will necessarily shed light on the character of his politics. The interdependent nature of the self, especially evident in Aristotle's account of friendship in the *NE* and the *EE*, has long been ignored and discussion about it was only re-ignited toward the end of the 20th century. As Susan Collins explains, "[t]he Aristotelian tradition became almost moribund with the success

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[44] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 72.

of modern liberalism and with attacks such as those of Hobbes on the many 'absurdities' of the 'old Morall Philosophers', Aristotle chief among them."[45] In 1995, Suzanne Stern-Gillet anticipated that "modern" readers would still receive Aristotle's discussion of friendship with "incredulity, annoyance, and possibly even shock."[46] In fact, unlike scholarship on other branches of Aristotle's philosophy which stretch back almost continuously to the time of Aristotle, modern scholarship on friendship essentially begins in 1977 with a pair of articles on the subject published by John M. Cooper.[47] Cooper points out in one of those articles that friendship does not hold a prominent place in either the scholarly or philosophical literature on Aristotle and supposes that " . .. this is in part, though certainly not wholly, to be explained by the fact that modern ethical theories with which Aristotle might demand comparison hardly make room for the discussion of any parallel phenomenon."[48] The last serious discussions of friendship in general in the European tradition were published by Montaigne and Bacon in 1580 and 1597 respectively—four *centuries* prior to Cooper.

As detailed above, the still-dominant Post-Cartesian and Post-Kantian view of the self has been undergoing a sustained critique in the last several decades and much of this critique in some way looks back to the ancient Greek model for inspiration. As Gill explains, his approach in *Personality* involves "combining the exploration of Greek thinking about selfhood and personality with the re-examination of our own ideas on the subject."[49] This philosophical approach has been mirrored in other disciplines and in

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[45] Collins, *Re-discovery of Citizenship*, 2.
[46] Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 4.
[47] Cooper, "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle," and "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship."
[48] Cooper, "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," 619.
[49] Gill, *Personality*, 4.

psychology in particular, where modern 'advances' have often borne a strong resemblance, albeit in a substantially altered form, to ancient assumptions. There is thus a rich body of theory which can be used. As Cooper's quote above suggests, our modern notions of who we consider ourselves to be determine what we view as relevant, or even possible, when considering ancient sources. Thus this improvement in modern theory based on the examination of ancient models also has the effect of shedding more light on the ancient models themselves. By creating coherent systems of thought that share similarity with ancient models and yet are experientially intelligible to *ourselves* in the modern day, we increase our horizon of what is possible and in turn have more flexibility to re-approach the ancient sources and compare their observations with our own. By taking the view that the "individual" is not so radically separate from society as post-enlightenment trends of thinking would have it, Aristotle's insights become more understandable and his philosophy becomes not only more intelligible in general, but important as a source of alternative thinking.

1.2 Chapter Summary

This thesis will systematically move through a number of salient points for understanding the functioning of the self in Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*. In Chapter 2, the notion of *philautia* (self-love) as it appears in the *NE* and *EE* will be examined along with its connection to Aristotle's vision of the importance of *philia* (friendship) and its role in the development of virtue. It will be shown how an individual's development of a proper relationship to herself stands in a circular relationship to the development of proper relationships with others. This will be used to explain why Aristotle's view of

self-hood cannot be properly grasped by the modern ethical categories of "egoism" or "altruism," because his conception of human flourishing is based on a much more deeply symbiotic view of human happiness. The highest form of happiness cannot be achieved properly by "you" or "me" in a separate sense, but *we* must flourish, through the development of virtue, together. This is the interdependent nature of the perfection of the self, which rest on the ability to *be* properly and appreciate the goodness of life that is inherent in humanity. This sense of shared flourishing will acquire further theoretical grounding through an examination of Aristotle's theory of perception in the *De Anima* and a clarification of Aristotle's epistemology and the interdependent nature of his theory of cognition. On Aristotle's theory, the mind only comes to know itself in and through the cognizing of an object; the nature of the mind is "nothing" outside of its interaction with the world. In this way, Aristotle sense of 'self' as substance will be revealed as more properly an activity or process than an *entity*.

On the basis of this understanding of Aristotle's theory of self-hood, Chapter 3 will move away from the concept of friendship to consider Aristotle's view of the self as it relates to that of his teacher, Plato. This Chapter will examine a number of ways in which Aristotle apparently diverges from Plato in his methodology and his relationship to the Eastern mystical wisdom traditions in the midst of which Plato's philosophy developed, alongside the ways in which Aristotle continued the tradition of Plato in the realm of theory and logic. In the course of this examination a crucial feature of both Plato and Aristotle's philosophy will be brought forth, namely, their view of reality as fundamentally *good*. This will help illuminate the view of the goodness of the self brought forth in Chapter 2 by showing the broader system in which it is situated—the

view of the goodness of the cosmos itself. This view of goodness is one of the primary features which distinguishes the philosophy of both Plato and Aristotle from much modern philosophy.

Chapter 4 will continue the work of Chapter 2 in showing the relationality of the self for Aristotle through a consideration of his view of education. The question of the intended audience of Aristotle's ethical lectures will be taken up to show how Aristotle did not view a rational explanation of goodness as sufficient for actually *becoming good*. Rather, it will be shown how he saw the capacity for proper rationality as a social phenomenon, for it is dependent on a proper up-bringing through which one not only mimics, but deeply internalizes ethical behaviour through the development of good habits. In this way, the circularity of self and other in the development of virtue-friendship shown in Chapter 2 will take on an added layer, as the self and society will also be shown to stand in a circular relationship. Good society is necessary for the virtuous habits which contribute to good society.

Finally, Chapter 5 will take up the question of the highest form of happiness—contemplation—and how it relates to the sense of self as relational elucidated in the previous Chapters. The relationship of the contemplative life to the political life will be explored to show how much the contemplative life is embedded in and not separate from the political. Furthermore, Aristotle's theory of the unmoved mover and its relationship to the totality of existence, which is moved by it, will be examined, especially with regard to the political metaphors of the general and the household which Aristotle uses to describe it. It will be shown how at the highest level of virtue, which is "most self-sufficient" and most apparently removed from political life, the relationality of political life is, in fact,

affirmed through the philosopher's vision of human and political nature as embedded within the ordered goodness of the cosmos itself.

The thesis will conclude with some remarks about how the view of Aristotle's ethics presented in the four main Chapters might be both applicable, and not, in a re-examining of the modern ethical context. Although Aristotle's concept of the highest virtue, *sophia* (wisdom), was rooted in a notion of divinity based on a now-overturned astronomical model and was restricted to a very particular class of people, it will be suggested that these strictures need not be taken as inherent to his view of the human being. More essential to Aristotle's thought is his view of the human as fundamentally good as well as inseparable from society. This aspect of his view is shared by other cultures and is still relevant as it provides a coherent alternative to key aspects of modern thinking.[50] At the same time, it will be noted that Aristotle also has limitations as a source of alternatives to the modern Euro-centric paradigm. This is the case as he is the progenitor of much European philosophical thinking—in particular through his privileging of the rational faculty and his substance ontology. In this way, to fully understand and re-imagine the Euro-centric model of thinking about the world, non-European systems of thought, e.g. North American Indigenous and Eastern, would need to be taken into account to provide a more penetrating re-analysis of *both* Aristotelian and later European assumptions about basic questions of being (substance) and the relationship of the intellect to wisdom. Nevertheless, the view of humanity as good and

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[50] As will be explained in the course of this thesis, the emphasis in the phrase "fundamentally good" is on *fundamentally* as much as on *good*. Aristotle is acutely aware of the human being's tremendous capacity for wrong-doing, as well as for virtue, but he also sees that the underlying nature of the human, simply by virtue of being a living being, is good in an *essential* sense of the word that precedes the relative dichotomy of good and bad in the realm of practical action.

the self as interdependent, shared in a fundamental way by East and West, are important ideas which are a vital component of society's re-examining of itself in this time of great technological, political, and environmental change.

Chapter 2: *Philautia* and the Self

The concept of *philautia* (self-love) is vital to understanding Aristotle's conception of the self. His argument that a proper, loving, relationship to oneself is the basis for proper relationships with others is not necessarily intuitive to modern moral philosophy, and its un-packing provides a number of insights into Aristotle's understanding of the nature of the self. It will thus serve as a starting point for outlining Aristotle's conception of self-hood which is implicit in his ethical and political works, although not fully articulated. Although, as scholars have pointed out,[1] Aristotle rarely uses the term "self" (*autos*) it is evident in reading his works that he has a sense of what it means to be a moral agent, and thus must necessarily have some conception of self-hood, even though he does not treat of the question explicitly. Part of the work of this thesis is to clarify what exactly this conception entails. Beginning with a discussion of *philautia* and its place within the broader project of the *NE*, this Chapter will lay the groundwork for the discussion of the 'self' in Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* by examining Aristotle's claims about friendship and self-hood in relation to his theories of 1) the divisions and proper functions of the parts of the *psychē*, 2) perception and cognition in the *NE* and *De Anima*, and finally 3) contemplative and practical happiness. This analysis, in addition to contextualizing the discussion of the 'self' within Aristotle's broader project in the *Ethics*, will make two claims: firstly, that virtuous self-love allows the individual subject to *be* with itself, which is a necessary condition for the shared cognition involved in virtue-based friendship, and secondly, the 'self' in Aristotle is not a something that one

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[1] E.g. Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 11-18, takes up the question of Aristotle's substantive use of αὐτὸς and its grammatical irregularity in his contemporary context.

"has" (like heart or a liver[2]), but a *process* that can admit of greater or lesser degrees of perfection.[3] Since, for Aristotle, the human is inextricable from its relations, the 'self' is a description of a kind of relational activity in the truly virtuous moral agent. This second claim will serve to demonstrate the circularity of the first claim—the individual's relation to herself provides a necessary condition for a proper relation to others, *and*, due to the self's dependence on other for becoming fully developed, the proper relation to others will be a necessary condition for the individual to form a proper relation to herself. Thus, even though friends appear to be "external goods," they are actually integral to and inseparable from the self, since the self is much more so a relational activity—mutually shaped through its interactions with other people and objects of perception—than a monadic entity that has unchanging characteristics.[4] It is this interdependence of self and other in society that forms the basis of Aristotle's conception of *philautia*.

2.1 *Philautia* and its Context in the *NE*

Aristotle's discussion of *philia* in Books VIII and IX of the *NE*, and thus *philautia* as part of Book IX, comes at a crucial point in the work. As Lorraine Smith Pangle points out in her discussion of the place of friendship within the *NE*, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the goal of the *Ethics* is to demonstrate "the unity of virtue and happiness*"*—that happiness is not opposed to, but identical with acting virtuously. As

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[2] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 112, characterizes the modern understanding of the self with this analogy.
[3] I use the term "process" in this Chapter to capture the sense in which the self is defined through its actions in general—including both motion (κινήσις) and activity (ἐνεργεία) as defined at *Metaphysics,* IX.6 1048b16-36—and thus not in any technical, Aristotelian sense.
[4] As Aristotle writes in the *Categories*, V 4a10-11, "the primary characteristic of a substance is that, while remaining one in number, it is capable of receiving contrary qualities (Μάλιστα δὲ ἴδιον τῆς οὐσίας δοκεῖ εἶναι τὸ ταὐτὸν καὶ ἓν ἀριθμῷ ὂν τῶν ἐναντίων εἶναι δεκτικόν)." In this way, the self, or the individual human as a substance, is constantly in a state of change and is not static with regard to its characteristics.

Aristotle writes at *NE* I.7: "the human good (happiness) is activity in accord with virtue (ἀρετήν), and if there many virtues, in accord with the best and the most perfect (τελειοτάτην)."[5] The arguments in the Books preceding the discussion of *philia* show the importance of virtue and acting in accord with the mean and with a right relationship to pleasure and pain. However, they do not show sufficiently how this behaviour would constitute a wholly fulfilling life. It is the discussion of friendship which ". . . encourages that in the realm of friendship, one may find all the nobility of virtuous action at its best without the ultimate sacrifice of happiness . . . . [T]hus [it is] both a proof of [Aristotle's] thesis on the unity of virtue and happiness and at least a partial answer to the question of what the substantive concerns and activities of the best life should be."[6] This view is based on the assumption that the ten Books of the *Ethics* constitute a unified work and argument[7], which I concede as well for the purpose of this thesis. This point also highlights the importance of social relations in the *NE*, for Aristotle is not simply trying to provide a formula for an individual to live an *abstractly* morally good life, but a fulfilling life *alongside* others. As Aristotle says when clarifying what he means when he calls happiness "self-sufficient" (αὔταρκες) in the first Book of the *NE*: "by self-sufficient we do not mean by oneself alone, living a solitary existence, but together with one's parents and children and wife and altogether one's friends and fellow citizens, since man is by nature political."[8] This definition of *autarkeia* is of crucial importance in understanding Aristotle's relational understanding of the self, which will be examined

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[5] 1098a16-18: τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ᾽ ἀρετήν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην.
[6] Pangle, *Philosophy of Friendship*, 6-7.
[7] Ibid, 8.
[8] *NE* 1097b8-11: τὸ δ᾽ αὔταρκες λέγομεν οὐκ αὐτῷ μόνῳ, τῷ ζῶντι βίον μονώτην, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονεῦσι καὶ τέκνοις καὶ γυναικὶ καὶ ὅλως τοῖς φίλοις καὶ πολίταις, ἐπειδὴ φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

later, but for now this early mention of "friends and fellow citizens" lends weight to the assertion of the tremendous importance of the discussion of friendship which occurs in Books VIII and IX of the *NE*. Friendship is vital for fulfilling Aristotle's project of demonstrating the inseparability of happiness and virtue.

In the discussion leading up to Book VIII, especially in Aristotle's long exegesis of the particular virtues, their extremes and virtuous mean, beginning at Book III.6 with bravery and continuing through the extended discussion of justice that comprises all of Book V, he is largely concerned with the independent definition of the virtues and the ideal state of character. However, he does not go into the details of *how* one should relate to others in particular situations and in the context of political life. While this is obviously treated in detail in sections like *NE* IX.3, where Aristotle discusses the question of when to break off a friendship, the view of the relationship between self and other in the *NE* (and thus naturally the clearest view of the 'self') is to be found above all in the discussion of *philautia*.

It is when Aristotle treats of *philautia* that he gives the clearest articulation of how he views the experience of the moral agent in meeting the claims of virtue. It is in this context also that the view of modern, *subjective-individualist* ethical discourse, as defined by Gill in the Introduction to this thesis, and the Aristotelian view are most at odds. Aristotle's claim that one's relationship to oneself is what is determinative of the character of one's relationships to others transcends the problem of egoism vs. altruism that arises in the *subjective-individualist* view. If the self is radically distinct from society—truly individual in essence—then there will always be a deep conflict between one's own flourishing and that of another. Aristotle, on the other hand, while recognizing

the possibility of this kind of conflict, provides a model of *shared* human flourishing that does not entail the sacrifice of one's own good for the sake of others.[9] One's moral motivation is not taken as heavily into account as it is in modern moral philosophy, precisely because the understanding of *what a human is* for each differs. Since being a human, for Aristotle, is fundamentally social (a 'political animal') and the excellence of a thing is that which is most in accord with its nature, then the perfection of one's nature will be objectively beneficial for oneself and others, since the two are basically inseparable, that is, interdependent. Since the achievement of perfect virtue is identical with the achievement of perfect happiness, the truly happy man will inevitably benefit others. Conversely, he who fails to achieve his own happiness through virtue will be correspondingly harmful in society. Thus the nature of the self in Aristotle will be important for clarifying his aim in the discussion of *philautia*. To pursue this point further it will first be necessary to review what Aristotle says about *philautia* in Book IX.4-8, along with some of the difficulties of the argument, and then proceed to clarify how a relational conception of the self emerges in the broader context of Books 8 and 9 of the *NE*.

The treatment of *philautia* begins at Book IX.4. Hitherto in the discussion of *philia* Aristotle has defined what different types of *philia* look like (i.e. the three types of *philia*—use, pleasure, and virtue), but at IX.4 he moves to a discussion of the very root of friendship. He opens the chapter with the statement: "the feelings of love towards

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[9] Following Gill, *Personality*, 355, who comments on this point how Aristotle's arguments do not presuppose that " . . . the claims of altruism require the negation of the importance of personal identity. The assumption . . . is rather that (positive) 'self-realization' and maximal engagement in interpersonal and communal relationships are fully compatible in a way that is beneficial to both parties." See also Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, Chapters 3 and 5, on the problem with the egoism-altruism dichotomy in interpreting Aristotle's *Ethics*.

neighbours, as well as those by which friendships are defined, appear to stem from those [one holds] towards oneself."[10] He then immediately elaborates on this (apparently according to the common opinion[11]) with reference to five possible definitions of friendship: a friend 1) desires and performs the good (or what appears to be) for the sake of the other person (ἐκείνου ἕνεκα), 2) desires their friend to exist and to live for that friend's sake (αὐτοῦ χάριν), 3) lives together (with the other) and 4) chooses the same things, or 5) shares in pain and in joy with the other (συναλγοῦντα καὶ συγχαίροντα τῷ φίλῳ).[12] He then goes on to point out that for the "decent man (τῷ ἐπιεικεῖ)" all of these attributes are present with relation to himself: he has the same opinions as himself; desires the same thing with his whole soul; wants the good, real or apparent, for himself and does it for his own sake; wants himself to live and be preserved and to exist; and feels pain and pleasure together with himself.[13] These are the criteria according to which a person's relationship to himself appears to bear similarity to that person's relationship to others. Aristotle does raise the point of whether one can properly be said to be a friend to oneself, but chooses to leave that semantic distinction behind for the time being.[14] He simply allows the argument to function by analogy.[15] An emphasis is especially placed on *intrinsic* desirability in these categories, as Aristotle repeats the words "for the sake of the other (ἐκείνου ἕνεκα/ αὐτοῦ χάριν)" and "for the sake of oneself (ἑαυτοῦ ἕνεκα)" in the

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[10] 1166a1-2: τὰ φιλικὰ δὲ τὰ πρὸς τοὺς πέλας, καὶ οἷς αἱ φιλίαι ὁρίζονται, ἔοικεν ἐκ τῶν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐληλυθέναι.

[11] He use the verb τιθέασι in an impersonal way to introduce the five definitions—"they posit . . . ." The implied subject is continued at 1166a6 with "οἳ δὲ . . . ."

[12] 1166a3-8.

[13] 1166a13-27.

[14] 1166a33-34.

[15] This is one of the examples of the difficulties of pinning down a clear view of the self in Aristotle, as he remains vague on subtle and precise points of the relationship between the different parts of the soul and how they are both separate and a unity.

two descriptions respectively. These instances are also connected with a desire for the

other simply "to be" and "to live." Thus, one gets a hint at how friendship plays an

important role in Aristotle's thought on a very deep level, for the desire for friends and

for existence itself[16] seem quite closely related in this passage.[17]

The question of how this relationship to oneself functions for non-virtuous people

(φαύλοις) does not escape Aristotle's notice, nor the commonly held opinion that self-

love is, in fact, a defect rather than a virtue. He takes pains to describe how these qualities

of self-love are shared by everyone to some degree, even though they may be of

imperfect moral character, since they possess some measure of virtue. Here he is

differentiating between two different senses of self-love: 1) self-love as a love for and

privileging of one's higher or rational aspects (which are the basis of virtue) and 2) self-

love as the love for and privileging of the lower, irrational, appetitive parts of oneself.

The first, proper, sense of self-love, according to which friendship with others is possible,

is not found at all in completely morally degraded people and doers of impious deeds

(τῶν γε κομιδῇ φαύλων καὶ ἀνοσιουργῶν), for they differ from themselves (διαφέρονται

γὰρ ἑαυτοῖς).[18] This issue is elaborated immediately in *NE* IX.4 and is further discussed a

few chapters later, at *NE* IX.8, where it is acknowledged that people use "self-love" as a

negative (shameful) term for those who love themselves the most.[19] Aristotle's initial

impetus for disagreeing with this view is a simple one—"they are in discord with

people's actions."[20] This is in accord with his method of "saving the phenomena" in

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[16] Cf. *De Anima* 413a23ff.—for a living being, being *is* living and hence also activities like awareness.
[17] This is discussed to some degree in Kosman, "Desirability of Friends," with a focus on shared
consciousness and perception, which will be taken up later in this Chapter.
[18] 1166b7.
[19] 1168a29-30: ἐπιτιμῶσι γὰρ τοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μάλιστ᾽ ἀγαπῶσι, καὶ ὡς ἐν αἰσχρῷ φιλαύτους ἀποκαλοῦσι.
[20] 1168a35-1168b1: τοῖς λόγοις δὲ τούτοις τὰ ἔργα διαφωνεῖ.

ethical thinking[21], for he lists of a number of proverbs, like "everything is common to friends," to point out that one's relationship to oneself is the basis for all of one's relationships, and so self-love is a necessary condition for love of others. He then continues to define more specifically why this is the case.[22] This discussion at IX.8 does differ slightly in kind from the discussion at IX.4, for here the question of whether one should love oneself or another *most* is taken up, whereas in IX.4 the topic of self-love was just being introduced. It will, however, be beneficial to look forward to the arguments given in IX.8 and then return to IX.4. The discussion of IX.8 will be briefly reviewed here and then the focus will return to the complementary discussion of the relation of the morally degraded man to himself in IX.4.

After bringing up both the notion that "self-love" is an insult in some contexts as well as the opposing point of view (i.e. that self-love is the standard of all affection), Aristotle points out that the objects of action differ for the two different kinds of self-love. This relates to the differentiation of the two kinds of self-love described above—1) love for one's higher, rational parts and 2) love for one's lower, appetive parts. The difference in objects seems to correspond to the tri-partite distinction of friendships present throughout Aristotle's ethical writings, viz. utility, pleasure, and virtue. The kind of self-love which receives opprobrium (rightly, so the argument) has to do with people "allotting for themselves a greater portion of materials goods, honours, or bodily pleasures."[23] The objects listed here all fall under the two lower categories of friendship;

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[21] The question of the exact nature of this method is taken up at length in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[22] This is methodologically notable, for it makes clear that Aristotle does not see himself as innovating particularly, but drawing out the wisdom in his own tradition, which was present to him through proverbs from the poets. For the similarity of the Homeric and Aristotelian conceptions of friendship see Adkins, "Homer and Aristotle," and Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 15-18.

[23] 1168b15-18: οἱ μὲν οὖν εἰς ὄνειδος ἄγοντες αὐτὸ φιλαύτους καλοῦσι τοὺς ἑαυτοῖς ἀπονέμοντας τὸ πλεῖον ἐν χρήμασι καὶ τιμαῖς καὶ ἡδοναῖς ταῖς σωματικαῖς.

material goods and pleasures clearly correspond to these two, as do "honours," for, as mentioned in Book VIII.7 when "affection" is compared to "being honoured," being honoured is not chosen for its own sake, but only for its result [as opposed to affection].[24] Accordingly, "honours" here seem like they belong to the lower categories, as they do not refer to a more virtuous and self-sufficient end. Furthermore, the lower categories are all defined in reference to a finite resource—your having more means my having less, like in the case of "honours" in a rigid social hierarchy, or wealth, etc.—whereas affection (and the theoretical virtues) do not have this limitation. On the other side of the argument, the kind of self-love that Aristotle is promoting is said to be self-love in virtue of the fact that one is choosing for oneself the highest ends: "for if someone were to be consistently eager that *he himself* most of all do what is just or wise or anything else that is in accord with the virtues, and in general always obtained the noble for himself, no one would say that man is a 'self-lover' [in the pejorative sense] nor would censure him."[25] The person who seeks to out-do others in respect of "what is in accord with the virtues" is not the object of censure, in contrast to those who seek utility or pleasure. But not only is he not to be blamed, rather, Aristotle claims: "such a man would appear to be more so a 'self-lover'; for he claims for himself the most noble and most good, and gratifies that part of himself which is most authoritative and obeys this in all cases."[26] Thus Aristotle provides his own definition of self-love according to which the virtuous man is not only said to be a self-lover equivocally, but is in fact *most truly* a lover of self. Just as the two lower

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[24] 1159a17-18: τὸ δὲ φιλεῖσθαι ἐγγὺς εἶναι δοκεῖ τοῦ τιμᾶσθαι, οὗ δὴ οἱ πολλοὶ ἐφίενται. οὐ δι᾽ αὐτὸ δ᾽ ἐοίκασιν αἱρεῖσθαι τὴν τιμήν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

[25] 1168b25-28: εἰ γάρ τις ἀεὶ σπουδάζοι τὰ δίκαια πράττειν αὐτὸς μάλιστα πάντων ἢ τὰ σώφρονα ἢ ὁποιαοῦν ἄλλα τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἀρετάς, καὶ ὅλως ἀεὶ τὸ καλὸν ἑαυτῷ περιποιοῖτο, οὐδεὶς ἐρεῖ τοῦτον φίλαυτον οὐδὲ ψέξει.

[26] 1168b28-31: δόξειε δ᾽ ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος μᾶλλον εἶναι φίλαυτος: ἀπονέμει γοῦν ἑαυτῷ τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ μάλιστ᾽ ἀγαθά, καὶ χαρίζεται ἑαυτοῦ τῷ κυριωτάτῳ, καὶ πάντα τούτῳ πείθεται.

forms of friendship are said to be friendship by analogy with primary friendship, and thus

are only called friendships accidentally[27], so too true *philautia* is based on a love of virtue

and not on goods which are only desirable accidentally. It is only the degraded form of

philautia that is worthy of reproach.[28] Thus, in *NE* IX.8 Aristotle is showing that, on the

one hand, self-love is rightly a term of reproach, when used in the common way, but that

true self-love is in fact to be praised; the distinction lies in the relative virtue of the object

which the self-lover chooses for his own gratification.[29]

The difference in the moral quality of objects chosen by the morally inferior

person (*phaulos*) explains how Aristotle can use the five definitions of friendship that

correspond to the virtuous man's relationship to himself at IX.4 to show how they do not

apply to the completely non-virtuous man. At 1166b7-27 Aristotle describes how the

morally inferior person lacks each of the qualities which the virtuous person has in his

relation to himself. He desires one thing and wishes for another [in contrast with (4)

choosing the same things as his friends], for he chooses what is pleasant and harmful in

lieu of the good, like the *akratic* person. Secondly, through cowardice and laziness the

morally inferior person neglects to do what he thinks is in fact best for himself [in

contrast with (1) wishing and performing his own good or what appears good for his own

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[27] 1156a16-17.

[28] The difference between the higher and lower kinds of friendship and the noble and base forms of *philautia* are not however, perfectly comparable to one another; the two lower forms of friendship do have some integrity due to their similarity with primary friendship and are not necessarily always an object of reproach. In this passage, the lower form of *philautia* seems to be treated as something which is simply negative. (For the value of the lower forms of friendship see Cooper, "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship"; and Alpern, K.D., "Aristotle on the Friendship of Utility and Pleasure").

[29] This topic is also explored in Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, Chapter 9 (Self-Love and Noble Sacrifice), where she also emphasizes how proper self-love is based on choosing the right (which is to say better) object in the hierarchy of goods. She explains, 170: "…Aristotle [sees] that the deepest problem with ordinary self-love is not that it seeks too much, but that it seeks too little [sc. the lower rather than higher, and thus greater, goods]."

sake]. Thirdly, if he has done many terrible things and is hated through his corruption, he flees his own life and destroys himself [in contrast with (2) wishing that a friend exist and live for his own sake, like the sentiment a mother feels toward her children]. Fourthly, he seeks the company of others and flees himself, for he is tortured by difficult memories and thus hopes for different things and to forget in the company of others [in contrast with (3) desiring to pass time with oneself, on account of pleasant memories, good hopes for the future and knowledge for contemplation]. And finally, he cannot feel pain and pleasure together with himself; as Aristotle says:

> nor do such men feel joy or pleasure together with themselves; for their *psychē* is in a state of civil war, and one part [of the *psychē*], through corruption, suffers while refraining from certain things, while the other part experiences pleasure, and one part drags him hither and another thither as if he were split in two. Or, if it is not possible to experience pleasure and pain simultaneously, then he is pained at what shortly before was pleasureful, and would wish that that pleasure had never happened to him; for the non-virtuous are brimming with regret.[30]

This is, of course, in contrast with (5) the virtuous man's ability to feel his own pleasures and pains, which is to say that his *psychē* is unified with regard to attraction and aversion and the rational and irrational parts experience the same things as pleasureful and others as painful. Thus the virtuous man is free from regret (ἀμεταμέλητος). The experience of the non-virtuous man demonstrates a lack of proper development in the structure of the parts of the *psychē* through wrongly oriented habituation towards pleasures and pains. He is therefore not able to appreciate the simplicity of his own being since he is experiencing excessive or deficient desire and anger towards external objects, which causes different impulses to conflict. Thus, he is led to seek objects outside of himself to fulfill his

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[30] 1166b18-25: οὐδὲ δὴ συγχαίρουσιν οὐδὲ συναλγοῦσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἑαυτοῖς· στασιάζει γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡ ψυχή, καὶ τὸ μὲν διὰ μοχθηρίαν ἀλγεῖ ἀπεχόμενόν τινων, τὸ δ᾽ ἥδεται, καὶ τὸ μὲν δεῦρο τὸ δ᾽ ἐκεῖσε ἕλκει ὥσπερ διασπῶντα. εἰ δὲ μὴ οἷόν τε ἅμα λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἥδεσθαι, ἀλλὰ μετὰ μικρόν γε λυπεῖται ὅτι ἥσθη, καὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐβούλετο ἡδέα ταῦτα γενέσθαι αὑτῷ· μεταμελείας γὰρ οἱ φαῦλοι γέμουσιν.

passions, which is to say, to seek objects which are good only accidentally, rather than choosing things which are good in themselves and which thus lead to self-consistency. The most fully virtuous form of friendship is not dependent on external objects, in the sense of experiencing unbearable pain or desire depending on the absence or presence of particular things. Rather, as shown in the five categories of self-love, this highest form appears to relate to one's ability to *be* with oneself or others, which involves the love for and privileging of the rational parts of oneself.

2.2 The Structure of the *Psychē* and its Functions

In order to understand this further it will be necessary to examine the meaning of the important specification Aristotle makes in the course of the discussion of *philautia* in both IX.4 and IX.8 that the rational part of the soul is the most authoritative (1168b3) and is most properly said to be "oneself" (1166a19). This will clarify what is meant when Aristotle says that the virtuous man experiences "the same thing at all times as painful or pleasurable respectively, and not sometimes differently (πάντοτε γάρ ἐστι τὸ αὐτὸ λυπηρόν τε καὶ ἡδύ, καὶ οὐκ ἄλλοτ᾽ ἄλλο)," and also what it means for different parts of the soul to be odds with one another, an idea which was referred to above with the phrase "his *psychē* is unified." This unification of the *psychē* is key to understanding how Aristotle's moral conception of self-love is intimately connected with his moral and ontological view of the self.

To approach this question, it will first be necessary to explore the apparent tension within the *Ethics* between the dianoetic part of the self and what one might call the 'practical' self. There is a key distinction made by Aristotle in relation to the self in both

IX.4 and IX.8, between the self in general and what he calls the most "authoritative" part of the self. This part he also calls the thinking part of the self and even "the self" in general.[31] At IX.4 this is made extremely explicit in his definition of self-love as "wishing and doing the real or apparent good for oneself . . . for one's own sake (for it is for the sake of the *dianoetic part* of oneself, which *each man seems to be*)"[32] and shortly thereafter in discussing whether one would wish for one's friend to become a god when he says, "no one would wish to have every [good] having become someone else (for even now the deity has the good), but only while being whatever they are: and each man would appear to *be his thinking part*, or at least mostly so."[33] In both of these passages it is clear that Aristotle associates the thinking part of the human most closely with its very existence. This is further emphasized at IX.8 in the discussion of the behaviour of the proper self-lover, when, as quoted above, the self-lover is said to "gratify the most authoritative part of himself (χαρίζεται ἑαυτοῦ τῷ κυριωτάτῳ)."[34] This is clarified in Book VI, wherein Aristotle gives the most thorough account of the different parts of the intellectual excellences of the *psychē* and their respective functions.

In Book VI of the *NE* Aristotle sets before himself to clarify a point that is left un-specified in the previous discussion of "the mean" as it pertains to the various virtues

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[31] 1166a17: . . . διανοητικοῦ . . . ὅπερ ἕκαστος εἶναι δοκεῖ.

[32] 1166a15-17: καὶ βούλεται δὴ ἑαυτῷ τἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ πράττει (τοῦ γὰρ ἀγαθοῦ τἀγαθὸν διαπονεῖν) καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἕνεκα (τοῦ γὰρ διανοητικοῦ χάριν, ὅπερ ἕκαστος εἶναι δοκεῖ).

[33] 1166a2123: γενόμενος δ᾽ ἄλλος αἱρεῖται οὐδεὶς πάντ᾽ ἔχειν ἐκεῖνο τὸ γενόμενον (ἔχει γὰρ καὶ νῦν ὁ θεὸς τἀγαθόν) ἀλλ᾽ ὢν ὅ τι ποτ᾽ ἐστίν· δόξειε δ᾽ ἂν τὸ νοοῦν ἕκαστος εἶναι ἢ μάλιστα. Lorraine Smith Pangle points out two commentators on the *NE* (Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics*; and Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle*), who connect this passage to what Christopher Cohoon, "Friendship and the Divine Wish," 373, refers to as "the divine wish aporia" at *NE* 1159a5-12. Pangle argues that the reasons for one not wishing a friend to be a god and for one not wishing oneself to be a god are distinct. While this discussion does have strong implications with regard to Aristotle's conception of the importance of individual vs. non-individual moral excellence in primary friendship, I do not comment further on it in this Chapter as it is not perfectly germane to the matter at hand.

[34] 1168b30.

described in Books III-V, namely, what is meant by "in accord with correct understanding (κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον)." For simply saying that *aretē ēthikē* is the mean between two extremes tells one nothing without some further understanding—for example, in the case of a doctor, knowing *which* medicines to take.[35] This is where the distinction between the ethical and the dianoetic virtues first takes place—ethical virtue has been discussed already but the dianoetic virtues are those virtues which pertain to the "correct understanding" (ὀρθὸς λόγος). Thus, already an order, or priority,[36] is established, for the ethical virtues are dependent on correct understanding, and the dianoetic virtues are what provide that understanding. In order to explain this further, Aristotle (re)turns to the *psychē* and makes a new division. Previously,[37] he had specified that the *psychē* consists of two parts: the rational (τό λόγον ἔχον) and the irrational (τὸ ἄλογον). At this juncture (*NE* 1139a5ff.) he specifies that the rational part of the soul has its own division into two parts, which differ according to their objects. Of these two parts "one is that by which we contemplate those beings whose first principles do not admit of existing other than they are, and the other by which [we contemplate those things whose principles] admit of being otherwise."[38] One obviously involves theoretical or scientific knowledge (whose objects are unchanging) and the other has to do with deliberation (for we can only deliberate properly, according to the definition of deliberation, about that which could be otherwise than it is). While it is clear that ethics in many ways pertain mainly to the latter category (i.e. deliberation), the definition of the differing functions of

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[35] 1138b30.
[36] In the secondary sense, *Categories* XII, 14a30-35.
[37] *NE* I.13, section 9.
[38] 1139a 7-9: ἓν μὲν ᾧ θεωροῦμεν τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ὅσων αἱ ἀρχαὶ μὴ ἐνδέχονται ἄλλως ἔχειν, ἓν δὲ ᾧ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα.

the two parts of the soul establishes an important framework for the self which will be

extremely relevant to unpacking the relationship between Aristotle's vision of the

political self and the introducing of contemplation as the highest form of happiness in *NE*

X.

     Aristotle explores the various domains of the two logical parts of the *psychē* by

examining the nature of five different psychological virtues by which truth is attained by

either affirmation or denial: art (*technē*), scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*), prudence

(*phronēsis*), wisdom (*sophia*), and intellect (*nous*).[39] The reason he defines these

functions in particular as "truth-attaining" qualities, and how the attainment of the truth is

related to ethics is clarified in VI.2. Firstly, Aristotle suggests that there are three features

of the *psychē* responsible for action and truth—sensation (*aisthēsis*), intellect (*nous*), and

desire (*orexis*)—but quickly determines that, of these three, only *nous* and *orexis* can

properly be said to originate action, for action (πρᾶξις) is based on choice and choice is

based on reasoning, not merely on sensation. He then goes on to explain the relation

between intellect and desire in the following way:

> that which affirms and negates in the realm of intellect is correlated to that which
> pursues and avoids in the realm of desire; in this way, since ethical excellence is a
> habit related to choices (ἕξις προαιρετική), and choice is a desire stemming from
> deliberation (ὄρεξις βουλευτική), it is necessary that both one's understanding be
> true and one's desire be correct if a choice is to be virtuous, and that one must
> both articulate the correct understanding and pursue the correct desire. And so this
> is what practical truth and the practical intellect are, whereas the theoretical
> intellect, which is neither practical nor productive, is said to function well or
> poorly only with regard to truth and falsehood. This is indeed the function of both
> dianoetic parts of the soul, but for the practical part the truth is in agreement also
> with right desire.[40]

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[39] 1139b15-17: ἔστω δὴ οἷς ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ καταφάναι ἢ ἀποφάναι, πέντε τὸν ἀριθμόν: ταῦτα δ᾽ ἐστὶ
τέχνη ἐπιστήμη φρόνησις σοφία νοῦς.

[40] 1139a21-32: ἔστι δ᾽ ὅπερ ἐν διανοίᾳ κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφασις, τοῦτ᾽ ἐν ὀρέξει δίωξις καὶ φυγή: ὥστ᾽
ἐπειδὴ ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἡ δὲ προαίρεσις ὄρεξις βουλευτική, δεῖ διὰ ταῦτα μὲν τόν τε λόγον
ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθήν, εἴπερ ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ τὸν μὲν φάναι τὴν δὲ διώκειν.

Virtue in the realm of action is based on the combination of intellect and desire, which here is referred to as "practical intellect (ἡ διάνοια πρακτική)." Since desire is related to the irrational part of the soul, it is only able to be shaped in the correct way by habit.[41] The ability to shape that part correctly, however, is dependent on some kind of right understanding, which is to say the ability to differentiate truth and falsehood. It is with regard to this ability that Aristotle discusses the five different functions of the dianoetic *psychē*.

In what follows in Book VI, the virtue of *phronēsis* is determined to be most germane to Aristotle's project in the *NE*, as it is an intellectual habit relating to truth, but it also practical and is concerned with human goods in particular.[42] It differs from *epistēmē*, *nous*, and *sophia*, in that it is defined in reference to changeable objects and is thus an excellence of the *logistical* (τὸ λογιστικόν) rather than *epistemic* part of the soul (τὸ ἐπιστημονικὸν). The other three intellectual virtues mentioned above (*epistēmē*, *nous*, and *sophia*—discussed respectively in VI.2,6,7) are all related to objects which are unchanging and which exist by necessity. Furthermore, *phronēsis* differs from *technē* (discussed at VI.4) since it is related to action (πρᾶξις), rather than creation (ποίησις), whereas "by necessity art is in the realm of creation rather than action."[43] Hence *phronēsis* is the one virtue of the *logistical* part of the *psychē* which pertains to action in the realm of changeable objects, rather than creation with regard to the same objects, or knowledge of or related to

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αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ διάνοια καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια πρακτική: τῆς δὲ θεωρητικῆς διανοίας καὶ μὴ πρακτικῆς μηδὲ ποιητικῆς τὸ εὖ καὶ κακῶς τἀληθές ἐστι καὶ ψεῦδος (τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι παντὸς διανοητικοῦ ἔργον): τοῦ δὲ πρακτικοῦ καὶ διανοητικοῦ ἀλήθεια ὁμολόγως ἔχουσα τῇ ὀρέξει τῇ ὀρθῇ.

[41] *NE* Book II.1.
[42] Full definition is given below. Cf. note 44.
[43] 1140a17-18: ἀνάγκη τὴν τέχνην ποιήσεως ἀλλ᾽ οὐ πράξεως εἶναι.

unchanging first principles. In this way Aristotle's definition of prudence (repeated twice with near identical wording at 1140b6-8 and 20-22) is "a true, practical habit, together with understanding, concerning good (and evil)."[44] In this definition, one of the most notable distinctions is that *phronēsis* pertains exclusively to human affairs. This is the reason why it is the virtue most directly connected to ethics, *but it is also the reason why Aristotle cannot restrict the* NE *only to a discussion of* phronēsis. Since determining the nature of true happiness and its inherent concordance with virtue is the goal of the *NE*, happiness must be inclusive of all of the parts of the *psychē*, including that part which can see beyond simply human affairs. This is made explicit in the definition of *sophia* where Aristotle writes, "for it would be strange if one thought that political knowledge or *phronēsis* were the most excellent knowledge, unless the human were the best thing of all things in the cosmos."[45] The wise man would know what is actually best, not just what is best for some particular species, like birds or humans, for that would mean that there were as many wisdoms as there are different things. Aristotle makes clear that he is thinking beyond the animal and human realms when he writes, "if it is that the human is the best of the animals, it makes no difference; for there are things much more divine in nature than the human, such as the most visible things [viz. the heavenly bodies] out of which the cosmos is composed."[46] Thus it is clear that *phronēsis* must play a significant role in the establishment of good society, as it deals with the beneficial arrangement of practical matters. However, the Aristotelian self goes beyond this, as it is defined *both* by its ability to participate in

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[44] At 1140b6-8: λείπεται ἄρα αὐτὴν εἶναι ἕξιν ἀληθῆ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικὴν περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά. At 1140b20-22: ἀνάγκη τὴν φρόνησιν ἕξιν εἶναι μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἀγαθὰ πρακτικήν.

[45] 1141a21-23: ἄτοπον γὰρ εἴ τις τὴν πολιτικὴν ἢ τὴν φρόνησιν σπουδαιοτάτην οἴεται εἶναι, εἰ μὴ τὸ ἄριστον τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν.

[46]1141a34-1141b2: εἰ δ᾽ ὅτι βέλτιστον ἄνθρωπος τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων, οὐδὲν διαφέρει: καὶ γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἄλλα πολὺ θειότερα τὴν φύσιν, οἷον φανερώτατά γε ἐξ ὧν ὁ κόσμος συνέστηκεν.

human affairs excellently as well as the ability to transcend the human realm through intellectual comprehension.

2.3 The Self and Cognition

Turning here to the *De Anima* will show first how Aristotle's view of the self is dependent on others, but also how it transcends the human realm. As Joseph Owens explains in his account of cognition in the *De Anima*, "[Aristotle's analysis of human cognition] means that all knowledge of self has to be represented in terms of sensible objects, the things upon which our cognition has its basic bearing . . . . Accordingly, there is in Aristotle's *De Anima* the blunt requirement that the mind must become sensible things in order to be capable of knowing itself."[47] He follows this with a quotation from *De Anima* III.4: "but when the mind has become the several groups of its objects [the various sense perceptions] . . . the mind is then capable of thinking itself."[48] Suzanne Stern-Gillet also takes the theory of perception in the *De Anima* into account in her discussion of the self and friendship and comments that, "[i]n order to fully appreciate the extent of friendship's contribution to self realization, two Aristotelian theses need to be borne in mind, viz. (1) that self-awareness is indirect, and (2) that *nous'* actuality is directly proportional to the intelligibility of the object that it apprehends."[49] With the first proposition, Stern-Gillet is pointing to the same understanding as Owens, that self-awareness is dependent on sense objects and thus the self is not capable of perceiving itself apart from perceiving another.[50]

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[47] Owens, "The Self in Aristotle," 712.
[48] 429b5-10: ὅταν δ' οὕτως ἕκαστα γένηται... αὐτὸς δι' αὐτοῦ τότε δύναται νοεῖν (Translated by H. Rackham).
[49] Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 51.
[50] Kosman, "Perceiving That We Perceive," 59-61, furthers this point in a slightly different context in discussing the absence of a " . . . common sense that performs a reflective and super-apperceptive function that explains awareness" in the *De Anima*. This is similar to Kahn's views in "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle's Psychology."

This is highly significant from the historical standpoint of the development of the self, for as Owens points out, this understanding is the inverse of modern empiricism. For Locke and other empiricists, one's primary awareness is of one's own sensation, which then provides the ground for awareness of others and the discussion of whether those sensations correspond to real externals.[51] This is dramatically different from the account of perception given at *De Anima* II.12, according to which sense perception is defined as, fundamentally, the potential for receiving the form of sensible objects. Since each sense perception is specially attuned to the receiving of a particular type of form, there is an innate correspondence between the proper objects of sense perception and the sense faculties themselves.[52]

This account of the correspondence between the self and external sense objects is continued further in Aristotle's discussion of mind. Aristotle writes, "there is no nature of [the mind] except that it is potential. Therefore the part of the *psychē* called "mind" (by mind I mean that by which the *psychē* thinks and asserts) is nothing [lit. not one of beings] in actuality before thinking."[53] Mind itself is functionally non-existent—in the sense of "essenceless" (discussed below)—until it is presented with an object. The identification of mind with its object is suggested through the phrase, the sense of which is difficult to translate, "[mind] is not one of beings in actuality (οὐθέν ἐστιν ἐνεργείᾳ τῶν ὄντων)" before thinking. It is not just nothing (οὐθέν) in general, but rather not (yet) any one of the beings (which it will become). Thus the mind will only be able to know itself, to be aware of its

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[51] Owens, "The Self in Aristotle," 709.
[52] *De Anima*, 424a17ff.
[53] *De Anima*, 429a21-24: ὥστε μηδ᾽ αὐτοῦ εἶναι φύσιν μηδεμίαν ἀλλ᾽ ἢ ταύτην, ὅτι δυνατός. ὁ ἄρα καλούμενος τῆς ψυχῆς νοῦς (λέγω δὲ νοῦν ᾧ διανοεῖται καὶ ὑπολαμβάνει ἡ ψυχή) οὐθέν ἐστιν ἐνεργείᾳ τῶν ὄντων πρίν νοεῖν.

own cognition-process, in the presence of an object to cognize. As for Stern-Gillet's second proposition that *nous'* actuality is directly proportional to the intelligibility of the object that it apprehends, the correlation of the intelligibility and actuality of the mind itself with its object follows directly from the relation described by the first proposition. If the mind comes into being in actuality through becoming its object, an intelligible object of greater actuality will necessarily cause the mind to become more actual. Aristotle in fact distinguishes mind from the other sense perceptions in just this way: "the [sense] perceptions are not able to perceive after perceiving an object of too great intensity, such as hearing a sound after [other] very loud sounds, nor to see or smell after perceiving intense colors and scents. But the mind, whenever it thinks something intensely thinkable, does not think subordinate objects any more poorly, but even better."[54] Compared to the other sense faculties, these unique properties of mind are what allows the human (as discussed above) to think beyond the human realm. This will have implications for the final account of what happiness is in the *NE*, as it includes not just politics, but making use of the full range of one's human capacities, which includes this thinking outside of human particularity, which is the comprehension of the divine.

This excursus through the *De Anima* provides the background for understanding why the self is dependent on *philia* for full actualization. In particular, it sheds light on Aristotle's famous use of the phrase "another self" (*allos/heteros autos*).[55] This phrase is notorious both because of its grammatical irregularity as well as its enigmatic character

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[54]Ibid, 429a32-429b5: ἡ μὲν γὰρ αἴσθησις οὐ δύναται αἰσθάνεσθαι ἐκ τοῦ σφόδρα αἰσθητοῦ, οἷον ψόφου ἐκ τῶν μεγάλων ψόφων, οὐδ' ἐκ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν χρωμάτων καὶ ὀσμῶν οὔτε ὁρᾶν οὔτε ὀσμᾶσθαι· ἀλλ' ὁ νοῦς ὅταν τι νοήσῃ σφόδρα νοητόν, οὐχ ἧττον νοεῖ τὰ ὑποδεέστερα, ἀλλὰ καὶ μᾶλλον.
[55] 1166a32, 1168b6-7, 1170b6-7.

when approached from the standpoint of the egoism-altruism dichotomy.[56] While both Gill and Stern-Gillet continue to use the language of egoism and altruism, it is extremely unwieldy in this context in particular because of the stark separation between individual and communal flourishing it implies. This dichotomy is not present in the *objective-participant* model of the self in Aristotle. Because this individualism does not exist for Aristotle in the same way it now does, the egoism-altruism terminology must constantly struggle to destroy itself in order to offer a satisfactory account of Aristotle, as is evident in the analyses of Stern-Gillet as well as Gill, despite Gill's sophisticated and helpful *subjective-individualist* vs. *objective-participant* model. This is where the language of *interdependence* is more useful. It provides a precise terminology for Gill's insight that, rather than assuming a fundamental difference between 'I' and 'other' "[t]he Greek framework centres . . . on the idea of shared or mutual benefit, in which *we* pursue *our* benefit."[57] Aristotle's very definition of the self is one that is always *in relation*, as was shown through the analysis of cognition and his definition of self-sufficiency quoted at the beginning of this chapter—a definition which includes family, friends, and fellow citizens.[58] This relational quality of the self need not undermine Aristotle's substance ontology. It does, however, reveal a difference in the implicit assumption about what constitutes a *human* substance in Aristotle's view compared to the view developed later in

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[56] Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 11-18, provides a detailed explanation of the question of the phrase 'other self'. She describes its grammatical irregularity, 12, due to the fact that there are no similar recorded cases of the pronoun αὐτὸς being used substantively at Aristotle's time, but further explains why the phrase ultimately would not have been problematic for a contemporary of Aristotle. Gill, *Personality*, 346-355, also treats of Aristotle's use of this phrase and its embedded-ness in ancient Greek psycho-ethical norms, which differ greatly from those of today.
[57] Gill, *Personality*, 341. Gill is opposing the utilitarian view of Parfit, *Reasons and Persons,* as well as the interpretation of Greek ethics from the standpoint of 'altruism' and 'rational moral agents' made by Engberg-Pedersen (in relation to Stoicism, "Stoic Philosophy,") and Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*.
[58] See note 8, above.

the European tradition, due to his understanding of the dependence of the sense faculties

on sense objects, as discussed in the analysis of cognition. Relation in Aristotle is after all

one of the three most primary categories.[59] Because of the relational nature of cognition in

Aristotle, the virtuous person is only able to achieve full virtue *within* a social context,

either practical or dianoetical. Thus Stern-Gillet claims that "[a]s far as friendship's

cognitive dimension is concerned . . . it lies in the self-actualization and self-awareness that

each virtuous friend gains through his intimate acquaintance with his partner's moral

virtue."[60]

The importance of shared cognition between friends is brought to light in its fullest

form at *NE* IX.9. This section treats of the question of whether it is a necessary condition

for *eudaimonia* to have friends. This is in response to the common claim that "the blessed"

(μακαρίοις) and the "self-sufficient" (αὐτάρκεσιν) do not need friends.[61] In keeping with

his earlier view of self-sufficiency as inclusive of others, however, Aristotle quickly

comments that it would "appear strange, having attributed all goods to the happy man, not

to give him friends—a thing which *appears* to be the greatest of the external goods."[62] He

does here draw a distinction between the category of "external goods," to which friends

belong, and thus an implicit category of "internal goods," to which he suggests friends

might not belong. As evidence for the importance of friends for the happy man on the

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[59] Aristotle, *Categories*, Chapter 7. I am here following Diamond, "Substance and Relation," 424: "What is clear through all the soul's relational activities is that the interaction with objects in its environment doesn't undermine its substantial self-identity. But that being alive is the self-maintenance in and through interaction, assimilation and exchange with its external co-relatives." For the opposing view see, Kirkland, "Ontological Primacy of Relationality."

[60] Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 57.

[61] 1169b3-5: ἀμφισβητεῖται δὲ καὶ περὶ τὸν εὐδαίμονα, εἰ δεήσεται φίλων ἢ μή. οὐθὲν γάρ φασι δεῖν φίλων τοῖς μακαρίοις καὶ αὐτάρκεσιν.

[62] 1169b9-11: ἔοικε δ᾽ ἀτόπῳ τὸ πάντ᾽ ἀπονέμοντας τἀγαθὰ τῷ εὐδαίμονι φίλους μὴ ἀποδιδόναι, ὃ δοκεῖ τῶν ἐκτὸς ἀγαθῶν μέγιστον εἶναι.

external level he includes their use as recipients for beneficence as well as the natural sociability of humanity. However, the distinction between external and internal goods begins to blur as the discussion progresses. Aristotle makes an explicit appeal to the necessity of others for "what is our own (τὸ οἰκεῖον) is a pleasant thing and we are better able to contemplate (θεωρεῖν) our neigbours and their actions than ourselves and our own actions (τὰς οἰκείας)."[63] Since virtue is something that is the good man's "own (τὸ οἰκεῖον)," it is shared with others in such a way that through perceiving the deeds of others one is perceiving what is one's own.[64] In his commentary on this passage Michael Pakaluk argues that this claim is still unsatisfactory for Aristotle, for it does not yet fulfill the requirement of agreeing both with Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* as *activity* and of recognizing relations with others as analogous to the relation with oneself as outlined in *NE* IX.4. Friends in this instance are still somewhat instrumental in relation to one's own happiness— they are only good for their *use*. Pakaluk argues that it is only "[w]hen two persons share in perception—a relationship which Aristotle regards as equivalent to his . . . notion of 'living life together' (*suzēn*)—[that] each becomes related to the other in the manner in which he is related to himself."[65] It is thus not simply the pleasure of perceiving others perform virtuous actions, but perceiving *together* which constitutes the real importance of friends for the happy man.

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[63] 1169b33-35: ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον τῶν ἡδέων, θεωρεῖν δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς πέλας δυνάμεθα ἢ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ τὰς ἐκείνων πράξεις ἢ τὰς οἰκείας.

[64] Pakaluk, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 206-8, comments on how the word *oikeios* and its variants are used in several different ways in this passage and thus the word "familiar" would be more appropriate than "one's own." In light of Aristotle's view of cognition, however, it seems that "one's own" is in fact more appropriate.

[65] Ibid, 208-9.

The particular object of perceiving together (*sunaisthanesthai*) seems to be the act of being itself, through perceiving—both one's own being and perception and that of one's friend. In the second half of IX. 9 Aristotle seems to be furthering the account of perception in the *De Anima* (discussed above). He writes:

> he who sees perceives that he is seeing and he who hears perceives that he is hearing and he who walks perceives that he is walking, and in all other cases there is similarly something that perceives that we are acting, such that we perceive that we are perceiving and think that we are thinking, and in perceiving that we perceive and think, we are conscious that we exist (for being was [stated to be] either perceiving or thinking) and perceiving that we are alive is one of those things which is pleasant in itself (for by nature life is good, and it is pleasant to perceive the good being present in oneself) . . . .[66]

In this passage he explains how being is perceived through the act of sense perception; and how it is inherently pleasant. The fact of perception's inherent pleasantness is important because of Aristotle's intention, set forth at the beginning of the work, to demonstrate that virtue and happiness be ultimately not only compatible, but identical, and Aristotle's further claim that *eudaimonia* involves pleasure (developed at length in Book X). Thus, virtuous relationships with friends create an appreciation of being *itself* through the perception of our own being, which is pleasant. This pleasantness doesn't just arise from being itself *qua* separate individuals, but from being itself *qua* interdependence. As Aryeh Kosman puts it: "[i]n understanding συναίσθησις as common perception, we must understand common perception as *shared* and not simply *collateral* perception. Co-perception involves in all . . . cases the sharing of a communal consciousness, and not simply the concomitant propinquity of two instances of consciousness; friendship

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[66] *NE*, 1170a29-1170b-2: ὁ δ᾽ ὁρῶν ὅτι ὁρᾷ αἰσθάνεται καὶ ὁ ἀκούων ὅτι ἀκούει καὶ ὁ βαδίζων ὅτι βαδίζει, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως ἔστι τι τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ὅτι ἐνεργοῦμεν, ὥστε ἂν αἰσθανώμεθ᾽, ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα, κἂν νοῶμεν, ὅτι νοοῦμεν, τὸ δ᾽ ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν, ὅτι ἐσμέν (τὸ γὰρ εἶναι ἦν αἰσθάνεσθαι ἢ νοεῖν) τὸ δ᾽ αἰσθάνεσθαι ὅτι ζῇ, τῶν ἡδέων καθ᾽ αὑτό (φύσει γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ζωή, τὸ δ᾽ ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἡδύ).

transforms I's into a *we*."[67] This account of Aristotle's perceptual framework is in accord with Christopher Gill's analysis of the Greek ethical framework encapsulated in the phrase "*we* pursue *our* benefit."[68] This is further supported by a similar, but more explicit, statement found in the *Eudemian Ethics* VII.12, which Kosman makes much use of in his argument. In the *EE* Aristotle writes: "the perceiving of one's friend is in a sense necessarily the perceiving of oneself and the knowing of oneself."[69] As Aristotle cautions just before in the *EE*, however, this 'other self' is still separate (αὐτὸς διαιρετὸς εἶναι ὁ φίλος).[70] Just as the category of relation does not somehow destroy the primacy of the category of substance in the *Politics*, Aristotle is aware of the perceptible fact, as it were, of individuality, but is also aware of the depth of inter-connectivity between people. As Kosman emphasizes in his reading, he does not mean ". . . to argue that on Aristotle's view subjectivity has been exposed as illusory, to be replaced by a mysterious mode of collective consciousness." He proposes, "[o]n the contrary, the ways in which Aristotle sees subjectivity as enhanced by the possibility of a we-subject friendship." This is a provocative claim for "[u]nderstanding that possibility may require us to abandon myths of the radical privacy and interiority of subjective consciousness. It may require that we come to see consciousness more on the model of collective psychic phenomena such as language."[71] This is an, albeit quite conservative, affirmation of Eisenstein's, albeit quite

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[67] Kosman, "The Desirability of Friends," 177.
[68] Quoted above in full, note 57.
[69] *EE*, 1245a35-37: τὸ οὖν τοῦ φίλου αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτοῦ πως ἀνάγκη αἰσθάνεσθαι εἶναι, καὶ τὸ τὸν φίλον γνωρίζειν τὸ αὐτόν πως γνωρίζειν. Translated by Kosman, with my own slight modification. Kosman does recommend an emendation to the text here, "The Desirability of Friends," 177, which would read "τὸ οὖν τὸν φίλον αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτον πως ἀνάγκη αἰσθάνεσθαι εἶναι, καὶ τὸ αὐτόν πως γνωρίζειν." This change would make the point even more clear and is justifiable in light of the confused state of the manuscripts for this locus.
[70] *EE*,1245a34.
[71] Kosman, "The Desirability of Friends," 181.

radical, insight into the crisis of "Separation" in the modern age and the necessity for "interbeing," a part of which involves the recognition that "[m]y being partakes of your being and that of all beings. This goes beyond interdependency—our very existence is relational."[72] Aristotle's view, however, seems must simpler and less radical (as Kosman indicates), involving rather the observation that friends enhance each other's perception (as a "we-subject") and enjoyment of life, for "living [and thus perceiving] together is most choiceworthy for friends."[73]

It is through the individual subject's ability to *be* with itself, through virtue, that the we-subject becomes possible—this is the true importance of *philautia*. Recalling the five categories that differentiate the morally good and morally inferior man, it is wishing and performing the good for oneself and the resulting ability to spend time with oneself and experience pleasure and pain together with oneself (*sunēdesthai* and *sunalgein*) that provide the primary paradigm for all other friendship. This experience of *sunēdesthai* and *sunalgein* from *NE* IX.4 describes the type of pleasant, symbiotic *energeiai* that are proper to virtuous friends as explained in IX.9. The importance of virtue here is paramount. This is the case firstly, and on an outer level, because of the morally inferior person's inability to live with his own experience due to his unstable relationship with pleasure and pain, which leads to regret and destroying his own life. Aristotle emphasizes this at IX.9 1170a20-25 when he says that, in saying that "life counts among the things which are good and pleasant in themselves (τὸ δὲ ζῆν τῶν καθ᾽ αὐτὸ ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἡδέων)," he is referring only to the life of the good man for it is "definite (ὡρισμένον)," and what is good for the good man is also what is good by nature. In contrast, the corrupt and degraded life

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(μοχθηρὰν ζωὴν καὶ διεφθαρμένην) is "indefinite (ἀόριστος)" and thus does not qualify as a standard for arguments about life.[74] Michael Pakaluk comments on the meaning of "definite" vs. "indefinite" here drawing on the *Metaphysics* and speculating that "definite" refers to actuality, whereas "indefinite" refers to potentiality. Perception and thought involve receiving a form apart from its matter (*De Anima,* II.12), and thus are essentially definite, since form is actual and definite whereas matter is potential and is the source of indefiniteness.[75] Since life is "essentially perception," a life based around perception and thought perhaps shares in the definiteness of the forms it receives from external objects.[76] This is relevant to the good life because it is defined by its focus on communal perception and thought. The "degraded" life by contrast is defined by usefulness and external pleasures whose objects are enmattered and thus indefinite. Pakaluk writes: "[o]nly something that failed to realize its potential to attain a certain end, and which therefore had a potential to either of two conditions, could be considered bad; because an activity of perception is not of this kind, it cannot be bad; and its definiteness makes it complete and therefore good—cf. [*NE*] II.6, 1106b29-30, X.4, 1174a14-16."[77]

2.4 The Self as Process

The fact that the virtuous life and *life itself*—i.e. being able to live with oneself and *enjoy being*—are equated, on an inner level, points to the inseparability of virtue and the full actuality of human nature in Aristotle. Stern-Gillet provides a sustained argument for

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[74] 1170a20-25: τὸ δὲ ζῆν τῶν καθ᾽ αὑτὸ ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἡδέων· ὡρισμένον γάρ, τὸ δ᾽ ὡρισμένον τῆς τἀγαθοῦ φύσεως· τὸ δὲ τῇ φύσει ἀγαθὸν καὶ τῷ ἐπιεικεῖ· διόπερ ἔοικε πᾶσιν ἡδὺ εἶναι· οὐ δεῖ δὲ λαμβάνειν μοχθηρὰν ζωὴν καὶ διεφθαρμένην, οὐδ᾽ ἐν λύπαις· ἀόριστος γὰρ ἡ τοιαύτη, καθάπερ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῇ.

[75] Cf. *Metaphysics*, 1035b34-1036a12.

[76] Pakaluk, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 210-211.

[77] Ibid.

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this idea. She writes: "[i]n Aristotle's scheme of things the notion of 'self' appears to be an achievement word, since it denotes a state of equilibrium between the various parts of the soul and constitutes an ideal towards which we should strive but which we may not reach. According to such a conception akratic and vicious people are not 'selves' . . . ."[78] On this account, the 'self' is not something that everyone possesses by default but is what Stern-Gillet refers to as an "explicitly normative" concept which differs from the ". . . modern, purely descriptive conceptions of selfhood."[79] This is in line with Aristotle's teleological view of nature—happiness is the *telos* of a human being, which must be achieved through virtue in relation to oneself and others. The view that the self is an "achievement" requires some qualification, however, for the implication of the claim is that one does not have a self at all until one has attained perfect virtue. This is why the language of the self as *process* is more fitting. Selfhood is defined by a certain type of cognition of external objects, through which we recognize "that we are (ὅτι ἐσμέν)."[80] This activity of perceiving and existing is further enhanced by co-perception with others. This process does admit of different degrees of perfection, all the way from the morally degraded up to perfect moral virtue. Since, on the objective-participant view the self is defined by its humanity, as opposed to being an animal or a divinity, the morally virtuous man is for Aristotle *more fully* human and thus more fully a *self*; this is the sense in which the self is an "achievement," although the process of being, regardless of its being perfect would seem to Aristotle to qualify also as a 'self.' The sense of self and existence as a process is in accord with Aryeh Kosman's insight that being (*ousia*) is essentially an activity. He writes,

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[78] Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 29.
[79] Ibid.
[80] *NE*, 1170a34.

". . . substance is *the activity of those things that are able to be fully what they are, being what they are . . .* substance is the activity of things' being what they are."[81] This is in contrast to ". . . misleading depictions of Aristotle's ontology of substances as an ontology of *things*, of inert and static entities."[82] This "misleading depiction" is what occurs when the modern sense of the self (something you "have" like a heart or a liver, as Taylor says[83]) is read into Aristotle's *Ethics*. The reason the self is relational is because it is never inert— it is by nature an *energeia*, an activity of interaction that is richly and inextricably interwoven with the activities of other beings.

The *entelecheia* of this activity of being manifests as proper self-love, since the well-ordered *psychē* is naturally in harmony with itself. However, because of the inherent relationality of the human substance, this virtue of the self is not prior *in time* to virtuous external friendship, but contemporaneous. As Stern-Gillet argues: ". . . primary friendship provides the virtuous with both moral and cognitive actualization."[84] This claim is supported by Aristotle's statement at *NE* IX.9 that "according to Theognis [friendship] can become a kind of exercise in virtue through living together with good men"[85] and his statement at *NE* VIII.8 that virtuous friends "neither demand morally degraded deeds of one another nor perform such things, but even restrain one another, so to speak; for it is the characteristic of good men neither to make mistakes themselves nor to allow their friends to do so."[86] If one needed to be perfectly actualized oneself *before* engaging in virtue-

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[81] Kosman, *The Activity of Being*, 239.
[82] Ibid.
[83] See note 2, above.
[84] Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, 45.
[85] 1170a12-13: γίνοιτο δ᾽ ἂν καὶ ἄσκησίς τις τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐκ τοῦ συζῆν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, καθάπερ καὶ Θέογνίς φησιν.
[86] 1159b5-7: οὔτε δέονται φαύλων οὔθ᾽ ὑπηρετοῦσι τοιαῦτα, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς εἰπεῖν καὶ διακωλύουσιν: τῶν ἀγαθῶν γὰρ μήτ᾽ αὐτοὺς ἁμαρτάνειν μήτε τοῖς φίλοις ἐπιτρέπειν.

friendship it would be senseless to say that friendship could be an "exercise" in virtue or that it would involve mutual restraint from non-virtuous actions. Thus, while the full actualization of the self requires virtue, this can only be developed through the self, although not perfected, engaging in relations with others.

Aristotle's account of the good life is a holistic one. As Charles Taylor's analysis of "identity and the good" in *Sources of the Self* explains, the main distinction between much modern moral philosophy and Aristotle's ethical view is that the former is concerned with "obligatory action," wheareas the latter is concerned with "the *whole* good life, i.e. all the goods together in their proper proportion."[87] The view that ethics is purely about obligatory action, rather than about *being* properly by means of virtuous actions, provides an obstacle to understanding Aristotle, since it is entirely dependent on a *subjective-individualist model* of the self. On this model, *what* one does is crucial: since the self is not related to one's humanity one must constantly struggle to *create* goodness through overcoming "egoism" and engaging in "altruism," rather than simply *being* oneself according to one's nature, a process which is already fundamentally good. In this way Aristotle sees human nature, as a part of nature in general, as good.[88] He is not, however, unaware of the human being's capacity for wrong-doing. He writes at *Politics* I.1: "by nature there is an impulse in all people toward such a community [viz. the *polis]* . . . . [for] just as man is the best of animals when perfected, so too is he the worst of all when separated from custom and justice. For injustice is most harsh when armed; and man has weapons for prudence and justice, which also admit most of being used to oppose these.

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[87] Charles Taylor; *Sources of the Self*; 66, 75ff.
[88] The fundamental goodness of nature with regard to the unmoved mover is a theme taken up in Chapter 5.

Therefore man is most impious and savage apart from virtue."[89] This passage shows how Aristotle is not naive about the possibility of human savagery apart from virtue. And yet he also sees that it is man's nature to develop virtue through the natural impulse to create political community.[90] Furthermore, in the *NE* Aristotle writes "by nature life is good, and it is pleasant to perceive the good existing inherently in oneself."[91] This goodness, this thesis argues, is accessed through the process of engaging in proper virtuous activity through the richness of human relationality. As Lorraine Smith Pangle argues, even though contemplation is the highest form of virtuous activity for Aristotle, there is no indication at all that this activity is solitary. She writes that ". . . friendship and the longing for it may be, in the very best lives, most important as a bridge to philosophy, giving fire to one's desire to understand virtue . . . and giving inspiration and help and companionship along the way, but less critical and hence less fervent, though still delightful, on the other side of the divide."[92] The self-sufficiency achieved by the virtuous friends does not negate their relationship, but changes it to become simultaneously less "necessary," but more delightful, since they are no longer working towards a goal, but their relationship is now an end in itself. This relationship is based first and foremost, however, on a proper sense of *philautia*, for self-love is the expression of a properly ordered *psychē*, which is self-consistent in its pleasures and pains and thus provides the experience for the moral agent of being at home in its own being. This virtuous *philautia* is both a necessary condition for virtuous friendships and *dependent* on those same friendships for its own development—

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[89] 1253a: φύσει μὲν οὖν ἡ ὁρμὴ ἐν πᾶσιν ἐπὶ τὴν τοιαύτην κοινωνίαν: ὥσπερ γὰρ καὶ τελεωθὲν βέλτιστον τῶν ζῴων ὁ ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν, οὕτω καὶ χωρισθεὶς νόμου καὶ δίκης χείριστον πάντων. χαλεπωτάτη γὰρ ἀδικία ἔχουσα ὅπλα: ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος ὅπλα ἔχων φύεται φρονήσει καὶ [35] ἀρετῇ, οἷς ἐπὶ τἀναντία ἔστι χρῆσθαι μάλιστα. διὸ ἀνοσιώτατον καὶ ἀγριώτατον ἄνευ ἀρετῆς.
[90] For how this view compares to a modern view of the "evil" of the human will see Chapter 3, note 90.
[91] *NE*, IX.9 1170b1-2: φύσει γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ζωή, τὸ δ᾽ ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἡδύ.
[92] Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, 199-200.

prior in the logical sense, but not in time. This circular relationship of virtuous self-love and virtuous friendships is expressed, for the purpose of this thesis, by the term *interdependence*. Furthermore, since this sense of self-hood as a kind of proper activity is based on Aristotle's conception of human nature, it is both pleasant and good.

Chapter 3: Plato and Aristotle—Differing Forms of the Self

Now that an understanding of the circular relationship of self and other in the context of Aristotle's discussion of friendship has been established, it will be helpful to situate Aristotle's view of the self more broadly in his contemporary context in order to determine which parts of his view are particular to his own thought and which are not. Most importantly, it will be important to understand the influence of the views of his teacher, Plato, on his own, as well as the ways in which he departs from these in his understanding of the self.[1] What seems first and foremost relevant to a discussion of Aristotle's philosophy in general is that he was a biologist, for this is intimately tied to his methodological commitment to "saving the phenomena" (NE 1145b2-7, 1179a17-22). "Saving the phenomena" is, at least apparently, the view that philosophy should make what is already apparent to us make sense and not require the complete over-turning of one's basic intuitions.[2] This is apparently in direct conflict with Plato's description of the world of appearance as mere shadows in the cave and preference for a true reality in the realm of the eternal forms which stand outside phenomena as their cause. This is made explicit in Aristotle's rejection of Plato's expression of the doctrine of the forms in the history of philosophy in the *Metaphysics*, as well as his critique of Plato's *Republic* in Book II of the *Politics*. What this means in terms of the conception of the self in the two

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[1] Although the question of friendship taken up in Chapter 2 is also considered at length by Plato, this Chapter will leave the topic aside and dwell on more general points of comparison between the two philosophers in order to treat of their respective understanding of self-hood more broadly. For Aristotle's response to Plato's treatment of friendship see, e.g. Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, Chapters 1 and 2.

[2] The qualifier "at least apparently" is necessary here, as the nature of Aristotle's commitment to "saving the phenomena" is a complex matter and has a very different meaning in his ethical and metaphysical works respectively.

philosophers will be important to untangle, especially as they both fall within Gill's *objective-participant* model of self-hood. In many ways, Plato appears to fall outside Gill's framework of ancient Greek self-hood because of his focus on the fate of the individual soul. However, by examining the details of Plato's view of the soul, re-birth, and the traditions of mysticism with which he was engaging, it will be shown how his conception of self-hood does differ from that of Aristotle, but also that for Plato embodied political relations, including friendship, are nonetheless vital for attaining virtue and happiness. What differs is that these relations are seen as ultimately instrumental—as existing for sake of purifying the body for the sake of the transmigrating *psychē* —whereas in Aristotle the connection between *psychē* and body is more intimate. Thus this chapter will begin by characterizing how Aristotle's view of reality, of being, differs from that of Plato's, especially the mythical, allegorical, and mystical aspects of Plato's works. The relevance of Plato's conception of the soul as immortal, especially as portrayed in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* will be explored with a view to how it differs from the enmattered account of the soul found in the works of Aristotle. This distinction will lead to a discussion of the relevance of Aristotle's theory of substance to an understanding of Aristotle's critique of Plato's *Republic* in *Politics* II. It will be shown that Plato's view of the self, while still intimately tied up with notions of relationality and 'being human,' nevertheless differs from Aristotle in accord with his world-view. And yet, where both philosophers vitally agree is in their shared understanding of ontological "goodness" and the importance of society, which differs from a modern, especially Neo-Kantian, outlook.

Aristotle's basic philosophical method is one of justifying common opinion through philosophy in human affairs and observation in scientific matters. This method is commonly referred to as "saving the phenomena." A description of this method is offered by Aristotle at the beginnig of *NE* VII: "it is necessary, just as in other cases, to lay out how things appear (τιθέντας τὰ φαινόμενα) and, first having drawn out the difficulties (διαπορήσαντας), to show all of the common opinions (τὰ ἔνδοξα) . . . or if not all, at least the majority and the most reputable. For if the difficulties are resolved and the opinions remain, it will be a sufficient proof."[3] In a similar passage in the *EE* he remarks: "it must be attempted to seek what is trustworthy in these matters [viz. ethical inquiries] through the things said about them, using appearances (τοῖς φαινομένοις) as witnesses and paradigms."[4] Here we see Aristotle's remarkable commitment to "common opinion" and appearances as a standard against which valid knowledge must be measured. This ostensibly stems from his status as a philosopher who is "at heart, a philosophical biologist,"[5] for his extensive work in biology is based on the method of observation of the phenomenal world. This commitment to observation is in line with Aristotle's theory of cognition, wherein perception is not "subjective," but completely dependent on external objects, which are capable of being adequately perceived as they really are. This does not, however, mean that Aristotle's method was purely that of an "empiricist" in the modern sense. As G.E.L. Owen discusses, much of Aristotle's use of the word *phainomena* refers variously to both sense data and *endoxa,* or common opinions, which

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[3] 1145b2-7: δεῖ δ᾽, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, τιθέντας τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ πρῶτον διαπορήσαντας οὕτω δεικνύναι μάλιστα μὲν πάντα τὰ ἔνδοξα . . . , εἰ δὲ μή, τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ κυριώτατα: ἐὰν γὰρ λύηταί τε τὰ δυσχερῆ καὶ καταλείπηται τὰ ἔνδοξα, δεδειγμένον ἂν εἴη ἱκανῶς.
[4] 1216b26-28: πειρατέον δὲ περὶ πάντων τούτων ζητεῖν τὴν πίστιν διὰ τῶν λόγων, μαρτυρίοις καὶ παραδείγμασι χρώμενον τοῖς φαινομένοις.
[5] Diamond, *Mortal Imitations*, preface, ix.

can include opinions about logical problems which are not directly rooted in matters of empirical observation.[6] As is the case in the majority of the *Physics,* for example, "[t]he *phainomena . . .* are the familiar data of dialectic," a large number of which seem to be drawn from the hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides*.[7] Thus, while Aristotle does indeed wish to save common perception, which includes the category of common opinion, he does not proceed using sense data alone and has no qualms about engaging in purely logical and abstract reasoning. In fact, as will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, the highest form of thinking for Aristotle pertains directly to substances which *cannot* be the object of empirical observation, as they are not perceptible by the senses. As he writes at *Metaphysics* XII.10: "if there were nothing else besides sensible things, there would be no first principle or order, or creation or heavenly bodies, but each principle would be based on another . . . ."[8] Aristotle's entire philosophical system in this way cannot be reduced to the merely sensible.

And yet, Aristotle's philosophy does in many ways both begin and end with sensible appearances. Owen himself concedes that for Aristotle, ". . . an ἔνδοξον that is shared by all men is *ipso facto* beyond challenge," with reference to the following quotation from *NE* X.2, in which the question of whether all beings seek the good is discussed: "what seems to be the case (δοκεῖ) to all men, we affirm to be so. He who would deny this proof will hardly provide one more credible (πιστότερα)."[9] As David Roochnik, quoting, in part, Justin Broackes, explains: "[i]ndeed, Aristotle is best

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[6] Owen, "TITHENAI TA PHAINOMENA," 174.

[7] Ibid, 176. The whole second part of the article, 177-190, takes up the issue of the correspondences between the *Physics* and the *Parmenides*.

[8] 1075b24-26: εἴ τε μὴ ἔσται παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητὰ ἄλλα, οὐκ ἔσται ἀρχὴ καὶ τάξις καὶ γένεσις καὶ τὰ οὐράνια, ἀλλ᾽ ἀεὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀρχή.

[9] 1172b36-1173a2: ἃ γὰρ πᾶσι δοκεῖ, ταῦτ᾽ εἶναί φαμεν: ὁ δ᾽ ἀναιρῶν ταύτην τὴν πίστιν οὐ πάνυ πιστότερα ἐρεῖ.

characterized as a 'realist' who has 'extraordinary confidence' in the adequacy of the human cognitive capacity to 'tell us, fairly directly, about the most important causes in the world.'"[10] Jack Davidson supports the reading of Aristotle as a "realist" as well, due to his denial of "epistemic relativity."[11] While this description seems adequate, the use of the term "realism" is problematic in a similar way that the language of egoism and altruism is problematic—it is dependent on a modern understanding of subjectivity which was not present for Aristotle. In the realm of modern philosophical terminology, "realism" involves the twin contentions that objects exist, and that they exist *independently* of human cognition.[12] For Aristotle, the first claim appears to be true, whereas the last claim is not really intelligible in the context of Aristotle's philosophical framework. In contrast to Cartesian skepticism, Aristotle "faces no mind-body problem . . . and it does not occur to him to worry about the existence of an external world."[13] Aristotle's understanding of the world is always from a "human" standpoint and for him this standpoint is legitimate. The question of an abstract or "third-party" perspective, implicit in a modern defintion of the term realism, is not relevant to Aristotle's inquiry. For this reason it will be helpful to qualify the term "realism" with the adjective "phenomenological" in this Chapter to describe Aristotle's perspective according to which apparent objects are real, but never completely independent.

Notably, both of Aristotle's own descriptions of his phenomenological realism quoted above occur in the context of a critique of Socrates' account of moral virtue as knowledge. This occurs specifically in the discussion of *akrasia* in *NE* VII, when

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[10] Roochnik, *Retrieving Aristotle*, 11; Broackes, "Aristotle, Objectivity, and Perception," 75.
[11] Davidson, "Appearances, Antirealism, and Aristotle," 153.
[12] Miller, "Realism."
[13] Roochnik, *Retrieving Aristotle*, 12.

Aristotle is trying to determine how someone can be unable to control their impulses, despite knowing that what they are doing is wrong. He writes: "Socrates used to fight against this account altogether, as if there were no such thing as *akrasia*; for no one knowingly acts contrarily to what is best, but only through ignorance. This argument obviously contradicts appearances . . . ."[14] This argument is familiar from Plato's *Protagoras*, in which the character of Socrates articulates the view that ". . . no one knowing, or even supposing, that there is something better and possible to do than what he is doing, continues to do what he is doing, although it is available to him to do what is better: and there is no 'being overcome by oneself' other than ignorance, and no 'mastery of oneself' other than wisdom."[15] Here Aristotle is making a break from this Socratic stance, as received through Plato, on the grounds that it conflicts with "appearances." For, despite the compelling logic of the Platonic argument in the *Protagoras*, Aristotle relies on his observation of people's actual behaviour (*NE* 1145b30-31).[16] This one example is representative of a crucial difference between the Aristotelian and Platonic method. Looking back to the poem of Parmenides and seeing Plato as the inheritor of this tradition, Martha Nussbaum describes how Plato, like Parmenides, finds that the "*paradeigmata* . . . for understanding the most important subjects . . . are not to be found in the world of human belief and perception at all."[17] In this way Aristotle is making a

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[14] *NE* 1145b25-28: Σωκράτης μὲν γὰρ ὅλως ἐμάχετο πρὸς τὸν λόγον ὡς οὐκ οὔσης ἀκρασίας· οὐθένα γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνοντα πράττειν παρὰ τὸ βέλτιστον, ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἄγνοιαν. οὗτος μὲν οὖν ὁ λόγος ἀμφισβητεῖ τοῖς φαινομένοις ἐναργῶς.

[15] *Protagoras*, 358b-c: οὐδεὶς οὔτε εἰδὼς οὔτε οἰόμενος ἄλλα βελτίω εἶναι ἢ ἃ ποιεῖ, καὶ δυνατά, ἔπειτα ποιεῖ ταῦτα, ἐξὸν τὰ βελτίω· οὐδὲ τὸ ἥττω εἶναι αὐτοῦ ἄλλο τι τοῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἢ ἀμαθία, οὐδὲ κρείττω ἑαυτοῦ ἄλλο τι ἢ σοφία.

[16] Whether Aristotle is referring here to observed behaviour or whether to problems of language is somewhat ambiguous, as Owen, "TITHENAI TA PHAiNOMENA," 170-171, points out. In either case, however, the point of contrast with Plato stands, as Aristotle wishes to "save" either observed appearance or common linguistic usage in a way Plato does not seem concerned with.

[17] Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 242.

certain shift away from tradition, for although his first principles lie beyond the senses, he remains loyal to appearances as both the necessary beginning point of enquiry and as the *explanandum* to which that enquiry is ultimately accountable: "Aristotle declares that his aim, in science and metaphysics as well as in ethics, is to save the appearances and their truth . . . . Viewed against the background of Eleatic and Platonic philosophizing, these remarks have . . . a defiant look."[18]

Here it will be necessary to turn back to Plato to understand further the point from which Aristotle is breaking off, before clarifying the implications for the structure of the self in each model. This will serve to show how the view of the self in Plato and Aristotle can differ, while at the same time having both met the criteria of the *objective-participant* model. It is important that Nussbaum mentions Parmenides in her discussion of Plato's theory. In order to understand the self in Plato it is important to understand the traditions and cultural contexts within which he was operating. As will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, on Aristotle's model the basis for any rational discourse is always pre-rational cultural understanding, and that method is indeed helpful in understanding Plato. Anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere takes this issue of understanding Plato's cultural context head-on, writing:

> [a]lthough European thinkers see the Greeks as their intellectual forebears, the Greeks themselves looked toward the East for the sources of true wisdom—to Egypt, Persia, and during the early centuries of the common era, India. Thus, tradition has it that the early Greek thinkers traveled East in their quest for knowledge. Pythagoras, for example, is said to have wandered into Egypt and later to have sat at the feet of Zoroaster.[19]

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Obeyesekere, *Re-imaging Karma*, preface, xvii.

This is a very important point for understanding Plato's cultural context and his fundamental place as a philosopher of indigenous Greek and ancient mediterranean religion. Since this point is frequently overlooked, a vast portion of Plato's work is often ignored or neglected, due, ironically, to his tremendous significance for the later European tradition. As Obeyesekere puts it: "Plato's thinking must be seen in terms not of a then-non-existent European tradition but of existing thinkers in the then-known philosophical world, not just in the Greek world but the known contemporary world of which he was a part."[20] This veneration which Plato had for other cultures and sense of the cultural debt owed to those other cultures can be seen very clearly in the story of Solon which is prominently placed at the beginning of the *Timaeus*. Critias describes to Socrates how Solon spoke to an Egyptian priest and was told of how relatively immature the understanding of the Greeks was, for they are all ". . . young in soul . . ." and have no "old opinion in [their] souls from ancient tradition nor learning made hoary by time."[21] This Platonic claim is consistent with a broader Greek attitude toward Egypt as a source of ancient wisdom and learning familiar from e.g. the second book of Herodotus' *Histories* and Aristotle's own attribution of theoretical philosophy to Egypt in *Metaphysics* I.1.[22] Obeyesekere also mentions Pythagoras' journey to the East and his encountering of the mystical monotheism of Zoroaster and, indeed, Plato's works are filled with references to Pythagoreanism. For example, at *Republic* X, 600b, Plato explicitly mentions Pythagoras as a teacher who had established a particular way of life

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[20] Ibid, *xviii*.
[21] *Timaeus*, 22b: 'νέοι ἐστέ,' εἰπεῖν, 'τὰς ψυχὰς πάντες: οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἐν αὐταῖς ἔχετε δι᾽ ἀρχαίαν ἀκοὴν παλαιὰν δόξαν οὐδὲ μάθημα χρόνῳ πολιὸν οὐδέν.
[22] 981b 24-25.

and "was exceptionally admired on that account."[23] The Pythagorean connection is to be found as well in the *Phaedo*, especially in the myth presented in that dialogue, for it is this connection which accounts largely for the centrality of re-birth and the immortality of the soul in Plato's works, as well as his focus on mathematics.[24] Plato even spent time at the school of Archytas the Pythagorean at Tarentum when he was in Sicily.[25] Aristotle himself makes this connection in *Metaphysics* I when he describes how "the subject matter of Plato's philosophy followed after the above-mentioned [viz. Pythagorean] philosophies, in many ways following their doctrines and in others drawing its particularities from the philosophy of the Italians."[26] Plato is working within a sophisticated and ancient tradition of philosophy and mythology that is not specifically Greek and especially not specifically Platonic, but stretches back through time and across geographical boundaries. It is therefore important to examine what aspects of his philosophy Plato did in fact owe to his predecessors and how those traditions affected his understanding of humanity.

A key feature of the Pythagorean school, as well as of the Eleatic school to which Parmenides belonged, was those schools' reliance on initiation and "reserved" doctrines. In J.B. Kenney's study, *The Musical Structure of Plato's Dialogue*, it is argued that

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[23] *Republic*, 600b: ὥσπερ Πυθαγόρας αὐτός τε διαφερόντως ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἠγαπήθη; Philip Sydney Horky, *Plato and Pythagoreanism*, 99, notes this passage in a discussion of Platonic connections with Pythagoreanism.

[24] Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 107ff., goes into great detail on how Pythagoreanism and other ancient sources are the basis for the myth in the *Phaedo*. Horky, *Plato and Pythagoreanism*, *passim*, discusses Plato's debt to Pythagoreanism for his mathematical concepts. Obeyesekere, *Re-imagining Karma*, 200, discusses the possibility of transmission of re-birth *and* mathematical doctrines from India to Pythagoras to Plato.

[25] Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 94-95. For the meeting with Archytas, Kingsley cites Wilamovitz, *Platon*, 246-252.

[26] 987a29-31: μετὰ δὲ τὰς εἰρημένας φιλοσοφίας ἡ Πλάτωνος ἐπεγένετο πραγματεία, τὰ μὲν πολλὰ τούτοις ἀκολουθοῦσα, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἴδια παρὰ τὴν τῶν Ἰταλικῶν ἔχουσα φιλοσοφίαν. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 111, mentions this passage.

"Plato concealed a primarily Pythagorean doctrine within the dialogues" through a sophisticated use of symbols and allegory, with the implication that Plato was privy to the inner circle of secret Pythagorean teachings.[27] This is important for understanding Plato's methodology, due to its stark contrast to that of Aristotle. Much of Plato's work appears to be commenting on experiential wisdom traditions which involved initiation, or a kind of special knowledge. This appears quite anathema to Aristotle's approach, which does ultimately lead to a specialized knowledge but starts from more ready-to-hand logical and experiential premises. One need only look to the elaborate myths of the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic* and elsewhere to see this approach. It is a point of contention whether Plato was true to the traditions from which he drew, as it were, or began a process of reducing and 'rationalizing' these traditions in a way that was more similar to what Aristotle later does than to his sources. Kingsley in particular sees *both* Plato and Aristotle as operating in a way that diverges significantly from the mystically-informed traditions that preceded them. However, this is still in such a way that Aristotle stands in a position much farther removed from those traditions than does Plato.[28] Despite the tremendous debt which Aristotle's philosophy owes to Plato and the many aspects of Aristotle's work which are continuous with the work of Plato, the relationship to Eastern mystical and mythical teachings does not seem to be one of them.

A look at the myth in Plato's *Phaedo* and Aristotle's critique of that myth provides a notable case study of Aristotle's relationship to Plato's work. Similar to the myth of Er in the *Republic,* Plato ends the *Phaedo* with a myth about the necessity of virtue for souls going to the underworld and the purification and suffering they must

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[27] Kenney, *Musical Structure*, 9ff.
[28] Ibid, 158.

endure if they do not possess virtue. Other than demonstrating Plato's interest in and indebtness to traditions with doctrines of re-birth, this myth also provides a fascinating geographical account of the Earth. He describes how human beings believe they dwell on the surface of the Earth when they actually live down inside of a hollow in the Earth.[29] Despite scholarly agreement that Plato "invented" this myth, the account of the 'true Earth' found in the *Phaedo* is almost entirely Pythagorean.[30] In particular, Plato's description of the two rivers in the myth, the Cocytus and the Pyriphlegethon, help draw this Pythagorean connection. Kingsley describes how the etymology of Cocytus—the color *kyanos*—combined with the Sicilian geography and the context of a re-birth eschatology connect the geographical description in the myth to the Sicilian mysteries of Persephone and Demeter at the *Kyane* spring in Syracuse, which had an extremely close connection with early Pythagoreanism.[31] This connection is strengthened by Plato's reference to the Cocytus sinking underground and flowing into the "Styx" and then meeting the Pyriphlegthon on the other side of the Acherousian Lake.[32] The Acherousiam Lake and Lake Avernus (associated mythologically with the Styx) are three hundred miles north of Syracuse, both near Cumae. Kingsley asks, "[h]as Plato—or rather the Pythagorean source for the myth—produced some kind of arbitrary synthesis by conflating two entirely separate traditions associated with two completely different geographical regions?"[33] The answer is obviously negative. Kingsley points out that there were strong connections between the cults of Persephone at Syracuse and Cumae.[34] A

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[29] *Phaedo*, 109ff.
[30] Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 88.
[31] Ibid, 96-98.
[32] *Phaedo*, 113b-c.
[33] Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 99.
[34] Ibid.

further piece of evidence for this link is the case of the Pyriphlegethon. The Pyriphlegethon is very important for the eschatology of the myth for it is there where souls are punished for having commited violence through anger (patricide and matricide in particular).[35] This connection between anger and the river of fire is ". . . assumed nowadays to be a uniquely Neo-Platonic creation," however it is clear that this goes back to Plato himself, and, due to the fact that this detail is not emphasized, but merely mentioned by Plato, very much seems to belong to a pre-Platonic tradition.[36] Kingsley provides a great deal more detail in his work than what has been summarized here, but suffice it to say that the myth in the *Phaedo* is far from a flight of Plato's own imagination and is rather a re-capitulation of a fully developed piece of ethical and eschatological mythology from the Sicilian and Pythagorean tradition.

Given the profound spiritual and cultural significance of the *Phaedo* myth, it is remarkable to see how Aristotle treats of it in his comments in the *Meteorologica.* He writes that "what is written in the *Phaedo* about the rivers and the sea is impossible,"[37] as if Plato's account were meant as a presentation of straight-forward geographical fact. He objects to the idea that the original source of all waters is the underground lake, Tartarus, for three main reasons: the impossibility of rivers flowing uphill (implied in the text of the myth), the fact that rivers do not permanently disappear underground, and the fact that rivers manifestly end (φαίνονται τελευτῶντες) in the sea.[38] It is strange to read such an apparently superficial interpretation and objection to the geography in the *Phaedo*—an

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[35] *Phaedo*, 114aff.
[36] Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 102.
[37] 355b34-35: Τὸ δ' ἐν τῷ Φαίδωνι γεγραμμένον περί τε τῶν ποταμῶν καὶ τῆς θαλάττης ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν.
[38] The entire commentary on the *Phaedo* is from 355b34-356a34. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 106, note 27, also mentions this locus in Aristotle.

objection which completely ignores the unmistakably allegorical character of the myth.[39]

This raises a number of serious questions about the nature of the relationship between

Aristotle and Plato, for it seems that Aristotle rejected the commitment to allegory found

in the works of Plato. As J.B. Kenney remarks, Aristotle "contemptuously mocks

[Pythagorean] scientific theories (e.g. at *Metaph*. 989b29ff.) and generally treats their

lore as mere myth." He concludes that "[t]here is no indication in Aristotle's writings that

he was especially sympathetic to Pythagoreanism or an initiate," further acknowledging

that "[a]lthough Aristotle expresses admiration for Plato, there is little or no evidence in

his treatises of any close relationship with Plato (who was some forty years older)."[40]

Ingemar Düring also comments on this matter with regard to Aristotle's interpretation of

the Platonic theory of the Forms and the way in which his critique seems to distort Plato's

original intention in putting forth the doctrine: "perhaps Aristotle's false (*unrichtig)*

representation of the doctrine of the Forms stems from the fact that the young Aristotle

viewed the whole question as primarily an epistemological and logico-theoretical

problem and, due to his bias toward this mode of thinking, misinterpreted the doctrine's

ontological aspect."[41] Dennis House argues along slightly different lines, suggesting that

Aristotle's interpretation of Plato's doctrine was not "false," but rather a deeply *Platonic*

"revision" of Plato's forms, which made corrections to ". . . the problem inherent in

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[39] Although it by no means fully makes up for the unusual character of Aristotle's meteorological criticism of the *Phaedo* myth, it may in part be related to Aristotle's division of the sciences, i.e. in the *Meteorologica* he only comments on the geographical character of the myth because a commentary on allegory would fall outside of the scope of a treatise on physical science.

[40] *Musical Structure*, 49. This claim is potentially problematic, as it is difficult to say either way what the personal relationship of Plato to Aristotle was. At *NE*, I.6 1096a13, Aristotle does refer to those who introduced the concept of the forms as "men [who are] friends (φίλους ἄνδρας)."

[41] Düring, *Aristoteles*, 234: *Möglicherweise hat die unrichtige Darstellung der Ideenlehre ihren Grund darin, daß der junge Aristoteles die ganze Frage überwiegend als erkenntnis-theoretisch-logisches Problem betrachtete und in dieser Denkweise so befange war, daß er ihren ontologischen Aspeckt verkannte.*

[Plato's] original formulation."[42] This problem, on House's view, had to do exactly with

Plato's position as the inheritor of a number of different traditions—the issue of ". . .

drawing a Socratic and revised Eleatic orientation together into one consistent view."[43]

Thus Plato set up a problem which Aristotle solved on Platonic terms, in this way not

misrepresenting Plato at all, as Düring suggests, but making, in good faith, the logical

adjustments to Plato's theory which the theory itself demanded. While the details of this

complex matter of interpretation are beyond the scope of this thesis, it is notable that

House's view is very much in line with Kingsley's view, albeit cast in a very different

light. For both commentators, Aristotle represents the continuation of the tradition which

Plato started—taking Eleatic (and Pythagorean) philosophy and forming it into a rational

system.

The fact that Aristotle was a step further away from Plato's source traditions does,

however, cause there to be a difference in their relationship to the world of nature and

becoming. Düring comments later in the same discussion as above, that "Aristotle's

theory is actually not a theory of being. He accepted straightforwardly the apparently

existent as existent."[44] Although the former statement is not true ("Aristotle's theory is

not a theory of being"), the latter ("he accepted . . . the apparently existent as existent") is

surely the case. This is a major difference between Aristotle and Plato, even if the

difference is the result of a fundamentally Platonic revision of Platonism on Aristotle's

part. In support of this view of Aristotle's theory Düring mentions the following

comments by Aristotle at *Physics* II.1: "it is laughable to attempt to demonstrate that

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[42] House, "Did Aristotle Understand Plato," 15.
[43] Ibid, 16.
[44] Ibid: *Die Theorie Aristoteles ist eigentlich keine Theorie des Seins. Er akzeptierte geradewegs das handgreiflich Seiende als seiend.*

nature *is*; for it is obvious that there are many beings of this kind. And to show what is

apparent by means of what is not apparent is the mark of a person who is not able to

judge between what is and is not self-evident."[45] This returns to Aristotle's attempt to

"save the phenomena." Since form and matter have been successfully synthesized (as will

be discussed further below), such that a "third man" is not required to reconcile form and

matter[46], Aristotle's theory of being has been "flattened" in such a way that it is no longer

relevant to wonder whether something that appears *is*. This "flattening" is in contrast to

the vertical orientation of Plato's line and, as mentioned above, to the Eleatic aspects of

Plato's theory which manifest in the ". . . central focus of Plato's thought in the later

dialogues [on] defin[ing] the region between the poles of pure Becoming and the

standpoint of the One itself."[47] Aristotle's philosophy of the first principle is in direct

contrast to this, for, as opposed to the Neoplatonists, "Aristotle never attempts to explain

how or why the first principle produces what is other than it, but rather assumes the

existence of the world and all its distinctions and simply tries to account for how it is

governed by this principle."[48] Thus Aristotle's philosophy never sets before itself to

prove the existence of phenomena, but simply rests on the basic assumption that

phenomena actually are as they appear. Compared to the point of view of the mystical

tradition of Pythagoreanism and to the Pythagorean and Eleatic aspects of the philosophy

of Plato with its emphasis on the vast difference between the realm of becoming and of

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[45] 193a2-6: ὡς δ᾽ ἔστιν ἡ φύσις, πειρᾶσθαι δεικνύναι γελοῖον· φανερὸν γὰρ ὅτι τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶ πολλά. τὸ δὲ δεικνύναι τὰ φανερὰ διὰ τῶν ἀφανῶν οὐ δυναμένου κρίνειν ἐστὶ τὸ δι᾽ αὑτὸ καὶ μὴ δι᾽ αὑτὸ γνώριμον.
[46] For Aristotle's comments on this see, e.g. *Metaphysics*, I.IX 16-23.
[47] House, "Did Aristotle Understand Plato," 17.
[48] Diamond, *Mortal Imitations*, 23.

true being, Aristotle's approach represents a more unified understanding of appearance

and reality. Aristotle has abolished the radical distinction between Sun and Cave.[49]

To turn to the *Politics*, the same apparent rejection of allegory seems also present

in Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *Republic* in Book II of the treatise. In Robert Mayhew's

detailed study on the subject, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Republic*, he begins by

discussing how Aristotle's thought on the matter has been neglected due to Aristotle's

". . . reputation as an unfair judge of Plato."[50] He lists a number of criticisms to the effect

that Aristotle falls short in understanding Plato's arguments within the *Republic* as they

relate to Plato's broader ontological project and theory of the Forms, and that, as such, his

criticism is somewhat clumsy.[51] Some critics, as Mayhew points out, also mention what

are apparent problems with Aristotle's characterization of details of the *Republic*, such as

Aristotle's ". . . assumption that Plato's communism applies in some form to all citizens,

not simply to the ruling class,"[52] alongside his lack of reference to the allegorical import

of the work. In this way, Aristotle's criticism of the *Republic* is similar to his criticism of

the *Phaedo* myth. Although Mayhew himself disagrees somewhat with this assessment,

his study is not an apology for Aristotle's understanding of Plato's doctrine as such, but

fundamentally turns on the principle that an analysis of the relevant sections of the

Politics will ". . . aid in better understanding Aristotle's political thought more generally"

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[49] Notably, as Mor Segev discusses, *Aristotle on Religion*, 29, there is a general consensus that Aristotle did have his own allegory of the Cave and Sun which appeared in the treatise *De Philosophia* and is thus now lost in the original, but which is faithfully reproduced in the speech of Quintus Lucilius Balbus in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, II.37.95-96. This version of the allegory is quite different from that of Plato, however, and its details are very much in line with Aristotle's view that the opinions of those in the Cave are basically correct, although lacking the force of the corroboration offered by the more precise truth of philosophy.

[50] Mayhew, *Aristotle's Criticism*, 1-2.

[51] Mayhew, ibid, includes as examples of such criticism Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, 188; Susemihl and Hicks, *The Politics of Aristotle*, 21 and 32-33.

[52] Ibid, 7.

regardless of the accuracy of his treatment of the specific details in Plato. Following

Mayhew, it will be helpful to examine some of the arguments in this section of the

Politics, in order to better understand Aristotle's political philosophy, in particular, his

view of the unity of the *polis* and thus the character of the ideal form of political

relationality. The difference between Aristotle and Plato's view will be examined in light

of their differing conceptions of the relation between form and matter, as their divergent

ideas about what it means to *be* a human subject (as a composite of form and matter)

affect their views of what it means to *be together*.

Aristotle's critique of the unity of the *polis*, which Socrates advocates for in the

Republic, begins with a very distinctive argument. He writes:

> yet it is apparent that, proceeding to the point of becoming 'one,' the *polis* will
> cease to exist; for the the *polis* is by nature a multitude, and, if it becomes 'one,' it
> would be a household, rather than a *polis*, and from the household a single human,
> for we would say that the household is moreso 'one' than the *polis*, and one man
> moreso than the household. Such that, even if one were able to do such a thing, it
> ought not be done, for it will destroy the *polis*. And the city is not only made of
> many humans, but of many who differ in form. For a *polis* does not arise from
> identical people.[53]

In this argument we see Aristotle making a distinction between three types of unity—that

of the individual, the household, and the *polis*. The individual, which is to say the

substance, is the strongest unity while the household and then the *polis* represent

progressively weaker forms of unity compared to the substance of the individual. For

Aristotle, it is important that these three gradations of unity remain distinct in order for a

polis to remain intact and not be "destroyed" by being collapsed into the tight unity of

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[53] *Politics*, 1261a: καίτοι φανερόν ἐστιν ὡς προϊοῦσα καὶ γινομένη μία μᾶλλον οὐδὲ πόλις ἔσται: πλῆθος γάρ τι τὴν φύσιν ἐστὶν ἡ πόλις, γινομένη τε μία μᾶλλον οἰκία μὲν ἐκ πόλεως ἄνθρωπος δ᾽ ἐξ οἰκίας ἔσται: μᾶλλον γὰρ μίαν τὴν οἰκίαν τῆς πόλεως φαίημεν ἄν, καὶ τὸν ἕνα τῆς οἰκίας: ὥστ᾽ εἰ καὶ δυνατός τις εἴη τοῦτο δρᾶν, οὐ ποιητέον: ἀναιρήσει γὰρ τὴν πόλιν. οὐ μόνον δ᾽ ἐκ πλειόνων ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶν ἡ πόλις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ εἴδει διαφερόντων. οὐ γὰρ γίνεται πόλις ἐξ ὁμοίων.

substance. It is in this concept of gradations of unity that we see the effect of Aristotle's

theory of substance on the relations between form and matter on his political thought.

Robert Mayhew takes up the discussion of unity by referencing the two senses in which

something can be said to be "one" or a "unity" at *Metaphysics* V.6.[54] Aristotle writes,

"the majority of things are said to be 'one' because they do, or have, or suffer, or are in

relation to some other [common] thing, but those things which are said to be 'one' in the

primary sense are substances."[55] Aristotle here is making a similar distinction of

gradation of unity as in the *Politics*, describing substance as the "primary" sense in which

something is a unity. The reason for this can be seen in a passage from *Metaphysics*

VII.16: "it is apparent that the majority of those things which appear to be substances are

in fact potentialities, the parts of animals (for no part is able to exist as separate from the

whole; whenever it is separated it becomes [only] matter) as well as earth and fire and

air."[56] When a limb is separated from an animal it becomes mere matter and ceases to

have any life of its own—it is fully dependent on its connection to the whole of the

substance. This is what distinguishes the unity of a substance from the unity of the people

in a city—a person can conceivably exist apart from society, even though this is not the

ideal circumstance on Aristotle's model. Mayhew writes, "[t]hat one can live his life

most fully *in* the city does not mean that one must live a life wholly *for* the city. So

although it is true to say of the leg of a dog . . . that it exists solely for the sake of the dog

. . . it is not the case, according to Aristotle, that a human being exists solely for the sake

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[54] Mayhew, *Aristotle's Criticism*, 15.

[55] *Metaphysics*, 1016b6-9: τὰ μὲν οὖν πλεῖστα ἓν λέγεται τῷ ἕτερόν τι ἢ ποιεῖν ἢ ἔχειν ἢ πάσχειν ἢ πρός τι εἶναι ἕν, τὰ δὲ πρώτως λεγόμενα ἓν ὧν ἡ οὐσία μία. This section is quoted by Mayhew, ibid, as well.

[56] *Metaphysics*, 1040b5-9: φανερὸν δὲ ὅτι καὶ τῶν δοκουσῶν εἶναι οὐσιῶν αἱ πλεῖσται δυνάμεις εἰσί, τά τε μόρια τῶν ζῴων οὐθὲν γὰρ κεχωρισμένον αὐτῶν ἐστιν: ὅταν δὲ χωρισθῇ, καὶ τότε ὄντα ὡς ὕλη πάντα καὶ γῆ καὶ πῦρ καὶ ἀήρ.

of the city."[57] The function of the city is thus defined by the second sense of unity, rather than a substantial relation.

The question of whether a human being is more properly a substance than a *polis* is not so clear cut, however, as certain claims in the *Politics* would suggest that the *polis* too is a kind of substance. Mayhew's point about the unity of animal and limb being opposed to the unity of the *polis* is called into question by Aristotle's statement in the following passage of *Politics* I.2: "the *polis* is by nature prior to the household and to each of us (the individual). For it is necessary that the whole be prior to the part. If one removed the whole [in the case of a human] there would be no foot or hand, except equivocally like when one speaks of a stone hand."[58] Here Aristotle is using the analogy of the human substance to describe the nature of the unity of the *polis*, directly equating the citizen with the limb of an animal. He even suggests shortly after that a human being *qua* human being *cannot* exist apart from a city, with the famous claim that one would otherwise be a beast or a god.[59] Another example of this analogy is in *Politics* III.3 when Aristotle is discussing the diversity of functions required by the citizens in a state:

> moreover, since the *polis* is comprised of unlike individuals, just like an animal is made up firstly of *psychē* and body, and furthermore the *psychē* [is made up of] of *logos* and appetite, and the household of man and woman, and property holdings of master and slave, in the same way the *polis* is made up of all of these same different people, in addition to other classes of people who differ from these.[60]

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[57] Mayhew, *Aristotle's Criticism*, 20.

[58] 1253a20-22: τὸ γὰρ ὅλον πρότερον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ μέρους: ἀναιρουμένου γὰρ τοῦ ὅλου οὐκ ἔσται πούς οὐδὲ χείρ, εἰ μὴ ὁμωνύμως, ὥσπερ εἴ τις λέγοι τὴν λιθίνην.

[59] 1253a25-29.

[60] 1277a5-10: ἔτι ἐπεὶ ἐξ ἀνομοίων ἡ πόλις, ὥσπερ ζῷον εὐθὺς ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, καὶ ψυχὴ ἐκ λόγου καὶ ὀρέξεως, καὶ οἰκία ἐξ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός, καὶ κτῆσις ἐκ δεσπότου καὶ δούλου, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ πόλις ἐξ ἁπάντων τε τούτων καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἐξ ἄλλων ἀνομοίων συνέστηκεν εἰδῶν.

By this analogy it seems that Aristotle's definitions of the *polis* and of substance are nearly identical.[61] And yet, despite the similarity of the unity of the *polis* to the unity of the substance, the complexity of the *polis* does indeed differentiate it from animals. For, were the *polis* a substance, it has as its parts beings which themselves qualify as substances in a way that human limbs do not. In this way, although Mayhew's claims require qualification, the unity of the *polis* involves a much greater diversity of function and is thus a much broader unity than the unity of the primary substances which Aristotle explicitly names.

This differentiation of scope of unity in the *polis* compared to the individual is in contrast to Plato's view of the city, which apparently sees the relationship of the self to itself (an intra-substance relationship) as more directly analogous to the relationship of fellow citizens (inter-substance relations). Jules Tricot, in his French translation of the *Politics*, comments on the above-mentioned unity argument in Aristotle's *Politics*, pointing to the exact argument in the *Republic* it addresses: "[c]e passage est dirigé contre un texte de la *Républ.*, V, 462 *c d*, où Socrate assure que l'État le mieux gouverné est celui qui se rapproche le plus de l'unité et l'individu."[62] The text at *Republic* 462c-d reads: "[the best city] is that which is closest to being like one human being [with regard to pleasure and pain] in the same way that, just as if one of our fingers should be hurt, the entire community of the body, which is brought into harmony by being stretched around the soul as its leader (τὴν ψυχὴν τεταμένη), simultaneously feels the same pain as a

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[61] Whether Aristotle ultimately views the *polis* as a kind of substance is a question which lies beyond the scope of this thesis. In either case, he never explicitly makes that claim in any of his extant works.
[62] Tricot, *Aristote: La Politique*, 85.

whole when the part is injured."[63] While this particular analogy is similar to that of

Aristotle in comparing the citizen to a limb, it is firstly differentiated from Aristotle in

that it is not referring to an abstract logical problem of unity, but to issues of perception,

i.e. of pleasure and pain. This points to a much tighter sense of the unity of the city and a

much more direct analogy to the self than the broader sense of the community of diverse

parts employed by Aristotle. Secondly, this more direct analogy is possible for Plato

because the city and the self are being compared not merely because they are similar, but

because the city *is* the self for Plato within the allegorical framework of the *Republic*. In

this way, Aristotle and Plato are using the comparison of city and self to very different

ends. This allegorical sense of the *polis* and its similarity to the soul leads to a differing

conception of the unity of the "individual" substance of a human being and, in particular,

Plato and Aristotle's divergent views of the relation of form and matter in the human

subject. It will be necessary to make a few comments on Aristotle's theory of substance

in order to draw out further the significance of this difference.

Aristotle sees form as inseparable from matter (at the very least in the case of

humans and other mortal, natural beings), whereas Plato does not. To see how this

inseparability functions, it will be helpful to turn to some passages from the *Metaphysics*

which deal with this question in detail. In Book VIII of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle gives

three definitions of sensible substance as either (1) matter, (2) form and actuality, or (3)

the combination of the two.[64] For this tripartite distinction he gives the analogy of a

house, writing, "in defining a house, those who call it 'stones and bricks and wood,'

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[63] 462c-d: ἥτις δὴ ἐγγύτατα ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἔχει; οἷον ὅταν που ἡμῶν δάκτυλός του πληγῇ, πᾶσα ἡ κοινωνία ἡ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα πρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν τεταμένη εἰς μίαν σύνταξιν τὴν τοῦ ἄρχοντος ἐν αὐτῇ ἤσθετό τε καὶ πᾶσα ἅμα συνήλγησεν μέρους πονήσαντος ὅλη.
[64] *Metaphysics,* VIII.2 1043a26-28.

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define the house potentially, for those things are the matter; those who call it a 'receptacle for containing possesions and bodies' . . . define the actuality; those who put the two together define it as the third type of substance, composed of the first two."[65] In the case of human beings, although Aristotle goes on to emphasize that the soul, or the actuality of a human being may be *more* properly said to be the substance than the matter[66], he nevertheless denies that the two are separable.[67] He in fact explicitly attributes this false view to "the younger Socrates," a character who appears in Plato's *Parmenides*. This inseparability of form and matter, or "hylomorphism," is central to Aristotle's understanding of the unity of substance and its particular individuality; a 'self' is always in a particular form of embodied relation and is not separable from that relation.

Plato, on the other hand, places the self in a category separate from matter, in a way that is consistent with his view of the individual as undergoing multiple earthly incarnations. In Plato's *Phaedo*, when Socrates is awaiting execution, he says to Crito, "it may be that those who adhere to philosophy correctly escape the notice of others in practicing nothing other than dying and being dead."[68] Plato's view of the immortality of the soul and the afterlife is an integral part of understanding what it means for him to be an ethical agent. The character of Socrates further elaborates on this later in the *Phaedo*

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[65] Ibid, VIII.3 1043a14-19: διὸ τῶν ὁριζομένων οἱ μὲν λέγοντες τί ἐστιν οἰκία, ὅτι λίθοι πλίνθοι ξύλα, τὴν δυνάμει οἰκίαν λέγουσιν, ὕλη γὰρ ταῦτα: οἱ δὲ ἀγγεῖον σκεπαστικὸν χρημάτων καὶ σωμάτων ἤ τι ἄλλο τοιοῦτον προτιθέντες, τὴν ἐνέργειαν λέγουσιν: οἱ δ᾽ ἄμφω ταῦτα συντιθέντες τὴν τρίτην καὶ τὴν ἐκ τούτων οὐσίαν.
[66] Ibid, 1043b2-14.
[67] While the self is more properly the composite of form and matter for Aristotle, there is nonetheless, following in the Platonic tradition, an emphasis on the primacy of the soul as the form of the human being and thus the "true self." However, Aristotle is never explicit on whether the soul ever exists apart from the body, even if it is theoretically separable. Furthermore, the question of the possiblity of the immortality of the soul in Aristotle is an extremely vexed question which lies beond the scope of this thesis.
[68] Plato, *Phaedo*, 64a: κινδυνεύουσι γὰρ ὅσοι τυγχάνουσιν ὀρθῶς ἁπτόμενοι φιλοσοφίας λεληθέναι τοὺς ἄλλους ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο αὐτοὶ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι.

when he likens the body to a cage (82e) and describes how physical pleasures and pains "nail" the soul to the body (83e) and thus prevent the soul from mingling with the divine at death. This is just one example of a similar view presented throughout many of Plato's dialogues.[69] Thus the "self" is only incidentally embodied and is most truly said to be the soul alone. Since that soul peregrinates through many lifetimes, it transcends any particular relation. As Andrea Nightingale writes, "[t]he contemplating soul . . . has detached itself from the bodily and social aspects of its earthly life."[70] In its contemplative aspect, the soul is completely separate from the parts of itself which pertain to pleasure and pain and thus to the body.

This differs radically from Aristotle's view of the relation of the three parts of the soul (nutritive, appetitive, and rational) as ". . . degrees of potentiality as one actuality, which can exist separately only in the sense that a being with only the lower powers can exist apart from the higher."[71] As Diamond elsewhere explains ". . . Aristotle wants to show, against Plato, that our practical activity is not simply a loss of the self-sufficient independence exhibited in our theoretical activity."[72] As discussed in Chapter 2, the practical activity of a human being is essential for Aristotle in establishing a virtuous character, which in turn provides the ability to perceive accurately and is thus the necessary ground for true contemplation. While Plato obviously finds virtue to be of paramount importance, the source of that virtue differs in accord with his ontology and thus his own theory of perception. For Aristotle knowledge comes entirely from

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[69] The *Phaedrus* in particular is discussed at length in this regard by Andrea Nightingale, *"Plato on aporia,"* 21ff.
[70] *"Plato on aporia,"* 24.
[71] Diamond, *Mortal Imitations,* 246.
[72] Ibid, 222.

interaction with an existent, external world and is thus gained through perception and observation by an agent with the proper ethical habituation. For Plato, true knowledge, as well as ethical behaviour, can only come from the forms, which stand outside the world and which can only be accessed by "turning inward" to find knowledge, pre-existing in the soul, from times when the soul has moved through death and the underworld and thus had more direct contact with the forms in a state that is free from the constraints of the body. In this way, knowledge can ultimately only be gained from within oneself as a kind of memory. As Andrea Nightingale comments, ". . . the philosopher uses his memory to connect his contemplating soul to his earthly person."[73] This is, of course, a reference to Plato's doctrine of recollection which is discussed further in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Nevertheless, the senses do play a role in learning for Plato, for even though the soul already contains the forms which constitute all knowledge, this knowledge is forgotten at birth. At *Phaedo* 75e Socrates asks: "if having formerly grasped [the forms] before we were born we lost them at birth and later *using our senses* we retrieve the knowledge which we used to possess, would we not refer to learning as a recovery of a knowledge proper [to ourselves]? And I suppose we would be correct in calling this 'recollection'?"[74] Knowledge is not created by the senses, but rather they function as a kind of catalyst for recollection. In this way they are important for Plato, but only as a means for discovering something which is really proper to oneself.

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[73] "*Plato on* aporia," 24. Aristotle's response to Plato's Doctrine of Recollection is discussed more fully in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

[74] εἰ δέ γε οἶμαι λαβόντες πρὶν γενέσθαι γιγνόμενοι ἀπωλέσαμεν, ὕστερον δὲ ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι χρώμενοι περὶ αὐτὰ ἐκείνας ἀναλαμβάνομεν τὰς ἐπιστήμας ἅς ποτε καὶ πρὶν εἴχομεν, ἆρ᾽ οὐχ ὃ καλοῦμεν μανθάνειν οἰκείαν ἂν ἐπιστήμην ἀναλαμβάνειν εἴη; τοῦτο δέ που ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι λέγοντες ὀρθῶς ἂν λέγοιμεν.

Thus while Plato and Aristotle both view one's physical manifestation as necessary for the ultimate end of contemplation, the quality of that necessity differs between the two. For Plato, the body is necessary because the self (which is really the soul) is incidentally embodied so long as it is alive and thus the body and social relations are necessary *instrumentally* for the cultivation of the virtue of the soul to benefit future re-births. For Aristotle, the self is in a much stronger sense said to be a composite of mind and body and thus the body is not merely instrumental, but essential to virtue.

To return to the question of the unity of the *polis*, the two different views of the relation of matter to form in the self seem to shed light on the philosophers' respective visions of the ideal city. Since matter is ultimately separate from form for Plato and must exist by participation in a single form, many apparently individual objects (or substances, on Aristotle's account) exist already for Plato in relation to a deeper unity. As Plato has Socrates relate in *Republic* VI: "we say that there are many beautiful things, and many good things and define many other particulars in this way in our speech . . . but also the beautiful itself and the good itself and similarly concerning all things, and, with regard to those things which we just said were many, we in turn call each 'what it is' in light of a single form which we posit as a unity."[75] Each apparently individual thing of the same kind is unified in the realm of true reality. Furthermore, *all* things are ultimately always already subsumed into the unity of the Good on the Platonic model. Thus "communism" is not a threat to the natural individuality of substance (as it is for Aristotle), because the model of his city is not a model of a real city, but a model of the individual soul and the

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[75] 507b: πολλὰ καλά, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, καὶ πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ ἕκαστα οὕτως εἶναί φαμέν τε καὶ διορίζομεν τῷ λόγῳ. . . καὶ αὐτὸ δὴ καλὸν καὶ αὐτὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ οὕτω περὶ πάντων ἃ τότε ὡς πολλὰ ἐτίθεμεν, πάλιν αὖ κατ᾽ ἰδέαν μίαν ἑκάστου ὡς μιᾶς οὔσης τιθέντες, 'ὃ ἔστιν' ἕκαστον προσαγορεύομεν.

unified structure in which that soul partakes. Plato writes at the end of *Republic* IX, "[the wise man] will look to the city (πολιτείαν) in his soul,"[76] a city which "does not exist anywhere on earth, but rather, perhaps . . . is preserved as a paradigm in the heavens for whomever wishes to behold it and in beholding it to become its citizen. It makes no difference if it should exist now or if it ever will."[77] The focus for Plato here is not truly on the development of a city but on an understanding of the unity and structure of the *soul*. Thus political viability does not properly enter into the realm of his consideration. This differs greatly from the approach of Aristotle, for whom practicability is a primary concern, that is, although his treatise is theoretical, it is about actual communities and is not an allegory. This is shown in his objection to the Platonic idea of the unity of all things under the form of "Good" on highly practical grounds, consistent with his phenomenological realism, in his arguments at *NE* I.6. He points out that the universal good would not be helpful to a weaver or a carpenter in completing their respective jobs and further that "it is unreasonable that it should be such a great aid and yet all craftsmen are ignorant of it and do not even seek it out."[78] This statement is a strong testament to Aristotle's decidedly non-mystical approach. In this way, while Aristotle is correct in positing that a conventional *polis*, that is to say, a *polis* such as it appeared at his time, would be destroyed by too much unity, Plato is not very interested in appearance and convention, but is rather concerned with his understanding of true reality, and thus does not harbour the same fear.

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[76] 591e: ἀποβλέπων γε . . . πρὸς τὴν ἐν αὑτῷ πολιτείαν.
[77] 592a-b: ἐπεὶ γῆς γε οὐδαμοῦ . . . ἀλλ᾽ . . . ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται τῷ βουλομένῳ ὁρᾶν καὶ ὁρῶντι ἑαυτὸν κατοικίζειν. διαφέρει δὲ οὐδὲν εἴτε που ἔστιν εἴτε ἔσται.
[78] 1097a6-8: καίτοι βοήθημα τηλικοῦτον τοὺς τεχνίτας ἅπαντας ἀγνοεῖν καὶ μηδ᾽ ἐπιζητεῖν οὐκ εὔλογον.

While an argument has been made so far in this Chapter for a number of differences between the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, it must be remembered that there is much that they have in common, even in terms of the self. This is the case as, on Gill's model, they both share in the *objective-participant* model of understanding the self. This is seen especially in the high value Plato places on education and socialization and, as is apparent in his dialogic pedagogical style, his view that social interaction is necessary for virtue. As explained above in this Chapter, it is the particular character of the "necessity" for social virtue, as either a means for remembering or a means for development of individual virtue, that is in dispute between Plato and Aristotle. What is in dispute is not the overall vision of the importance and *goodness* of the social. Although Aristotle and Plato differ about the character of the relation of the Good to the individual, they both view the process of working with virtue and rationality as ultimately in service of the Good. Furthermore, both philosophers see the role of the philosophical life as using reason to establish an ordered relation of life to the order of the cosmos. In Charles Taylor's words, for Aristotle, "[h]umanity is part of the order of beings, each with its own nature. Each kind of thing, moved by the love of God, strives to reach its perfection and hence fulfil its nature."[79] This is similar to Plato's idea that "[i]n light of the Good, we can see that our own good, the proper order in our souls, has . . . categoric worth . . . ."[80]

This vision of cosmic and human goodness is a primary distinguishing factor between both Plato and Aristotle, and the dominant modern philosophical view. In trying to understand the place of the "rule of reason" in Plato's psycho-ethical theory, Christopher Gill explores how Plato's theory compares both to Kant and to Aristotle and

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[79] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 125.
[80] Ibid, 122.

comes to the conclusion that ". . . the *Republic*'s thinking about what constitutes psycho-

ethical harmony is much closer to the Aristotelian, than the Kantian, conception of the

relationship between emotions and proper ethical, or moral motivations."[81] Although this

point is taken up more fully in Chapter 4 of this thesis, it suffices to say here that Plato

agrees with Aristotle in seeing rationality as playing an important role in 'shaping' (to use

Gill's language) the structure of the *psychē*, including its "lower," emotional parts. Thus

reason and emotion work together to form one's personality. This *inclusion* of the lower

parts of the *psychē* is testament to the idea that goodness pervaded the totality of being

for both philosophers. Martha Nussbaum describes how Plato's "indictment of the

passions" is in fact highly qualified, especially in the *Phaedrus*, and how in the view

presented in that dialogue "[t]*he passions, and the actions inspired by them, are

intrinisically valuable components of the best human life*."[82] Even in the *Phaedo*, which

espouses a much clearer ascetism, or "disdain" for the body in favor of contemplation,

Plato does not reject the importance of human emotion: "[f]rom within our human lives,

even disregarding, for the moment, their pain, we have a deep and positive natural desire

to get at something more perfect than the merely human."[83] Human desire and yearning

are a positive contribution to philosophy. And further, even in the content of the

contemplation which has transcended the pains of the body, there is celebration. Rather

than simply being motivated negatively to seek freedom from the body—a

characterization of Platonic philosophy which Nussbaum attibutes to Nietzsche—the

Platonic philosopher is spurred on by this positive motivation: "[w]hat Nietzsche leaves

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[81] Gill, *Personality*, 260.
[82] Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 218.
[83] Ibid, 161-162.

out is that mathematical, scientific, and philosophical reasoning are enormously beautiful and compelling to human souls . . . ."[84] On this same topic, Ronna Burger describes how in Plato's dialogues ". . . no theme seems to be more central or ubiquitous [than *eros*] . . ." although it is in the case of *eros* and its brief mentions in the context of Aristotle's discussion of *philia* in the *NE* that ". . . Platonic madness appears to be altogether replaced by Aristotelian sobriety."[85] Regardless, of the relative intensity or "sobriety" of the feeling, *philia* and *eros* share the common characteristic of being about an emotionally affective subject-object relation which was necessary for both philsophers for the development of wisdom. Gill sees this aspect of Plato's theory as key to demonstrating how Plato fits within the *objective-participant* model of self-hood, in particular the criteria of the model according to which "[t]he ethical life of a human being is expressed in whole-hearted engagement with an interpersonal and communal role. . ." and "[t]o be human is to be the kind of animal whose psycho-ethical life . . . is, in principle, capable of being shaped so as to become fully 'reason-ruled . . . .'"[86] This is in contrast to Kant's idea ". . . that, in the face of one's rational recognition of the absolute claims of duty, feelings (in the ordinary sense) cease to have weight."[87] Plato was very interested in the holistic education of the human being such as to be turned toward philosophy and the basis of that education in good society in a way quite similar to that of Aristotle. Far from the vacuous, rational sterility of Kantian ethics, Plato's ethical thought was deeply emotive. Thus, while Plato differs greatly from Aristotle in some regards,

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[84] Ibid.
[85] *Aristotle's Dialogue with Plato*, 183.
[86] Gill, *Personality*, 241.
[87] Ibid, 247.

they share an interest in the role of community and human relations in the rational shaping of ethical lives.

Finally, due to the Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of nature and the cosmos, there was no room for "evil," in the modern sense, in their respective philosophies. In the context of debates heavily influenced by Christianity and the concept of "original sin," Kant could not ". . . uphold a privative account of evil . . ." and thus conceived of evil as something ". . . positive, radically real, ineradicable, and bound up in freedom itself."[88] Charles Taylor also comments at length on how Kant ". . . explicitly insists that morality can't be founded in nature or in anything outside of the human rational will . . ." and how the ". . . the influence of Augustinian thinking on Kant is at times over-powering, via its Protestant and Pietist formulations. Kant had a lively sense of human evil, of the distorted and crooked state of human nature."[89] It is this connection with the Augustinian traditon that shows how the concept of evil is attached to a strong concept of self, for it was "Augustine's doctrine of the two loves [which] allow[ed] for the possibility that our disposition may be radically perverse, driving us to turn our backs even on the good we see. Indeed, this is precisely the predicament of all of us owing to the sin of Adam."[90] When Augustine puts the focus on the will ("the two loves") and thus begins to 'internalize' (as Taylor puts it), carving out a more substantial notion of self, so too is the connection with the goodness of God compromised—goodness becomes a struggle rather than the default because the "self" has the option of moving toward or away from it. Importantly, Augustine's ideas about the will are *still* embedded within a conception of

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[88] Dennis Vanden Auweele, *The Enduring Relevance of Kant*, 124. For his mention of original sin, see, ibid, 127.
[89] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 364-366.
[90] Ibid.

the cosmos as good, wherein evil is privative rather than radical, similar to the view of Aristotle. Nonetheless, his philosophical innovations, which are fundamental to modernity, created the basis for an understanding of the self, through the will, as separate from the cosmos and thus as the source of evil. In this way he represents a kind of "half step" toward the more fully developed concept of evil found in Kant. Although Kant is being used here by way of example in terms of how this view was taken up, this idea of human evil was not uncommon in the cultural climate of the Enlightenment, and is one that has persisted, strongly, to this day.[91] However, this view of human corruption is unintelligible in the context of Platonic and Aristotelian thinking, as it is tied to an idea of the self based on a religious outlook that was not present in their contemporary social and philosophical climate.[92]

The views of Plato and Aristotle differ radically, but at the same time share much in common. Plato's world-view was heavily influenced by the complex cultural interactions of Greece with the mystical traditions of the West and East, from Sicily to West Asia. He thus was working within a system which in some sense rejected "common" reality in favor of a "true" reality which traditionally could only be understood through initiation. And yet, Plato was also steeped in the rationalizing influence of the Athenian philosophical tradition. It was this aspect of Plato's philosophy

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[91] On the general pervasiveness of the concept of the self as the source of evil in the Enlightenment see Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Chapter 20 "Nature as Source." For the pervasiveness of this view of evil in the modern world see Eisenstein, *The More Beautiful World*, "Evil," 191-211.

[92] Notably, in Aristotle's account of Plato's Pythagoreanism at *Metaphysics*, I.6 988a7ff. he mentions how, on Plato's model, matter is the source of "evil" (lit. "cause of being badly"—τοῦ κακῶς αἰτίαν) and form is the source of good ("[cause of] being well"— τοῦ εὖ). This distinction stems from Plato's theory of "Limit" and "Unlimited" as the first principles of reality. Although we have in this passage an acknowledgement of a fundamental duality of good and bad in Plato's thought, it is important that, compared with the later tradition, there is no emphasis on *humanity* as the source of this "evil." Furthermore, the use of the word "evil" to translate Plato's word "κακῶς" is problematic, as it is now so loaded with connotations from post-Platonic thought. This is a vast question which would need to be addressed in further work.

which Aristotle seems to have taken up whole-heartedly, apparently rejecting the mystical aspects of the traditions with which Plato had contact in favor of developing a philosophy grounded in appearances such as they are. Despite this difference, Aristotle and Plato both expressed a trust in the value of the goodness of society in their respective philosophies. They disagreed on the exact nature of the ideal unity of the *polis*, but nevertheless saw a deep unity of self and other as essential to human life. Furthermore, it was this interdependent conception of self that allowed for the idea that humanity is inherently, if not always practically, good, as shown in the contrast with the Augustinian and later Kantian conception of selfhood and will. Thus Plato and Aristotle's emphasis on the value of reason to human life did not alienate them from that life, but helped them to contextualize their place within it.

Chapter 4: Education and Rationality

Having established an understanding of how Aristotle views the self and how his philosophical approach both differs from and yet remains profoundly indebted to that of Plato, it will be necessary to examine how the relational notion of self-hood manifests in the context of the *polis*. This will be best accomplished by first treating Aristotle's theory of education in the first section of this Chapter, and then discussing Aristotle's understanding of the role of rationality in the moral agent—as this is a defining element of the *objective-participant* view of the self—in the second part. This treatment of Aristotle's view of rationality will help to demonstrate the importance of the relationship of self and society on which his theory of education rests—for his view stands in contrast to modern ethical theories which see the faculty of practical reason as existing independently of any social context. As a treatise largely concerned with virtuous conduct and prepared for oral presentation in a lecture format,[1] the text often gives the impression that it is designed as a manual for how to *become* good. This is especially the case in the extended discussion of the individual virtues from *NE* III.6 through Book V. According to Aristotle himself, however, this is *not* the purpose of the treatise, as evidenced by his insistence that youth and those who are led by their passions—and are thus like those who are un-restrained (τοῖς ἀκρατέσιν)—are an inappropriate audience for the text.[2] Thus this analysis will be following Bodéüs in assuming that legislators (or would-be legislators) are in fact the intended audience, however, the focus will be on what implications this reading has for an understanding of the 'self' in Aristotle's treatise.

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[1] Bodéüs, *Le philosophe*, 160ff.
[2] *NE*, 1094b29-1095a13.

Notably, as elaborated by Gill, whether scholars interpret the *Ethics* as a readily-accessible manual for anyone to become good or a text for an *already* good audience depends on how they view the role of rationality in the self and society. Although Aristotle obviously views the rational and contemplative faculty as the highest human faculty, it is also clear from his discussion of ethics as a political science and his view of virtue as initially *habitual*, that the development of the intellect is circumscribed by one's up-bringing on a pre-reflective level, i.e. before one can rationally articulate one's choices. This pre-reflective level refers not only to good ethical habits, but one's material nature. For Aristotle, the potential of the individual for goodness is inextricably bound to the goodness of the society, as well as quality of the climate, in which that individual is born and raised. The circularity of *philautia* and *philia* described in Chapter 2 of this thesis takes on an added layer by examining audience and education, for proper *paideia* is a pre-condition for both of these relations. Thus, the first part of this Chapter will deal with the question of audience and education, and the second part will discuss Aristotle's view of the nature and proper development of the rational faculty.

4.1 Education and Virtue

The question of who exactly the intended listener of Aristotle's *Ethics* was—whom it is supposed to be educating—is a matter of significant scholarly contention, as the text itself is not entirely explicit. Thus, the audience must in some respects be inferred from a detailed analysis of the text. The fact that the *Ethics* is not simply written as an ethical manual for everyone is suggested at *NE* I.4, where Aristotle writes:

> one who is youthful is not an appropriate student (lit. *listener*—ἀκροατὴς) of political science; for he is inexperienced in worldly actions, but the discourses

[concerning politics] arise from these [actions] and are about them. Moreover, one who is prone to following his passions will listen in vain and without any benefit, since the goal [in these matters] is not knowledge, but action. And it makes no difference whether one is 'youthful' in age or in disposition.[3]

In this passage (notably focusing on 'political science,' given that it is the introduction to the study of ethics) it is strongly suggested that experience is a pre-requisite to the philosophical study of virtue contained in the treatise.[4] In Richard Bodéüs' study, *Le philosophe et la cité,* this question of the audience is taken up at great length. Ultimately, his conclusion is that the intended audience of the *NE* is legislators. This conclusion rests on an understanding of the unity of the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, about which there is also much debate.[5] As Bodéüs writes: ". . . les conditions auxquelles chacun peut accéder à la connaissance des principes pratiques sont liées de manière rigoureuse à l'acquisition préalable d'une ἕξις vertueuse, qui n'est pas encore φρόνησις, mais simple disposition permanente à agir conformément à la raison droite." This "disposition permanente" is, naturally, a product of the city one inhabits with its laws, decrees, and customs, and thus he infers that ". . . les principes pratiques sont effectivement déterminés pour tous par la société où l'on vit . . . ."[6] The legislator must come to understand the essential connection

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[3] *NE*, 1095a2-7: τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖος ἀκροατὴς ὁ νέος· ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δ᾽ ἐκ τούτων καὶ περὶ τούτων· ἔτι δὲ τοῖς πάθεσιν ἀκολουθητικὸς ὢν ματαίως ἀκούσεται καὶ ἀνωφελῶς, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν οὐ γνῶσις ἀλλὰ πρᾶξις. διαφέρει δ᾽ οὐδὲν νέος τὴν ἡλικίαν ἢ τὸ ἦθος νεαρός.
[4] This section is setting up Bodëús' claims. The actual manner in which experience precedes philosophy in Aristotle's thought will be treated much more thoroughly in what follows.
[5] On this matter Bodéüs, *Le philosophe*, 83, includes as a significant contributor to the debate Olaf Gignon, especially Gignon's article "Theorie und Praxis." He also identifies a number of scholars who deal with this problem by a distinction of terms, namely, a "narrow" sense of politics which refers to the *Politics* proper, and a "broader" sense which includes both the *Politics* and the *Ethics.* Among these scholars he includes Richard McKeon, "Aristotle's Conception of Moral and Political Philosophy"; Alexander Schwan, "Politik als 'Werk der Wahrheit'"; G. Bien, *Die Grundlegung der politischen Philosophie*; and W.F.R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*.
[6] Bodéüs, *Le philosophe*, 78.

between ethical habits and society and be aware of the science of "individual" ethics in detail in order to understand the object towards which he is legislating.

The real force of the *NE* is thus to show the structure as well as the end of ethics (and thus the end of politics) and to provide guidance on what kind of constitution will be most conducive to true human happiness in light of its findings. For Aristotle, this is the virtuous happiness that comes from the unity of virtuous habits and theoretical pursuits— an attendance to the totality of virtue. Aristotle agrees with Plato's criticism of the Spartans in the *Laws*, namely, that they focused on a part of virtue and built their laws around that.[7] Accordingly, the Spartans ". . . were preserved so long as they were at war, but were destroyed when in power through not knowing how to be at leisure and not practicing any virtue greater than the science of war."[8] Importantly for the discussion of education in this Chapter, however, in the *NE* Aristotle does actually praise the Spartan constitution for something he judges that they do correctly: "it appears that in the *polis* of the Lacedemonians alone (or with a few others) the legislator has given attention to up-bringing and customs (τροφῆς τε καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων); in the vast majority of cities such things have been utterly neglected and each man lives as he wishes, laying down the law over his children and wife in the manner of a Cyclops."[9] Although the Spartans might have missed the mark in terms of being overly war-like, the tremendous attention paid to the character development of each citizen is praiseworthy and prevents the brutish and arbitrary (cyclopean) style of ethical habituation which Aristotle sees as prevailing in lieu

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[7] Paraphrasing *Politics* 1271b1-2: πρὸς γὰρ μέρος ἀρετῆς ἡ πᾶσα σύνταξις τῶν νόμων ἐστί.

[8] 1271b3-5: τοιγαροῦν ἐσῴζοντο μὲν πολεμοῦντες, ἀπώλλυντο δὲ ἄρξαντες [5] διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐπίστασθαι σχολάζειν μηδὲ ἠσκηκέναι μηδεμίαν ἄσκησιν ἑτέραν κυριωτέραν τῆς πολεμικῆς. Bodéüs, *Le philosophe*, 224, makes this reference to the Spartans as well.

[9] 1180a13-17: ἐν μόνῃ δὲ τῇ Λακεδαιμονίων πόλει ἢ μετ᾽ ὀλίγων ὁ νομοθέτης ἐπιμέλειαν δοκεῖ πεποιῆσθαι τροφῆς τε καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων: ἐν δὲ ταῖς πλείσταις τῶν πόλεων ἐξημέληται περὶ τῶν τοιούτων, καὶ ζῇ ἕκαστος ὡς βούλεται, κυκλωπικῶς θεμιστεύων παίδων ἠδ᾽ ἀλόχου.

of proper political oversight.[10] In his criticism of the Spartans in the *Politics*, however, Aristotle emphasizes that in a well-governed city-state, alongside the necessary war-like virtues, ". . . it is necessary that there be those virtues which pertain to leisure."[11] The reason Aristotle offers for this is that ". . . it appears that the same end applies (τὸ αὐτὸ τέλος εἶναι) to men both communally and privately, and it is necessary that both the best man and the best city share the same aim (τὸν αὐτὸν ὅρον)."[12] A good constitution is necessarily intertwined with a good understanding of human virtue and flourishing because the two share exactly the same end—the living well (εὖ ζῆν) identified at the beginning of the *Politics*.[13] This is why the science of legislation is also the science of ethics. The Spartan constitution falls short because it sees virtue as a vital means of attaining political goals, but does not understand that virtue itself *is* the goal.[14] This is what is shown in the *NE*, especially in Book X in the discussion of the relationship between theoretical and practical happiness. Since the two are inseparable, a complete human life contains both. Thus, a politics that does not understand the value of leisure and contemplation—and so does not understand the capacities of the human being that transcend politics—will be imperfect.

Bodéüs' thesis concerning the intimate connection between the *Ethics* and the *Politics* is supported by the over-lapping content of the two works, as the *Ethics* is

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[10] Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto, *"Verfassung und Gesellschaft Spartas,"* 39, comments on the unusually balanced and insightful nature of Aristotle's critique of the Spartan constitution, especially in light of the Spartan mirage (*das Idealbild Spartas*) which was so prevalent at his time: "Aristotle's insight into the inner structure of population policy, economy, and civil law can [despite its short-comings] be put forth as unique. It touches on the cause of Spartan social ills in a quite direct way . . . (*Die Einsicht des Aristoteles jedoch in die inneren Zusammenhänge von Bevölkerungspolitik, Volkswirtschaft und Bürgerrechtspolitik kann als einzigartige herausgestellt werden. Sie trifft in ganz konkreter Weise den Urgrund der spartanischen Mißstände . . .*)."
[11] 1334a14: δεῖ τὰς εἰς τὴν σχολὴν ἀρετὰς ὑπάρχειν. This comparison is drawn directly from Bodéüs, 224.
[12] 1334a11-13: ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ τέλος εἶναι φαίνεται καὶ κοινῇ καὶ ἰδίᾳ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ὅρον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τῷ τε ἀρίστῳ ἀνδρὶ καὶ τῇ ἀρίστῃ πολιτείᾳ.
[13] 1252b30.
[14] 1271b7-10: νομίζουσι μὲν γὰρ γίνεσθαι τἀγαθὰ τὰ περιμάχητα δι᾽ ἀρετῆς μᾶλλον ἢ κακίας, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν καλῶς, ὅτι μέντοι ταῦτα κρείττω τῆς ἀρετῆς ὑπολαμβάνουσιν, οὐ καλῶς.

preparatory to the *Politics*. The opening chapters of the *NE* begin by defining politics as the science which is most authoritative and architectonic (τῆς κυριωτάτης καὶ μάλιστα ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς) of all other sciences dealing with action (τῶν πρακτῶν).[15] This is necessarily the case, since all actions are governed by a type of knowledge which is aware of what is good and best in relation to that particular action: for example, the science of strategy in regard to war and the science of householdership in relation to the household. And, as Aristotle observes, the most honoured (ἐντιμοτάτας) among these—strategy, householder-ship, and rhetoric—as well as the discipline of legislation are all governed by political science. Thus the end of political science is the human good (τἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν) in its broadest sense and not merely the end of any particular individual.[16] This relates to Aristotle's contention from the *Politics*, cited previously in this Chapter, that "the best man and the best city share the same aim,"[17] which is also mentioned at the beginning of the *NE*: "the good is the same for the individual and the city."[18] Exactly how this is the case and how Aristotle's conception of the self leads him to this understanding will be explored later in this Chapter; in terms of the structure of the treatises, however, it is important to note that he concludes the *NE* by returning to politics. The final chapter of the *NE* (X.9) concerns itself almost exclusively with a discussion of laws and education. This shift occurs when Aristotle turns to the question of *how* to implement what he has outlined in the preceding sections of the work. He writes, "It is indeed not sufficient to know about virtue, but one must try to possess it and exercise it, for how else do we become good?"[19]

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[15] 1094a26-27: δόξειε δ᾽ ἂν τῆς κυριωτάτης καὶ μάλιστα ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς. τοιαύτη δ᾽ ἡ πολιτικὴ φαίνεται.
[16] *NE*, 1094b1-7.
[17] See note 12, above.
[18] 1094b8: ταὐτόν ἐστιν ἑνὶ καὶ πόλει.
[19] 1179b2-4: οὐδὲ δὴ περὶ ἀρετῆς ἱκανὸν τὸ εἰδέναι, ἀλλ᾽ ἔχειν καὶ χρῆσθαι πειρατέον, ἢ εἴ πως ἄλλως ἀγαθοὶ γινόμεθα.

The goal of the ethics is not simply to contemplate goodness, but to apply it, and, as Aristotle astutely observes, words do not suffice to accomplishing this end, for it appears that (φαίνονται) words are "unable to urge the many toward complete virtue (καλοκαγαθίαν)."[20] Thus, the root of good ethics cannot be argument, but rather ethics must begin from a pre-rational disposition that is capable in the first place of being nurtured by argument. Aristotle writes: "he who lives according to his passions would neither listen to nor understand a deterring argument . . . . Indeed it is necessary that a character which is proper to virtue . . . be somehow already present. To happen upon a proper education, aimed at virtue, from childhood is difficult unless one is raised under such [viz. good] laws."[21] The necessary character for moral education by reasoned discourse must be already present in order for the listener to be able to judge the claims made by reason and, the way Aristotle sees it, that ability must come from society, which is to say, from proper laws. This direct continuity between the *NE* and the *Politics* is found in the concluding phrases of the *NE* itself. For, as W.D. Ross says in a note to his translation of the *NE*, "1181b12-23 [the concluding paragraph of the *NE*] is a programme of the *Politics*, agreeing to a large extent with the existing contents of that work."[22] The *NE* leads directly into the *Politics*, for, in some sense, the transition to the discussion which is proper to *Politics* happens prior to the first sentence of the treatise which bears the name.

This connection between upbringing and the possibility for ethical development can be further understood by reminding ourselves of Aristotle's overall philosophical

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[20] 1179b10: [οἱ λόγοι] τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς ἀδυνατεῖν πρὸς καλοκαγαθίαν προτρέψασθαι.

[21] 1179b26-32: οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀκούσειε λόγου ἀποτρέποντος οὐδ᾽ αὖ συνείη ὁ κατὰ πάθος ζῶν . . . . δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἦθος προϋπάρχειν πως οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς . . . ἐκ νέου δ᾽ ἀγωγῆς ὀρθῆς τυχεῖν πρὸς ἀρετὴν χαλεπὸν μὴ ὑπὸ τοιούτοις τραφέντα νόμοις.

[22] Ross, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Aristotle and McKeon, *Basic Works*, 1112, note 24.

method of inquiry. In Book I of the *NE*, when discussing how to discover what *eudaimonia*

is, Aristotle writes:

> what is knowable is said in two ways: that which is knowable to us and that which is simply knowable. And so perhaps we ought to begin from what is known to us. Therefore it is necessary that he who is to be an adequate student (ἀκουσόμενον ἱκανῶς) of what is noble and what is just, and in general of all things political, be brought up properly with regard to his habits (τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἦχθαι καλῶς). For the first principle is the 'what' (τὸ ὅτι), and if this should be evident at the beginning there will be no additional need of the 'why' (τοῦ διότι).[23]

This passage is fundamental to understanding the project of the *NE* as a whole as it contains

a summary of Aristotle's method of inquiry as it appears throughout the entirety of the

Corpus Aristotelicum. Firstly, Aristotle remarks on the importance of method in

approaching the subject of *eudaimonia*. As he remarks just a few lines before this passage,

Plato was correct in being uncertain as to whether one should move *from* first principles or

toward first principles in his reasoning.[24] As shown in the previous Chapter, Plato saw

knowledge even of ethical matters as pre-existent in the soul, and yet also the sense

perceptions are necessary for recollection of this knowledge. Thus in one way, in the

process of recollection, one moves *toward* the first principles from experience to

understand ethical truths, but in another way, since ethical knowledge is innate, true

knowledge (once recollected) always begins with or moves *from* first principles. Thus there

is a sense in which particular principles are deduced from the *ideai*. This is what is meant

when Aristotle says, "moving *from* the first principles." In terms of practical ethical

knowledge Aristotle took the opposite approach. As Aristotle writes in the *Physics*: "by

nature the road [of inquiry] is *from* those things more knowable and clearer to us *toward*

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[23] 1095b2-7: ταῦτα δὲ διττῶς· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν τὰ δ᾽ ἁπλῶς. ἴσως οὖν ἡμῖν γε ἀρκτέον ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωρίμων. διὸ δεῖ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἦχθαι καλῶς τὸν περὶ καλῶν καὶ δικαίων καὶ ὅλως τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀκουσόμενον ἱκανῶς. ἀρχὴ γὰρ τὸ ὅτι, καὶ εἰ τοῦτο φαίνοιτο ἀρκούντως, οὐδὲν προσδεήσει τοῦ διότι.
[24] 1095a32-33.

those which are clearer by nature and simply knowable."[25] This is precisely the kind of reasoning which Aristotle is invoking here in the *NE*, using the same terms (viz. "ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωρίμων" in the *NE* and "ἐκ τῶν γνωριμωτέρων ἡμῖν" in the *Physics;* and the shared phrase "γνώριμα ἁπλῶς"). Aristotle always begins with experience and moves from there to his first principles by induction. The importance of this reasoning as it applies to the *NE*, as opposed to the *Physics*, which deals with theoretical knowledge, is that the *goal* as well the starting point of political science lies within the realm of action, and thus of things "more knowable to us." This further explains Aristotle's admonition, cited above[26], that those who are youthful either in age or disposition are unsuitable for the study of ethics. Since political science is the study of action for the sake of action, it will need somehow to have action, which is to say *experience*, as its starting point. Since, unlike in mathematics, the goal of political science is in this way not simply abstract knowledge, the youthful and inexperienced are not suitable students.

In many ways, Aristotle presents here his solution to Meno's Paradox, at least as it applies to practical philosophy. The character of Meno in the *Meno* asks: "how will you search for something if you don't know at all what it is? What kind of things that you don't know will you set forth as the object of the search? And even if you should happen to find it, how will you know that is it if you didn't know what it was?"[27] The Socrates character then reformulates the paradox as follows: "a man cannot search for what he knows or for what he does not know[.] He cannot search for what he knows—since if he knows it there

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[25] *Physics*, 184a16-18.
[26] See note 3, above.
[27] *Meno* 80d: καὶ τίνα τρόπον ζητήσεις, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦτο ὃ μὴ οἶσθα τὸ παράπαν ὅτι ἐστίν; ποῖον γὰρ ὧν οὐκ οἶσθα προθέμενος ζητήσεις; ἢ εἰ καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα ἐντύχοις αὐτῷ, πῶς εἴσῃ ὅτι τοῦτό ἐστιν ὃ σὺ οὐκ ᾔδησθα;

is no need to search—nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for."[28] According to this paradox, it is impossible to know the start and end point of any inquiry into an object unless you already know what you are looking for. In the *Meno*, Plato's Socrates hypothesizes the doctrine of recollection as a solution to this problem, according to which all learning is in fact a process of *recollecting* knowledge which the *psychē* already possesses through its countless journeys through lifetimes.[29] As explained previously in Chapter 3, on this account, all virtue is a kind of *knowledge*, which is remembered via the education process; this circumvents the problem posed by the paradox by proposing that one already (potentially) knows everything. Aristotle, however, explicitly criticizes the Socratic position that all virtue is knowledge.[30] To re-capitulate and elaborate further on what was mentioned about this issue in the previous Chapter, what this view fails to account for, Aristotle explains, is the fact that someone can *know* what is right, yet nevertheless be led astray by his passions. Thus, Socrates would have it that there is no such thing as unrestraint (*akrasia*).[31] This example of unrestraint is why, for Aristotle, ethical virtue must be acquired through habit, which involves knowledge, but is not identical with knowledge; for this theory offers a better explanation for people's behaviour. Aristotle explains that ethical virtue is "habitual excellence together with correct understanding (μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου) and correct understanding is *phronēsis*."[32] He thus

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[28] Ibid, 80e (trans. G.M.A. Grube): ἆρα ἔστιν ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ οὔτε ὃ οἶδε οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδε; οὔτε γὰρ ἂν ὅ γε οἶδεν ζητοῖ—οἶδεν γάρ, καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖ τῷ γε τοιούτῳ ζητήσεως—οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδεν—οὐδὲ γὰρ οἶδεν ὅτι ζητήσει.

[29] *Meno*, 81b-e.

[30] *NE*, VII.2 1145b23-28.

[31] Ibid: ἐπιστάμενον μὲν οὖν οὔ φασί τινες οἷόν τε εἶναι: δεινὸν γὰρ ἐπιστήμης ἐνούσης, ὡς ᾤετο Σωκράτης, ἄλλο τι κρατεῖν καὶ περιέλκειν αὐτὴν ὥσπερ ἀνδράποδον. Σωκράτης μὲν γὰρ ὅλως ἐμάχετο πρὸς τὸν λόγον ὡς οὐκ οὔσης ἀκρασίας: οὐθένα γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνοντα πράττειν παρὰ τὸ βέλτιστον, ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἄγνοιαν.

[32] *NE*, VI.13 1144b27-28: ἡ μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου ἕξις ἀρετή ἐστιν: ὀρθὸς δὲ λόγος περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἡ φρόνησίς ἐστιν.

specifies that "Socrates thought that virtues *were* principles [λόγους] (for they are forms of knowledge), we say they are *with* a principle."[33] In this way he does not completely reject what Socrates says, but alters it slightly, by adding an emphasis on habit. In order to become fully ethically virtuous by understanding the correct principle (*phronēsis*), one must begin by knowing what virtue is, which is to say by already being habitually virtuous. Once one has this fundamental disposition to do what is right, this can be elaborated on through intellectual education. This is what Aristotle means when he says that the first principle in this instance is "the what" (τὸ ὅτι), namely, being habitually virtuous, which in itself has no need of explanation, no need of a *why* (τοῦ διότι). In order to live the *most* fulfilling life, one must build on these habitual virtues and cultivate the dianoetic virtues through virtue-friendship (as explained in Chapter 2); for the truly happy life also consists in theoretical knowledge. The starting point, however, is far from intellectual and is based on good habits, which is based on proper upbringing (τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἦχθαι καλῶς). This is Aristotle's response to Meno's paradox in the realm of practical philosophy.[34] One is able to search for what they don't know (in this case *what* virtue is) because one already has a basic habitual tendency toward virtue through virtuous habits acquired through one's upbringing. One can thus learn to explain rationally what one already has in *pre-rational* form. Unlike in Plato's view, however, what one already has is not innate knowledge in the *psychē* but is learned from family and society through education in good habits—one takes commands from one's parents and educators and internalizes them to become the

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[33] 1144b28-29: Σωκράτης μὲν οὖν λόγους τὰς ἀρετὰς ᾤετο εἶναι (ἐπιστήμας γὰρ εἶναι πάσας), ἡμεῖς δὲ μετὰ λόγου.

[34] For a more complete discussion of Aristotle's response to Meno's Paradox, especially as pertains to theoretical philosophy in the *Posterior Analytics*, see David Bronstein, *Aristotle on Knowledge and Learning*.

basis of full moral development. As Howard Curzer writes, summarizing a point from Myles Burnyeat's seminal article "Aristotle on Learning to be Good": "Aristotle thinks that guided habituation enables you to acquire the ability to judge for yourself which acts are virtuous. You must be told by someone that this act in this context is virtuous; that act is vicious; and so on. . . . [But further] habitual virtuous action causes you to accept these virtue judgments not just superficially, but in a profound way."[35] In this way the principles of virtue *become* innate for Aristotle, but they do not begin that way.

This solution to *Meno*'s paradox is consistent with Plato and Aristotle's differing views of the 'self' explored in Chapter 3. Plato's view of the *psychē* is such that all knowledge is drawn from within and requires virtue to be brought forth, and thus ethical knowledge as well as theoretical knowledge ultimately moves *from* a first principle possessed in the soul, even if one needs education to begin to recollect it. Aristotle's view is more explicitly interdependent with regard to the city, as ethical knowledge has its very source in the proper habits of this life; for the properly ordered *polis* is a reflection of the proper order of the cosmos itself.[36] In the case of education, the virtuous moral agent in Aristotle is a product of good socialization. Just as, later in the life, the most virtuous man ascends to the peak of human existence, verging on the divine, by honing his rational virtues through the dynamic interplay of virtue-friendship and shared *we*-subject cognition, the potentially virtuous subject is formed in early life on a pre-reflective level by participation in the virtuous habits of his family and community. As Aristotle writes at *Politics* VII.13:

just as the body is prior in its genesis to the *psychē*, so the irrational part [of the

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[35] Curzer, "Aristotle's Painful Path to Virtue," 142. See also Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to be Good."
[36] This claim will be further elucidated in Chapter 5.

psychē] is prior to the rational. This is evident; for passion and wanting, as well as desire, are present in children immediately from birth, but deliberation and intellect come to be as they develop. Therefore, it is necessary to care for the body before the *psychē* and then for the appetite before the intellect. However, the care of the appetite should be for the sake of the intellect, and the body for the sake of the *psychē*.[37]

Here Aristotle maintains his emphasis on the priority of the *psychē* over the body and rationality over appetite, which is familiar from the *NE,* but with this move simultaneously highlights the importance, from the standpoint of education, of the lower parts. These habits, Aristotle thinks, are best enforced by legislation since passions in youth are best overcome by force, and law has the best compulsory force (ἀναγκαστικὴν ἔχει δύναμιν); this is the case because people can hate an individual for enforcing virtue, whereas the law is impersonal.[38] This discussion of public regulation does seem to pertain more to older children, however, and Aristotle also seems to place importance on habits in the household, for "the words of one's father and his habits . . . through kinship and beneficence . . . exist prior [to those of the state] and are loving and by nature easy to obey."[39] Thus, although the state is prior to the family,[40] it is reasonable to think that Aristotle holds the family to be of primary importance for instilling virtue, a role which is then continued by the state. In discussing the importance of law, family, and community here, it is important not to slip into ascribing to Aristotle a collectivism that is not his own. As he writes at *Politics* VII.12: "indeed a *polis* is virtuous when the citizens who participate in the *polis* are virtuous . . .

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[37] 1134b21-28: ὥσπερ δὲ τὸ σῶμα πρότερον τῇ γενέσει τῆς ψυχῆς, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἄλογον τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος. φανερὸν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο: θυμὸς γὰρ καὶ βούλησις, ἔτι δὲ ἐπιθυμία, καὶ γενομένοις εὐθὺς ὑπάρχει τοῖς παιδίοις, ὁ δὲ λογισμὸς καὶ ὁ νοῦς προϊοῦσιν ἐγγίγνεσθαι πέφυκεν. διὸ πρῶτον μὲν τοῦ σώματος τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι προτέραν ἢ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἔπειτα τὴν τῆς ὀρέξεως, ἕνεκα μέντοι τοῦ νοῦ τὴν τῆς ὀρέξεως, τὴν δὲ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ψυχῆς.

[38]*NE,* 1180a 21-24.

[39] Ibid, 1181b5-8: οἱ πατρικοὶ λόγοι καὶ τὰ ἔθη . . . διὰ τὴν συγγένειαν καὶ τὰς εὐεργεσίας . . . προϋπάρχουσι . . . στέργοντες καὶ εὐπειθεῖς τῇ φύσει.

[40] *Politics,* I.1 1253a19-20.

and this is to be examined: how does a man become virtuous? For if it is possible for all to be virtuous, but for there to be no *individuals* who are virtuous, the latter would be more choice-worthy; for, if the individual is virtuous, it follows that all would be."[41] As explored in Chapter 3, Aristotle does not collapse the notion of the individual in the discussion of the state, but sees the *polis* as flourishing through the diversity of its parts in a manner analogous to but different from the functioning of the body. In just the same way in the case of education, the individual and the state and community are definitionally distinct, but practically interdependent.

Furthermore, the profound importance of family for Aristotle is perfectly intelligible from the standpoint of "saving the phenomena," for the household was an integral part of ancient Greek society. Michael Parker comments at length on the intricate religious ritual surrounding ancestral tombs and the familial structure of the *oikos*, describing how one had not only a duty to one's ancestors, but the particular deities worshipped by one's household, to the point where the *oikos* itself was, in his terms, a "quasi-religious entity needing to be respected and preserved."[42] The term "quasi-religious" here is somewhat awkwardly employed to capture the sense in which, as Zaidman and Pantel more clearly state, ". . . every moment and every stage of the Greek citizen's existence was intimately imbued with a religious dimension."[43] Thus, even if Aristotle did not subscribe to the intensely mystical religious views of the tradition Plato was drawing from, as discussed in Chapter 3, his experience was nonetheless *de facto*

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[41] 1332a32-38: ἀλλὰ μὴν σπουδαία γε πόλις ἐστὶ τῷ τοὺς πολίτας τοὺς μετέχοντας τῆς πολιτείας εἶναι σπουδαίους . . . τοῦτ᾽ ἄρα σκεπτέον, πῶς ἀνὴρ γίνεται σπουδαῖος. καὶ γὰρ εἰ πάντας ἐνδέχεται σπουδαίους εἶναι, μὴ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον δὲ τῶν πολιτῶν, οὕτως αἱρετώτερον· ἀκολουθεῖ γὰρ τῷ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον καὶ τὸ πάντας.
[42] Parker, *Polytheism and Society*, Chapter 1 "Ancestral Gods, Ancestral Tombs: The Household and Beyond," 8-36.
[43] Zaidman and Pantel, *Religion*, 27.

deeply religious in its own way. Josine Blok, in discussing the meaning of the *hiera kai hosia* (traditionally rendered as "the secular and the sacred"), writes, ". . . the juxtaposition of *hiera* and *hosia* acknowledges the differences between gods and men, and between the kinds of obligations humans have toward each party, but in no way entails an opposition between their spheres of action, let alone between sacred and profane domains." Alternatively, she suggests that the ". . . ancient Greek perception of society can be rendered as a covenant between humans and gods, and *hiera* and *hosia* as the synopsis of all relations of exchange and obligation between [them] . . . from the human perspective"[44] While the religious dimensions of Athenian life are not the main topic of this discussion, this aspect of the *oikos* is notable for its fundamentally relational nature. By being in a family one's identity was established not just by maintaining the proper relations to one's family members, as Aristotle discusses in the *NE*[45], but by a particular relationship to the deities (whether anthropomorphic or not). As discussed in Chapter 2, perception for Aristotle is fundamentally relational and this includes perception of both the human and the divine. In this way Aristotle's sense of the self as in relation to others certainly would not exclude relations with the deities. While the details of Aristotle's religious life are obscure, he was apparently quite supportive of the traditional religious praxis of the Greek city states, perhaps alongside the peculiarities of his account of the unmoved mover as it is presented in the *Metaphysics* and other distinct features of his religious outlook in his minor works.[46] This commitment to relative religious orthopraxy in his time is suggested by his emphasis on the importance of having priests and overseers for the care of what was due

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[44] Blok, "A 'Convenant'," 33.

[45] E.g. the treatment of *philia* between family members at *NE*, VIII.12.

[46] This point is discussed quite fully by Mor Segev, *Aristotle on Religion.*

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to the gods in several places in the *Politics*.[47] In either case the view of the self as *familial*,

that is, of entailing a particular set of duties to one's kin as well as to the gods stemming

from one's place in the household, was deeply embedded in the ancient Greek way of life.

This quality of the individual being understood largely in and through the context of family

is not something that Aristotle tried to break away from.[48]

4.2 Rationality and Society

This key understanding that leads Aristotle to address his appeal to legislators at

all, namely, that the type of leisured, theoretical happiness combined with practical virtue

described in the *NE* is only accessible to those who have the proper moral habituation to

begin with, is dependent on an *objective-participant* view of the self. In other words, the

legislator must understand the importance of the self as political—as *relational*—in order

to properly do his job. This view hinges on a primary feature of the *objective-participant*

model: the view that correct rational understanding is based initially on pre-rational

acculturation as a good human being. This is in contrast to modern views which see

practical reason as entirely separable from any particular social context. This early moral

habituation, originally impressed by one's parents and community, can be formed into

articulated, rational habits through the circular relation of virtuous self-love and virtue

friendship, but the circle must begin in the context of a virtuous city. Ironically, the

wisdom (*phronēsis*) that constitutes the apex, or the completing step of political virtue, is

in this way always necessarily contextual. Political virtue and general rational truths are

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[47] E.g. 1322b18-29, 1331b4-6.
[48] This is obviously in stark contrast to Plato's radical abolishment of the family and property in the
Republic, which Aristotle explicitly argues against at *Politics* II.1.

inseparable, because you cannot begin on the path of understanding reason without proper habits—rationality is not separate from humanity. As Aristotle rhetorically asks in book X.9: "who could persuade a man in such a state [sc. living according to passion] to change?"[49] This section of the Chapter will explore Aristotle's understanding of practical reason as inherently contextual and then will go on to compare this model with the opposed model which underlies the *subjective-individualist* framework.

This notion of rationality as related to humanity points to an important discrepancy between the way the word "rational" is used in the ancient Greek and modern context as one of the key elements of the interpretative problems that occur when approaching Aristotle with a modern outlook. As Charles Taylor explains, for the ancients, ". . . [t]o be rational was to have the correct vision, or in the case of Aristotle's *phronēsis*, an accurate power of moral discrimination. But once we sideline a vision of the good and consider it irrelevant to moral thinking, then our notion of practical reason is procedural." He goes on to describe how this procedural style of thinking manifests for the utilitarians as "maximizing calculations" and how "[f]or Kantians the definitive procedure of practical reason is that of universalization."[50] If the world does not define the moral agent, but the moral agent is free to define the world, rationality must be defined by a consistent series of logical manoeuvers. In this way one's logic—one's rationality—may be called justified and so somehow good. Since in the ancient Greek framework the good was part of the cosmic order—was objective—rationality was a matter of grasping what is already ordered. This view allowed one to understand, and thus enjoy, that order since understanding for Aristotle is inherently pleasurable—through the habits one has

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[49] 1179b28: τὸν δ᾽ οὕτως ἔχοντα πῶς οἷόν τε μεταπεῖσαι;
[50] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 86.

developed in order to achieve this understanding, one's physical and emotional life has come to be in harmony with the natural way of things.[51] The inclusion of emotion in this schema was discussed with regard to Plato in Chapter 3; as Taylor comments about Plato (although it certainly applies to Aristotle as well, given his presentation of the good in the *Metaphysics*): "[t]o be rational is to have a vision of the rational order, and to love this order."[52] Thus embodied humanity and rationality are not separate, but the former provides the conditions for the latter to be able to fully develop and thus grasp, contextualize, and, in turn, nourish the former. Rationality is not the basis of human life; it is a distinctive feature of full human development (and according to Aristotle the highest feature) which enables us to live well.

So, what exactly is rationality for Aristotle? Notably, although it is a commonplace at this point to say that Aristotle defined man as a "rational animal," such a definition is nowhere to be found in his works.[53] The attribution of the definition *animal rationale* to Aristotle is rather a product of the Latin scholastic tradition. Hannah Arendt takes this up in *The Human Condition* when she writes about the term "*zoon logon ekhon* [sic] ('a living being capable of speech')" and comments that "[t]he Latin translation of this term into *animal rationale* rests on [a] . . . fundamental misunderstanding. Aristotle meant neither to define man in general nor to indicate man's highest capacity, which to him was not *logos*, that is, not speech or reason, but *nous*, the capacity of contemplation, whose chief characteristic is that it cannot be rendered into speech."[54] This is a very important point

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[51] The unity of political and cosmic order—and the sense in which a proper relation to this order is also pleasurable—will be discussed further in Chapter 5.
[52] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 92.
[53] Boyle, "Essentially Rational Animals," 7, points this out.
[54] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 27. She cites *NE*, 1142a25 for the claim that *nous* cannot be put into words.

posed by Arendt, which nevertheless requires a number of qualifications. Firstly, while the life of *nous* is indeed the highest for Aristotle,[55] the claim that *nous* "cannot be rendered into speech" seems like a mistranslation of the word *logos* in the context of the passage Arendt cites as evidence (*NE* 1142a25). There Aristotle writes: "[*phronēsis*] is opposed to *nous*; for *nous* pertains to definitions, of which there is no *logos*, whereas *phronēsis* pertains to ultimate particulars, which are not the object of science but of perception . . . ."[56] Here it seems that the term *logos* is employed in the technical sense of rational proof, rather than simply speech. For *nous* pertains in general to the *archai*[57] or in this case to definitions or premises (τῶν ὅρων), which are the *basis* of a proof and are thus themselves not provable. In this way, it is mistaken to translate *logos* in this instance as "speech." Furthermore, Arendt's critique furthers falls within the framework of Arendt criticizing the translation of *zoon politikon* as *animal sociale* in Aquinas. She argues that there was a much more radical separation between public (politics) and private (household) in Aristotle's conception of the *polis* than can be captured by the later term "society," which for her represents a specific kind of breaking down of public and private barriers and thus a blending of the two.[58] Along these lines she argues that the household, the realm of women and slaves, was the realm of pure necessity and thus violence, whereas political life was the only forum where there was "freedom."[59] It does seem that this is true for Athenian life in general and true to some degree for Aristotle (*politikon* does indeed seem to mean a much more specific type of relation than 'societal' does today). And yet, from the

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[55] 1178a6ff.
[56] *NE* 1142a25: ἀντίκειται μὲν δὴ τῷ νῷ· ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς τῶν ὅρων, ὧν οὐκ ἔστι λόγος, ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἐσχάτου, οὗ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη ἀλλ᾽ αἴσθησις . . . .
[57] 1141a7-8.
[58] Ibid. And all of Chapter II, "The Public and Private Realm," 22-78.
[59] Ibid, 30ff.

standpoint of human nature, Arendt's argument for the "political" as related to one's fully human nature and the "private," i.e. household, as only pertaining to one's animal nature seems too strong to be supported by the text of the *NE* itself. To take up just one example from the discussion of slavery in the context of *philia* in Book VIII, Aristotle writes that "there is no friendship towards a slave *qua* slave, but there is *qua* human being."[60] While Aristotle was critical of the existing system of slavery at his time, he did offer a defence of the notion, properly understood through his notion of "natural slavery," i.e. that some people are by nature apt only for servitude and others for commanding.[61] Thus, in this distinction of the role of a slave from that slave's humanity, he does indicate a slightly less harsh view of human relations than may have been prevalent in the broader culture at the time.[62] As Mariska Leunissen also notes, Aristotle comments at *Politics*, I.13 1259b27-28, that slaves are fully human and possess reason (ὄντων ἀνθρώπων καὶ λόγου κοινωνούντων), but only to a limited extent.[63] This leads to an important point about what *is* in fact meant by Aristotle when he writes about humanity's special relationship with *logos*. While Arendt's claim that *logos* does not define man, like her claim that *sociale* is a faulty translation of *politikon*, is a bit problematic, it *is* the case that Aristotle's use of *logos* in his definitions of humanity is far removed from the modern sense of the word "rational," in the abstract, procedural sense discussed above.

Logos in Aristotle's definitions of humanity, as Arendt points out, relates not to "rationality" in general but particularly to speech and this is also perhaps what the passage

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[60] *NE*, 1161b5-6: ᾗ μὲν οὖν δοῦλος, οὐκ ἔστι φιλία πρὸς αὐτόν, ᾗ δ᾽ ἄνθρωπος.
[61] This discussion is at *Politics*, I.1, 1253b23-1255b40.
[62] Furthermore, Mariska Leunissen, *From Natural Character*, 48-54, points out that Aristotle's views about natural slavery did not necessarily apply to any particular ethnic group, e.g the "barbarians," but were based rather on individual capacity.
[63] Ibid, 53.

Leunissen points to—that slaves partake in *logos* (λόγου κοινωνούντων)—is suggesting. There are some significant passages from Aristotle which will help clarify this point, both of which are cited (among others) by Lis Wey in *Logos und Ousia: Sein und Sprache bei Aristoteles*. Wey discusses Aristotle's "anthropology (*Anthropologie*)." By "anthropology" Wey means Aristotle's biological definition (*biologische Bestimmung*) of humanity as well as his reflections on how humans should act ethically and politically. Wey notably comments that the term anthropology was alien to antiquity (*in der Antike . . . fremde*) because of its dependence on a genuinely contemporary and modern understanding of the human subject (*genuin neutzeitlich-moderne Auffassung des menschlichen Subjektes*).[64] The first of the passages is in the *Politics* in the same locus as Arendt refers to when she refers to the human as a "*zoon logon ekhon* [sic]." The passage reads as follows:

> the human is by nature a political animal . . . . It is clear that the human is a political animal moreso than than any bee or any herd animal. For, as we say, nature makes nothing in vain; and the human is the only animal that has speech (λόγον). The voice (φωνὴ) is a sign of the painful and the pleasurable, therefore other animals also have this (for their nature has developed up to the point where they have the sensation of pain and pleasure and can signal this to one another), but speech (ὁ δὲ λόγος) is for the sake of indicating the beneficial and the harmful, and that for the sake of pointing out the just and the unjust; for it is unique (ἴδιον) to humans, compared to all other animals, to have a perception (αἴσθησιν) of the good and the bad and the just and the unjust and all the others; and the sharing (κοινωνία) of these things forms a household (οἰκίαν) and a *polis*.[65]

In this passage we see the primary importance of *logos* for Aristotle. Although Arendt argues that *logos* is not the defining characteristic of humanity, but rather *nous*, Aristotle

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[64] Wey, *Logos und Ousia*, 76-77.

[65] *Politics*, 1253a2-18: ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον . . . πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζῷον πάσης μελίττης καὶ παντὸς ἀγελαίου ζῴου μᾶλλον, δῆλον. οὐθὲν γάρ, ὡς φαμέν, μάτην ἡ φύσις ποιεῖ· λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων· ἡ μὲν οὖν φωνὴ τοῦ λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος ἐστὶ σημεῖον, διὸ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει ζῴοις (μέχρι γὰρ τούτου ἡ φύσις αὐτῶν ἐλήλυθε, τοῦ ἔχειν αἴσθησιν λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος καὶ ταῦτα σημαίνειν ἀλλήλοις), ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν ἐστι τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον· τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἴσθησιν ἔχειν· ἡ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν.

is quite clear here that *logos,* from a biological point of view, is what separates humanity from other animals. In comparison to the scholastic notion of *animal rationale*, however, *logos* in this passage seems to be referring quite simply to *speech*, rather than a particular form of abstract thought (especially, as discussed above, of the sort that would qualify as "rational" in modern parlance). *Logos* is what separates humanity from other animals that share in community because, through *logos*, humans are able to represent (σημαίνειν, δηλοῦν) perceptions of value (good, bad, etc.), which lie beyond the simple physical experiences of pleasure and pain. Now, naturally one might say that perceptions of good and bad, just and unjust, do represent a certain kind of rational thought. While this is true to a certain extent (for the formulation of speech is necessarily associated with a certain degree of abstraction), this is not the significat point here. Aristotle indicates in the passage that, at its most basic level, speech can simply be for indicating the beneficial and harmful, and need not necessarily attain to the level of discussing justice and injustice, or those objects which are proper to the dianoetic virtues.[66] What, in fact, seems most important in this passage, is the way in which the human capacity for *logos* interacts with the more explicit definition of the human as a *political* animal. For, while *logos* does indeed represent a significant part of the essence of humanity, it is only a necessary, and not a sufficient condition for political life. This is because, while all humans (at least according to their nature) possess the capacity for speech, it is the *sharing* (κοινωνία) of this function, in the words of Aristotle, that makes the human *political*. Wey confirms this understanding

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[66] Although it is not the focus of this treatment, it is important that *logos* in the sense of speech is also the pre-condition for *logos* in the broader sense of discursive rationality. As Wey, *Logos und Ousia*, 79-80, writes: "In this way the capacity for speech . . . goes hand in hand with the capacity for thinking, contemplation, deliberation, and consideration, and ultimately the faculty of knowing (*Auf diese Weise geht Sprachbefähigung . . . mit der Fakultät des Denkens, Überlegungs und Abwägens sowie letzlich mit der Fähigkeit des Erkennens einher*)."

with the statement: "the *polis* is understood as the 'actuality of human nature,' in so far as, according to Aristotle, it is only in the *polis* that man can reach the full actualization of his inherent capacity for *logos*."[67] Human nature is thus formed of the combination of a capacity for speech as well as a necessary biological drive toward community. Thus the capacities for speech and thought on their own is partially human, but the actual use of these faculties, which is by nature communal (as language communicates thought with others), is fully human.

The final statement of the passage from the *Politics* above concerning the sharing of perceptions through *logos* also speaks against Arendt's criticism of the Latin phrase *animal sociale* and her claim that it does not attend to the radical separation between public and private life. For Aristotle says that the speech-based sharing of values forms not only the *polis*, but the household (οἰκίαν) as well. Just as *philia* can be experienced towards anyone—including slaves—in so far as they are human beings, the capacity of speech unites human beings initially through the household and finally through the *polis*. As mentioned above, Aristotle viewed the human as intimately embedded in family relations. As a biologist he viewed it as a fundamental part of human nature—shared with plants and animals—to wish to leave behind offspring.[68] As he explains at the opening of the *Politics*: "firstly, it is necessary that those people couple who are not able to exist apart from each other, such as the female and the male for the sake of procreation (and this is not by choice, but rather, just as in the case of other animals and plants it is natural [φυσικὸν] to desire to

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[67] Ibid, 81: *Die πόλις wird als "Aktualität" der menschlichen Natur" begriffen, sofern nach Aristoteles erst in der πόλις der Mensch zur Aktualisierung der in ihm angelegten Fakultät des λόγος kommen kann*.
[68] *De Anima*, II.4 415a24-415b3.

leave behind another like oneself)."[69] However, the connection between parent and offspring seems to go much deeper for Aristotle than in a modern individualist conception of selfhood. This is evidenced by a (perhaps) somewhat perplexing passage from *NE* I.10, in which Aristotle is considering whether a man may still be considered happy if misfortune befalls his descendants *after* his death. He writes: "[i]t would be strange if the dead man should change together [with his ancestors] and become sometimes happy and sometimes wretched; but it would also be strange if the fortunes of descendants did not affect their ancestors, at least up to a certain length of time."[70] Aristotle leaves this matter unresolved in the *NE*. However, the import of this statement in terms of Aristotle's understanding of the self is significant. The notion that one's well-being, *eudaimonia*, is so intimately intertwined with the relative welfare of another that when you have died your well-being can be affected by the actions of your descendants, points to a conception of the self that is profoundly embedded in family relations both immediately and intergenerationally. Thus in many ways the *oikos* is seen as the extension of "oneself" both biologically and societally.

To return to the discussion of the definition of the human, the second relevant passage is from Book IV of *On the Parts of Animals* in a discussion of the relative sizes of limbs. This passage reads as follows:

> the anterior limbs and the trunk are continuous with the head and neck. Man, instead of forelegs and forefeet, has arms and hands. Man is the only animal that stands upright and this is because his nature and essence is divine (τὴν φύσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι θείαν). Now the business of that which is most divine is to think abstractly and to be prudent (τὸ νοεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν); and this would not be easy if

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[69] *Politics*, 1252a26-30: ἀνάγκη δὴ πρῶτον συνδυάζεσθαι τοὺς ἄνευ ἀλλήλων μὴ δυναμένους εἶναι, οἷον θῆλυ μὲν καὶ ἄρρεν τῆς γενέσεως ἕνεκεν καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐκ προαιρέσεως, ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ζῴοις καὶ φυτοῖς φυσικὸν τὸ ἐφίεσθαι, οἷον αὐτό, τοιοῦτον καταλιπεῖν ἕτερον).

[70] *NE*, 1100a27-30: ἄτοπον δὴ γίνοιτ᾽ ἄν, εἰ συμμεταβάλλοι καὶ ὁ τεθνεὼς καὶ γίνοιτο ὁτὲ μὲν εὐδαίμων πάλιν δ᾽ ἄθλιος: ἄτοπον δὲ καὶ τὸ μηδὲν μηδ᾽ ἐπί τινα χρόνον συνικνεῖσθαι τὰ τῶν ἐκγόνων τοῖς γονεῦσιν.

there were a great deal of the body at the top weighing it down, for weight hampers the motion of the intellect (διάνοιαν) and of the general sense (τὴν κοινὴν αἴσθησιν.).[71]

This is an excellent example of the deep influence Aristotle's biological thinking had on his thinking about humanity. Like in the passage from the *Politics*, Aristotle here makes a direct comparison of humans to other animals to show what distinguishes them. Here, however, he does not refer to *logos*, but rather to two different functions of the part of the *psychē* which partake of *logos,* namely, *nous* (τὸ νοεῖν) and *phronēsis* (φρονεῖν). In accordance with the discussion of the unity of the virtues in Chapter 2, Aristotle presents these two functions of the *psychē*, the one pertaining to human affairs and moral virtue and the other to science and the divine, as both important in separating humanity from animals. The human is presented as an embodied creature, but with an acknowledgement that the very structure of that body lends itself to a particular kind of nature which he describes here as divine. In accordance with Charles Taylor's understanding of rationality, the sense in which Aristotle uses divine here does not suggests that the thinking subject stands above its human, or animal nature, but that its nature *as* a human is situated in a particular relation in which it has access to that which is animal as well as that which is divine. Proper to the *objective-participant* view of the self, the human is shown to have its place in a larger order.

Here it would be helpful to make a further note of how deeply *embodied* Aristotle's ethical theory actually was. In discussing Aristotle's ethnographic observations about

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[71] 686a25-32: Ἐχόμενα δὲ τοῦ αὐχένος καὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τά τε πρόσθια κῶλα τοῖς ζῴοις ἐστὶ καὶ θώραξ. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἄνθρωπος ἀντὶ σκελῶν καὶ ποδῶν τῶν προσθίων βραχίονας καὶ τὰς καλουμένας ἔχει χεῖρας. ὀρθὸν μὲν γάρ ἐστι μόνον τῶν ζῴων διὰ τὸ τὴν φύσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι θείαν· ἔργον δὲ τοῦ θειοτάτου τὸ νοεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν· τοῦτο δ᾿ οὐ ῥᾴδιον πολλοῦ τοῦ ἄνωθεν ἐπικειμένου σώματος· τὸ γὰρ βάρος δυσκίνητον ποιεῖ τὴν διάνοιαν καὶ τὴν κοινὴν αἴσθησιν. This translation is that of A.L. Peck from the Loeb edition of the text with a few modifications of my own.

natural character in *Politics* VII.7 Mariska Leunissen remarks how, for Aristotle, ". . . the differences in character between people living in different regions must be due to their individual material natures. More specifically, they are due to the properties of the blend of their blood . . . ."[72] The appropriate blending of blood is based on a number of material factors at the time of birth including the age of a person's parents, the quality of their blood, their geographical location, as well as the direction of the wind.[73] Leunissen's observation here is vital for it shows how "'habit' and 'reason,' the other two factors Aristotle believes play a crucial role in moral development, have only a limited impact on and chance of success with those who lack the natural pre-requisites for the development of full virtue."[74] These observations are problematic from a modern standpoint, and in many ways rightly so, as they unjustly exclude many people from the possibility of attaining full virtue. They are also evidently informed by Aristotle's Athenian cultural bias, as only certain free men have the best material qualities and these happen to be the free men born in and around Athens.[75] At the same time, they do serve to emphasize the way in which Aristotle viewed the self as contextual, not only in terms of society, but in terms of natural environment and physical makeup.[76]

The understanding of rationality itself as contextual is vital to Aristotle's theory of education and, correspondingly, to his understanding of the purpose of the *NE*. In an important section of his discussion concerning the problems with the application of an

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[72] Leunissen, 45.
[73] Ibid, 179.
[74] Ibid, 177.
[75] Ibid.
[76] It is not possible to fully elaborate on the point raised in this paragraph in the space of this Chapter, although it has potentially wide-ranging implications for a comparison of Aristotle with modern philosophy. The question of the restriction of virtue to freeborn Athenian males is touched on again briefly in the Conclusion of this thesis.

"egoism-altruism" framework to ancient Greek ethics, Christopher Gill comments on the pivotal significance of how one views the role of rationality in human life. A feature of the *subjective-individualist* world-view which is an obstacle to a proper understanding of works such as the *NE* and the *Politics* is the ". . . belief that Greek ethical theory is designed to show any rational agent that altruism constitutes the deepest kind of self-realization."[77] As has been shown through the argument so far in this Chapter, this constitutes a grave misunderstanding of Aristotle's theory of education. Gill notes how ". . . pre-reflective virtue is a precondition for post-reflective virtue . . ." and how this conflicts with the 'Archimedan' conception of rationality, i.e. that rationality independently sets the standard for ethical engagement prior to any actual ethical relations.[78] This is the most common modern notion of the role of rationality, which Charles Taylor refers to as the BA model. On this model, any given action (A) is based on a universally valid (i.e. abstractly rational) moral injunction (B). This is seen in Kantianism in the form of the categorical imperative and in utilitarianism as 'the greatest good for all.' In this way, valid reasoning is based on the principle A=B.[79] This moral injunction, 'B', is what is represented by the altruism argument and its claim that it is abstractly morally good to be altruistic and thus one's reasoning ought to stem from that. However, altruism itself, just like the utilitarian idea of 'the greatest good,' itself has no fundamentally rational basis. With altruism in particular, the worldview it derives from and "whose influence on Western thought can hardly be overstated, is the Christian one."[80] Thus the basis of any rational system is always social, political, and religious and can never itself be "rational" in the modern sense. This has great

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[77] Gill, *Personality*, 334.
[78] Ibid, 343.
[79] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 76.
[80] Gill, *Personality*, 334.

import for the understanding of the self as societally embedded, for, as a human being, one must receive the proper starting points in experience, which is to say from society, in order to have the proper inclination or feeling for what is good (which for Aristotle includes a valuing of rationality itself). Aristotle experiences for himself and sees in others that the use of the rational faculty leads to virtue and thus pleasure and enjoyment, for it is indeed a vital part of what it means to be human. Therefore he values that part of humanity and wishes to structure a society so as to nourish the full range of the human capacity to virtuously interact with others as well as the divine. This further explains why Bodéüs' argument that the treatise was not intended for an audience of individuals wishing to become good, but rather for legislators, makes sense. Both the structure of the political self as a linguistic being and the source of human rationality in proper habituation makes the possibility of a virtuous self for Aristotle dependent on a virtuous society.

Chapter 5: Contemplating Interdependence—Aristotle on *Theōria*

It has been shown thus far in this thesis the extent to which Aristotle viewed

friendship, family, and society as integral to human flourishing and the ability for

individuals to develop their rational faculty and thus moderate and enjoy their passions.

The human experience is entirely interdependent. But what of the divine experience?

Aristotle makes it clear that the goal of good society is ultimately to facilitate and

encourage philosophy and from there the attainment of a life of contemplation, which is

explicitly distinct from political life.[1] As elaborated on in *NE* X, this type of happiness is

a type of activity which is not available to animals and is closest to the activity of

Aristotle's god: ". . . thus the activity of the deity, which excels in blessedness, would be

contemplation. And that human activity which is closest to this, is the happiest . . . .

[O]ther animals cannot be happy, since they do not partake of contemplation. Thus to

whatever extent there is contemplation, there is happiness . . . ."[2] The practical virtues are

dismissed as candidates for the highest form of virtue, and thus happiness, because of

their very relationality and their grounding in the nature of the human as a composite

being (σύνθετον), whereas the happiness of the mind is separate (κεχωρισμένη).[3] What

then is the relationship between human political activity and the divine activity of the

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[1] This follows from Aristotle's claim at *NE*, I.4 1095a14-21 that the aim of politics is the *highest of all practical goods (*ἀκρότατον τῶν πρακτῶν ἀγαθῶν), which is happiness, together with his differing definition at *NE*, X.8 1178b6-7 "that perfect happiness is a certain contemplative activity (ἡ δὲ τελεία εὐδαιμονία ὅτι θεωρητική τις ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια)." He also explicitly mentions a difference between the life of politics and the life of contemplation at *NE*, I.5 1096a3-4 saying, apparently with reference to Book X, that the third type of life, the contemplative, will be treated 'in what follows' (τρίτος δ᾽ ἐστὶν ὁ θεωρητικός, ὑπὲρ οὗ τὴν ἐπίσκεψιν ἐν τοῖς ἑπομένοις ποιησόμεθα)."

[2] 1178b20-27: . . . ὥστε ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνέργεια, μακαριότητι διαφέρουσα, θεωρητικὴ ἂν εἴη: καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δὴ ἡ ταύτῃ συγγενεστάτη εὐδαιμονικωτάτη . . . τῶν δ᾽ ἄλλων ζῴων οὐδὲν εὐδαιμονεῖ, ἐπειδὴ οὐδαμῇ κοινωνεῖ θεωρίας. ἐφ᾽ ὅσον δὴ διατείνει ἡ θεωρία, καὶ ἡ εὐδαιμονία . . . .

[3] 1178a9-21.

contemplator? Is the interdependence of human virtue all merely instrumental and thus

something ultimately to be abandoned in order to reach the apex of divine virtue itself?

This question will be taken up at the beginning of this Chapter and it will be shown that

the apparent dichotomy between politics and contemplation in Aristotle's thought is not a

true dichotomy. Rather, as it is throughout Aristotle's thinking, the development of good

politics and virtue, leading to contemplation, represents a harmonious progression of ever

more perfect activity, which never abandons the lower virtues in favor of the higher, but

grows to encompass all good human (and some divine) things. Thus, one requires the

friendship and education described in Chapters 2 and 4 in order to achieve the life of

contemplation—social and political relations are necessary conditions for the possibility

of free contemplative activity. This deep interdependence between society and the life of

thought deepens even further, however, in light of a consideration of the nature of the

object of the highest life of *theōria*, which is allegedly distinct from politics. Thus, this

Chapter will conclude with an exploration of the nature of Aristotle's unmoved mover,

showing that the highest object of contemplation is, in fact, relationality itself. In turn,

this contemplation of the highest principle, which is the relationality of the world,

provides the contemplator with insight into the place of the human being within the order

of the cosmos and thus the necessity and goodness of the "lower," human, virtues.

As explained in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Aristotle's intention in the *NE* is to show

the unity of virtue and happiness. An important part of this argument is that virtue

involves pleasure.[4] Book X of the *NE* begins with a discussion of pleasure, which leads

into a treatment of contemplation (*theōria*) and the happiest life. The fact that a

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[4] This not to simply identify happiness with pleasure, but to say that happiness is an essential component of pleasure.

consideration of pleasure is the transition for Aristotle from the highest political virtue,

found in the moral virtues instilled by law and family and perfected by virtuous

friendship, to the divine activity of contemplation is testament to the simplicity and

elegance of Aristotle's ethical and political thought (despite its apparent complexities).

His trust in the affect of pleasure as an indicator that a being is accomplishing its true

function is further proof of his trust in the goodness of beings (as discussed at the end of

Chapter 3 with special reference to Plato), since one need not reject the passions in order

to attain truth or wisdom. This of course has the caveat that pleasure is experienced by

one with the proper moral character, for that person's senses have been attuned to reality

and are free from "corruptions and defilements (φθοραὶ καὶ λῦμαι)."[5] As Aristotle writes:

"it seems in all such matters [viz. the sense perceptions] that what *appears* to the virtuous

person is what *is*. If this is true, as it seems, and the measure of everything is virtue and

the good person, *qua* goodness, then what appears pleasurable to that person is [truly]

pleasurable."[6] It is in this way (i.e. the virtuous person's attainment of pure perception)

that one discovers that contemplation is truly the most pleasant activity. Aristotle's view

here is not one of a brute hedonism, in the sense of claiming that contemplation simply

delivers the highest *quantity* of pleasure.[7] Rather, he sees that contemplation differs *in

kind* from the pleasures typical of the "life of pleasure" identified at the beginning of the

NE in his tripartite division of lives (i.e utility, pleasure, and contemplation). As

Francisco Gonzalez writes, ". . . to the degree that an activity is its own object it will be

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[5] *NE*, X.5 1176a17.
[6] 1176a13-16: δοκεῖ δ᾽ ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς τοιούτοις εἶναι τὸ φαινόμενον τῷ σπουδαίῳ. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο καλῶς
λέγεται, καθάπερ δοκεῖ, καὶ ἔστιν ἑκάστου μέτρον ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἀγαθός, ᾗ τοιοῦτος, καὶ ἡδοναὶ εἶεν ἂν αἱ
τούτῳ φαινόμεναι.
[7] Gonzalez, *Aristotle on Pleasure*, 142-3.

pleasurable in itself. Because the object of knowledge is in the soul and is not separated

materially from the activity of knowledge, this activity will be more inherently

pleasurable than sensation."[8] While external pleasures necessarily involve motion

towards an object of desire outside the subject, the pleasure of thought unifies subject and

object to a much greater degree. This is why the *energeia* of the mind is more pleasant

than that of the senses:

> "it is agreed that the most pleasant of *energeiai* in accordance with virtue is that
> which is in accord with wisdom (σοφίαν); and so it appears that philosophy
> provides many pleasures which are marvelous in regard to their purity and
> stability, and it is thus reasonable that life would be even more pleasurable for
> those who know [i.e. the contemplator] than those still seeking."[9]

In *NE* Book VI.7, wisdom (σοφία) is identified as the capacity to speak truthfully about

and demonstrate the first principles (περὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀληθεύειν)[10] and thus it seems that

this is the character of contemplation for Aristotle—no longer to seek, but to have

attained a stable knowledge—to have internalized and thus become unified with—the

principles of the *kosmos* such that one can demonstrate them. There are a number of

criteria that support this discovery: contemplation is the activity of the highest part of the

self (1177a12-21); it is the most continuous, since one does not tire as easily as when one

is engaged in physical activites (1177a21-22); it is the most self-sufficient, for once you

have the necessary external goods in place you can do it alone (1177a28-1177b1); it is

loved for its own sake, since it produces nothing other than itself (1177b1-4); and it is

leisured—relaxing—in contrast to war or politics (1177b4-24). All of these criteria are

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[8] Ibid, 157.
[9] *NE*, 1177a23-27: ἡδίστη δὲ τῶν κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν ἐνεργειῶν ἡ κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν ὁμολογουμένως ἐστίν: δοκεῖ γοῦν ἡ φιλοσοφία θαυμαστὰς ἡδονὰς ἔχειν καθαρειότητι καὶ τῷ βεβαίῳ, εὔλογον δὲ τοῖς εἰδόσι τῶν ζητούντων ἡδίω τὴν διαγωγὴν εἶναι.
[10] 1141a17-18.

essentially related to pleasure—pleasure is a proof of the goodness of contemplation from the standpoint of humanity. If contemplation were truly an activity separate from relational human concerns it would necessarily transcend the affect of pleasure. However, we see here how, according to the criterion of pleasure, contemplation is not radically separate from political virtues but is a perfection of the pleasure inherent in those lower virtues: "the different kinds of pleasures which are pursued are only different degrees of approximation to that absolutely complete activity which is to be called pleasure without qualification."[11]

The question remains as to how this activity of contemplation, which is most pleasant, is still nonetheless relational, especially in light of Aristotle's claim that it is "most self-sufficient." To respond to this question, it is necessary to return to the discussion of *philia in* Chapter 2. There it was explained how virtue could only be developed through an interdependent, we-subject, relationship with a virtuous friend. As Aristotle reasons at *NE* X.7, since "happiness is activity in accordance with virtue (ἡ εὐδαιμονία κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν ἐνέργεια)" it is reasonable that it would be in accord with the highest virtue. Accordingly, he argues that this virtue would be the virtue of the mind (νοῦς), since the mind is the highest part of the self and contemplation is its particular excellence. Here a question arises: if contemplation is in accord with the virtue of the mind, does it, at its highest level, cease to be relational and move beyond the highest good of friendship? Many scholars indeed claim that there is a "contradiction" between the view of *eudaimonia* as contemplation presented in Book X and the view of *eudaimonia* based on practical wisdom (*phronēsis)* in the first nine Books. These views are often categorized as either "inclusive" or

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[11] Gonzalez, 157.

"exclusive,"[12] that is, that happiness *includes* both moral and intellectual virtues or that true happiness *excludes* practical wisdom and is ultimately only contemplative. Upon close examination, however, the distinction these views presuppose is artificial at best. As representatives of a much larger debate, Ann Ward cites Thomas Nagel as the proponent of the "exclusive view" and David Bostock as supporting the "inclusive view."[13] Both positions are based on an interpretation of Aristotle's *ergon* argument and differ according to whether they see the function of the human as necessarily singular ("exclusive" view), or whether that function can include other functions ("inclusive" view). Regardless of which tack the authors take, however, the concluding views they present are strikingly similar. Nagel finishes his article with the comment that the exclusive view is "a compelling position," but might be challenged by ". . . a different account . . . according to which the highest-level specification of human capacities was not just intellectual but involved both theoretical and practical concerns."[14] He does not indicate that he disagrees with this objection. Bostock makes just such an argument, viz. that "'[t]here are many 'human excellences,' and some of them do coincide with what we might call moral virtues, but some of them certainly do not (e.g. the 'theoretical wisdom' . . . highly praised in Book X.6-8)."[15] This distinction between inclusive and exclusive was originally made by W.F.R Hardie in 1965.[16] However, as Bostock points out, Hardie *himself* believed that "Aristotle

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[12] For the "exclusive" view see Thomas Nagel, "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*," and C.D.C Reeve, *Practices of Reason*. For the "inclusive" view see David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, especially 20-21; and J.L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*." These citation are found in Ward, *Contemplating Friendship*, 1, notes 1 & 2.
[13] Although these two scholars are perhaps not the *most* significant contributors to this discussion, their positions are indeed sufficiently representative of their respective positions.
[14] Thomas Nagel, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," 259.
[15] David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 20.
[16] Hardie, "The Final Good."

fails to distinguish between these two conceptions of one's ultimate end, and that what he

says requires us to take *eudaimonia* now in one way and now in the other."[17]

Turning to the following passage from Aristotle at *NE* X.8 makes this point more

than evident:

> there are many things required for actions, and the greater and more noble they are,
> the more they require. For the man who is in contemplation, none of these things
> are necessary, at least for [the present] activity (πρός γε τὴν ἐνέργειαν), but they
> are, so to speak, hindrances, at least for contemplation (πρός γε τὴν θεωρίαν). But
> insofar as he is a human and lives together with many others, he chooses to act in
> accord with virtue; for he will require such [external goods] for being a human.[18]

Aristotle's meaning here is unmistakable; both material goods and practical virtue, along

with contemplation, are required for a happy life. In particular, his use of the particle γε (*at*

least) emphasizes this point; he does not say that external goods are unnecessary and

hindrances *in general*, but restricts his statements with the repeated use of γε to those

instances when one happens to be engaged in contemplation.[19] Furthermore in his use of

πρός Aristotle is, for the sake of argument, separating out and considering the activity of

contemplation in conceptual isolation. Contemplation *qua* contemplation requires no

external good. In the following sentence, however, he considers it more loosely to say that,

in reality, i.e. not simply treated in isolation, contemplation requires external goods. Thus,

while Aristotle does categorize *phronesis* and political life as secondary to contemplation,[20]

it is absurd to suggest that he excludes them from the good life. The "exclusive" view

seems to involve a purely semantic distinction, insisting that because an *ergon* must be

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[17] David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 21.
[18] *NE*, 1178b1-8: πρὸς δὲ τὰς πράξεις πολλῶν δεῖται, καὶ ὅσῳ ἂν μείζους ὦσι καὶ καλλίους, πλειόνων. τῷ
δὲ θεωροῦντι οὐδενὸς τῶν τοιούτων πρός γε τὴν ἐνέργειαν χρεία, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς εἰπεῖν καὶ ἐμπόδιά ἐστι πρός γε
τὴν θεωρίαν: ᾗ δ᾽ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι καὶ πλείοσι συζῇ, αἱρεῖται τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν πράττειν: δεήσεται οὖν
τῶν τοιούτων πρὸς τὸ ἀνθρωπεύεσθαι.
[19] For the restrictive force of γε, see Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, section 2821.
[20] *NE*, 1178a9.

singular, there must be a contradiction between contemplation and *phronēsis*. This is using Aristotle's own definitions as a weapon against him and demanding more consistency from Aristotle's works than Aristotle himself provides. As Ann Ward writes, commenting on the passage quoted above:

> I believe . . . that in this passage Aristotle points to two aspects or ways of being of a single person who has achieved the highest human good or their final end. As naturally social and political beings, such persons are drawn out of themselves into a life of moral action grounded in prudential reasoning and reliant on external equipment and other human beings to manifest their virtue. Yet, at certain times, this person may be able to turn inward, as it were, allowing their intellect to engage in the activity of a divine contemplation.[21]

This she claims to be *"*both an inclusive and an exclusive view.*"* However, it amounts to a mere recapitulation of what Aristotle himself says: the "inclusive" vs. "exclusive" distinction is a strawman. In either case, it is clear that Aristotle views *all contemplation as relational*, for it is always supported by and in conjunction with friendship. In fact, Aristotle indicates at *NE* IX.10 that "it is evidently necessary to perceive existence together with one's friend, and this would occur in living together and *sharing in discourse and intellect.*"[22] This passage, in tandem with what is known of the social practices involving group philosophizing at both the Academy and the Lyceum, is highly suggestive of the fact that contemplation is a group activity.[23] This is confirmed by Aristotle himself in a short comment at the end of his explanation of why contemplation is the "most self-sufficient virtue" (previously cited above): ". . . the just person requires others to act justly toward as well as associates, just like the temperate and brave man and each of the others. But the

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[21] Ann Ward, *Contemplating Friendship*, 147.

[22] 1170b11-12: συναισθάνεσθαι ἄρα δεῖ καὶ τοῦ φίλου ὅτι ἔστιν, τοῦτο δὲ γίνοιτ᾽ ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας.

[23] For a description of Aristotle's life and a reconstruction of the philosophical institutions at Athens see, Düring, *Aristoteles*, 3-21 (*Leben und Persönlichkeit*).

wise man is able to contemplate alone, and the wiser the more self-sufficiently— although perhaps even better with companions (συνεργοὺς). . . ."[24] It is this qualifier (although . . . etc.) at the end of the statement that clarifies Aristotle's meaning: even at the highest peak of wisdom, contemplation is always better with others. This is the case, as mentioned above, because of the dialogic nature of the intellectual life for Aristotle—sharing in thinking with friends—rooted in the relational structure of the self.

The fact that engaging in contemplation initially requires social relationships for developing the virtue necessary for that activity, and that the activity itself, although "most self-sufficient (αὐταρκέστατος)" compared to other virtues, is nevertheless improved by working with others, has been shown. The question remains as to what exactly the object of the highest contemplation is; for if that object is one that transcends relation—is truly independent—than it would no longer follow that *all* being is relational for Aristotle. Rather, it would have to be concluded that *human* being is relational, but that relationality is the result of a "lower" part of the human's composite being, of the part of humanity that is not divine. Aristotle's vision of the life of contemplation is one that transcends the merely human. He writes, "such a life will be better than the life of a human (κρείττων ἢ κατ᾽ ἄνθρωπον); for a human will not live thusly [viz. truly happily] *qua* being a human, but *qua* the divinity that exists in him; to whatever degree this part differs from the composite (διαφέρει τοῦτο τοῦ συνθέτου), to that same degree the enactment (ἡ ἐνέργεια) of the virtue of this part differs from that of the other virtues."[25] Although human beings are a composite

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[24] *NE*, X.7 1177a30-34: ὁ μὲν δίκαιος δεῖται πρὸς οὓς δικαιοπραγήσει καὶ μεθ᾽ ὧν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ σώφρων καὶ ὁ ἀνδρεῖος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστος, ὁ δὲ σοφὸς καὶ καθ᾽ αὑτὸν ὢν δύναται θεωρεῖν, καὶ ὅσῳ ἂν σοφώτερος ᾖ, μᾶλλον: βέλτιον δ᾽ ἴσως συνεργοὺς ἔχων, ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως αὐταρκέστατος.
[25]*NE*, X.7 1177b27-30: ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη βίος κρείττων ἢ κατ᾽ ἄνθρωπον: οὐ γὰρ ᾗ ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν οὕτω βιώσεται, ἀλλ᾽ ᾗ θεῖόν τι ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει: ὅσον δὲ διαφέρει τοῦτο τοῦ συνθέτου, τοσοῦτον καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετήν.

(συνθέτου) and that composite is (practically, if not theoretically) inseparable, there is still a privileging here of the "divine" part of the composite which is identified in the line just after the above quotation (*NE* 1177b31) as mind (νοῦς); the life of mind is better or more powerful (κρείττων) than the merely human, embodied part. Although it has been argued thus far that Aristotle views body and mind as only conceptually and not practically separate, and thus interdependent, if the mind ultimately attains to a contemplation that is independent and beyond body or any other relation, it would have to be conceded that the interdependence of humanity is truly only of instrumental value to the highest human excellence. The highest form of contemplation would ultimately lead to an overcoming of the good society that leads up to itself and would attain to a state of pure independence. Thus it will be necessary to determine the character of the object of the highest form of contemplation in this regard.

The highest principle in Aristotle's philosophy and the ultimate object of contemplation is the unmoved mover, studied by first philosophy. C.D.C. Reeve explains how Aristotle thinks that ". . . theology . . . is identical to primary philosophy."[26] On this matter, he refers to *Metaphysics* VI.1, which it will be helpful to cite more fully here than Reeve does in his text. It is in this section of the *Metaphysics* that Aristotle identifies what types of thinking qualify as "contemplative (*theōretikē)*." Here he explains that there are three types of contemplative philosophy: mathematics, physics, and theology (1026a19). All of these types of philosophy deal with understanding first principles and causes (αἱ ἀρχαὶ καὶ τὰ αἴτια—1025b1), but mathematics and physics are not the highest form.

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[26] Reeve; *Action, Contemplation, and Happiness*; 265. It is important to note that there are other conceptions of first philosophy than the study of the unmoved mover, e.g. the study of being *qua* being or the study of *ousia*, inter alia. For a thorough study of the various definitions of first philosophy see Reale, *Il concetto di filosofia prima.*

Physics "deals with objects which admit of motion as well as the kind of being which is, in general, by definition not separable from matter,"[27] while it is "unclear whether the objects [of mathematics] are immovable and separable [from matter]."[28] Thus these both fall short of being the "first philosophy," which concerns the "separable and unmoving" and which "must all necessarily be eternal": "for such are the causes of those of the deities which are visible."[29] Thus it follows that "the contemplative sciences are more choiceworthy than the other sciences and that this [viz. the contemplative science which deals with the deities] is more choiceworthy than others." In this way the study of deities is the highest science, and this is identical to first philosophy. Furthermore, since the deities are causes and "unmoved movers" (as discussed in *Metaphysics*, XII.8), the highest object of contemplation will be the highest of these, the primary "unmoved mover" described at *Metaphysics* XII.7 1073a3-14. This unmoved mover consists purely of mental activity—thinking (νόησις)—which is completely separate from matter. The activity is described by Aristotle in the following terms: "evidently it thinks itself, and it is a thinking which is the thinking of thinking."[30] Aryeh Kosman also comments on the identification of first philosophy and theology, pointing out how, for Aristotle, this is not an uneasy combination of philosophy and divinity, but that they are truly inseparable: "[r]ather than attributing the role of first mover to divinity, think instead of conferring divine status on that which is revealed to be the world's motive principle; instead of imagining a cardinal feature of god

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[27] 1125b26-29: . . . περὶ τοιοῦτον ὂν ὅ ἐστι δυνατὸν κινεῖσθαι, καὶ περὶ οὐσίαν τὴν κατὰ τὸν λόγον ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ὡς οὐ χωριστὴν μόνον.

[28] 1026a8-9: . . . ἀκινήτων καὶ χωριστῶν ἐστί, νῦν ἄδηλον . . . .

[29] 1026a16-18: ἡ δὲ πρώτη καὶ περὶ χωριστὰ καὶ ἀκίνητα. ἀνάγκη δὲ πάντα μὲν τὰ αἴτια ἀΐδια εἶναι . . . ταῦτα γὰρ αἴτια τοῖς φανεροῖς τῶν θείων. By "those of the deities which are visible" Aristotle likely means the causes of the motion of the planets, which he considered to be the true gods (as opposed to the anthropomorphic deities of mythology); see, Segev, *Aristotle on Religion*, 9.

[30] 1074b34-35: αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.

as awareness, think instead of coming to see the principle of awareness that we have of this world [*nous*] . . . as for that very reason being divine."[31] According to Aristotle's argument, this is the ultimate cause of the motion of the universe and is thus the highest object of contemplation for the philosopher and the highest possible activity for a human being.

If the highest object of contemplation is the unmoved mover, which is thinking and thus is not enmattered and reflects only on itself, what is the character of its relation to others? Here it will be important to remember a key distinction made about the self in Chapter 2, namely, that the self is a process and not an inert entity; for Aristotle, substance is an *activity*. This is also a key insight when it comes to understanding the unmoved mover. As Aryeh Kosman writes: ". . . the first substance is pictured both as activity and as prime mover. Thus as *energeia* it is perfectly self-actualized and self-fulfilled activity whose only nature is activity, a principle upon which depend the being and the motion of the world."[32] This understanding of the first principle as activity—as the ultimate verb, rather than the ultimate noun—is vital. This must be kept in mind when considering Aristotle's characterization of this principle as "a thinking which is the thinking of thinking"(ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις)." This formulation gives the impression, especially the few words before it—"it evidently thinks itself (αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ)"—that the first mover is an *entity* (as opposed to an activity) separate from all other *entities* in the world, which only thinks itself and is thus radically separate. Kosman comments how one must distinguish between ". . . thought thinking itself and thought thinking *of* itself . . . . The failure to mark this distinction has led some . . . to worry . . . that Aristotle's theology posits a god supremely narcissistic

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[31] Kosman, *The Activity of Being*, 186.
[32] Ibid, 229.

and wrapped . . . in eternal self-contemplation."[33] If Aristotle's unmoved mover truly only thinks itself in the sense of having itself as its exclusive object, it will be a completely senseless principle, removed from the world, or as Kosman further comments, ". . . the errant nonsense of supposing one might think a thought that is nothing but the thinking of it."[34] The nature of the thinking of the unmoved mover, however, does not appear to have this character, but rather it seems to include and be involved in *all* perception and thought. Aristotle's writes at *Metaphysics* XII.9: "in the case of the contemplative sciences, the form (λόγος) is the object and the thought; and so since the thinking and the object of thought are not separate in the case of whatever has no matter, they will be the same, and the thinking and the object of thinking will be a unity."[35] In the case of contemplation, the mind has perceived the form (λόγος) of objects and thus possesses them in itself, such that the contemplation of them is simultaneously the contemplation of itself. This makes further sense in light of a passage from the *De Anima* mentioned in the discussion of perception in Chapter 2: "whenever it [*nous*] has become each thing, as the man who knows is said to do when he is engaged in the activity of knowing [ὁ κατ᾽ ἐνέργειαν] (and this occurs whenever he is able to engage in this activity on his own) . . . . At that time it [*nous*] is capable of thinking itself."[36] Thus all knowledge is still initially dependent on sense perception, but it is a function of the mind that it receives the forms of objects separate from their matter (*De Anima* 429a15, 24-5). Once these forms have been received and one "knows" they can be

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[33] Ibid, 230. Kosman attributes this view to Richard Norman, "Aristotle's Philosopher-God." However, Norman, 63, actually agrees with Kosman in arguing that Aristotle's god is not " . . . a sort of heavenly Narcissus . . .", but rather that, 72, " . . . as Aristotle is aware, there is a sense in which all conscious thinking is incidentally self-thinking."

[34] Ibid.

[35] 1075a1-5: ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν θεωρητικῶν ὁ λόγος τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ ἡ νόησις; οὐχ ἑτέρου οὖν ὄντος τοῦ νοουμένου καὶ τοῦ νοῦ, ὅσα μὴ ὕλην ἔχει, τὸ αὐτὸ ἔσται, καὶ ἡ νόησις τῷ νοουμένῳ μία.

[36] *DA*, III.4 429b6-10: ὅταν δ᾽ οὕτως ἕκαστα γένηται ὡς ἐπιστήμων λέγεται ὁ κατ᾽ ἐνέργειαν (τοῦτο δὲ συμβαίνει, ὅταν δύνηται ἐνεργεῖν δι᾽ αὑτοῦ) . . . καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ αὑτὸν τότε δύναται νοεῖν.

reflected on actively in a manner that is then separate from matter, at which point the mind

is thinking the object and itself at once. Thus, the first mover as mind's "awareness" of

itself, as Kosman described above, is in a relationship of interdependence with its objects.

For perceptions depend on objects, and objects rely on the primary motion manifested

through awareness of perception, for this is the very principle of life itself. The most

explicit formulation of this connection between the first mover and objects of thought is in

Metaphysics XII.7, where Aristotle explains: "mind thinks itself through participation in

the object of thought."[37] In this way it is somewhat ambiguous as to whether the prime

mover can be said to have any real ontological status, separate from the world. As Kosman

writes: 'it remains . . . to be determined whether such being [viz. that of the first mover] is

exemplified other than immanently, whether in those mediate determinate instances of it

that we call sensible substances, or in the order of which they are a part . . . the cosmos."[38]

It is unclear whether the first mover is any*thing* other than the motion and self-motion of

the sensible substances it animates.

As illustration of this point of the first mover's immanence in and interconnection

with the various activities of being in the world, it is significant that the metaphors Aristotle

uses to clarify the nature of the first mover are political ones. He opens *Metaphysics* XII.10

in the following way:

> "[w]e must examine in what way the nature of the whole (ἡ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις)
> possesses the good and the greatest good (τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον), whether as
> something separate and independent, or as an arrangement, or both, *like in an army,*
> for the good (τὸ εὖ) of the army is in the arrangement as well as the general,
> although moreso the general; for he does not owe his existence to the arrangement,

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[37] 1072b19-20: αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ.
[38] Kosman, *The Activity of Being*, 236.

but the arrangement to him (οὐ γὰρ οὗτος διὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀλλ᾽ ἐκείνη διὰ τοῦτόν ἐστιν)."[39]

Here the "greatest good" Aristotle is referring to appears to be the first mover, or *nous*, and is clearly entering into dialogue with the Platonic notion of the Form of the Good.[40] He is asking whether the good, *nous*, is separate from the whole, immanent as the structuring principle of the whole, or both. Although the metaphor is introduced in the form of a question, Aristotle seems to suggest that 'both' is the closest answer and that the good exists in the universe in the same way as in an army; there is an emphasis on the general as a cause, but the army is necessarily defined by the structuring of the whole and can thus never be merely the general. And yet, the general is the possessor of the grand strategy of the whole army and is ultimately responsible for the successful co-operation of all of the parts in the army in working toward that end. In this way Aristotle privileges the goodness of the general—καὶ μᾶλλον οὗτος—as a cause of the individual activity of each of the parts of the army (like the first mover) while at the same time acknowledging that the general and the army itself are completely interdependent in practice, i.e. in the actual execution of any military campaign.

Aristotle further elaborates on this dynamic of ruler and ruled and how it mirrors the activity of the first mover in what follows in the same passage. He writes, "all things are ordered together in some way (συντέτακταί πως), although not in the same way—all fishes and birds and plants; it is not the case that they exist in such a way that there is no

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[39] 1075a10-16: ἐπισκεπτέον δὲ καὶ ποτέρως ἔχει ἡ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κεχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτό, ἢ τὴν τάξιν. ἢ ἀμφοτέρως ὥσπερ στράτευμα; καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῇ τάξει τὸ εὖ καὶ ὁ στρατηγός, καὶ μᾶλλον οὗτος: οὐ γὰρ οὗτος διὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀλλ᾽ ἐκείνη διὰ τοῦτόν ἐστιν.
[40] Stephen Menn, "Aristotle and Plato on God," 573.

relation between them, but rather there is some relation."[41] Despite his privileging of the

first principle, he here strongly emphasizes the interconnection of all things, in this instance

using the example of biological life. Notably, the privileging of the first principle does not

make it more *independent*, but, paradoxically more fundamentally bound to the structure

of the things below it. This feature of the structure of relation in Aristotle's thought is

described in the second political metaphor, that of the household: "All things are ordered

together around one [principle] (πρὸς μὲν γὰρ ἓν), but, as in a household (ἐν οἰκίᾳ), it is

least permitted for the free people to act at random, rather all or the majority of things are

already arranged [for them] (τέτακται). For the slaves and livestock there is little which

pertains to the common good (μικρὸν τὸ εἰς τὸ κοινόν) and thus much which is

haphazard."[42] Thus "freedom" for Aristotle is intimately tied up with responsibility and

necessity. The duty to serve the common good is most incumbent upon the free people of

a household and thus their lives are more structured and less "free," in the sense of random,

than the people and animals who are not free. In the same way the unmoved mover *must*

be exactly how it already is, for it is the principle upon which the goodness of all is

dependent. The ability for other, lower, forms of being to be other than they are stems from

their privation from the good, which is to say their being subject to coming to be and

passing away—all forms of imperfect motion (*kinēsis)*. Conversely, since the first principle

is perfect, its motion is necessarily eternal and unchanging. Thus, the most free principle

in the universe, the prime mover, would have to be the least free in its actions, and the

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[41] 1075a16-18: πάντα δὲ συντέτακταί πως, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ὁμοίως, καὶ πλωτὰ καὶ πτηνὰ καὶ φυτά: καὶ οὐχ οὕτως
ἔχει ὥστε μὴ εἶναι θατέρῳ πρὸς θάτερον μηδέν, ἀλλ᾽ ἔστι τι.
[42] 1075a18-22: πρὸς μὲν γὰρ ἓν ἅπαντα συντέτακται, ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ ἐν οἰκίᾳ τοῖς ἐλευθέροις ἥκιστα ἔξεστιν
ὅ τι ἔτυχε ποιεῖν, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἢ τὰ πλεῖστα τέτακται, τοῖς δὲ ἀνδραπόδοις καὶ τοῖς θηρίοις μικρὸν τὸ εἰς τὸ
κοινόν, τὸ δὲ πολὺ ὅ τι ἔτυχεν.

activity of thought is completely circumscribed by the necessary structures of all things which are moved by it as a final cause.

Aristotle sees the functioning of the first principle in relation to the cosmos as best illustrated by the structures found in politics. However, the analogy with politics is not merely a metaphor, but for Aristotle the activity of the *polis* is actually a concrete representation of the activity of the unmoved mover. This view is possible for Aristotle because of his ordered vision of nature, and his concomitant view that the *polis* is natural. Adriel Trott writes in a discussion of the arguments for the naturalness of the *polis* at *Politics* I.2: "Aristotle legitimates political life according to a definition of nature whereby the political community, structured as natural, is grounded in itself . . . . Since nature is an internal principle by which we move to our end, the *polis* is natural because it moves from within itself to fulfill itself in this activity."[43] Since community is a natural state for the human being—an outgrowth of the primary principle which is nature—it is a natural expression of that nature. Just as "[i]n the movement from plant life to animal life, one sees how freedom or mind is prefigured in nature,"[44] the structure of the *polis* arises naturally as an imitation of the ultimate freedom of the divine unmoved mover. Aristotle uses this language of divinity in regard to the *polis* at *NE* I.2, when he writes: "[the good] for the individual is admirable, but for a tribe and for cities it is even more noble (κάλλιον) and more divine (θειότερον)."[45] The *polis* mirrors and approaches this principle, for ". . . the activity of deliberation is what defines the political community and . . . the community strengthens itself by including more and more persons, that is, by encouraging this activity

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[43] Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community*, 81.
[44] Diamond, *Mortal Imitations*, 35.
[45] 1094b9-10: ἀγαπητὸν μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἑνὶ μόνῳ, κάλλιον δὲ καὶ θειότερον ἔθνει καὶ πόλεσιν.

so as to have more citizens, more persons involved in the rule."[46] If "[t]he same activity [viz. deliberation] makes a person human and makes the community political"[47] and this activity pertains to the part of the *psychē* which is ultimately divine, then the political community itself is an (albeit less fully actualized) expression of what makes a human divine. In this way the metaphors of the army and the household are not really metaphors, but the properly realized forms of these two political structures are actual manifestations in a lower level of the actuality of the structure of the cosmos and first mover itself.

On this model, the perfectly virtuous person who attains to the highest level of contemplation, and thus a state of being "most self-sufficient," is contemplating nothing other than the structure and nature of the relationality and interdependence of all things. The cosmos itself is an immanent manifestation of the unmoved mover and its self-thinking thought—including plant, animal, and political life—and this is what the highest philosophy discovers and reflects on. Thus this principle is far from abstract—it is super-human in the completeness of its perspective and duration (*Metaphysics*, XII.91075a9-10), but completely accessible to humans for certain periods of time through the activity of knowing. In this way the contemplator does not transcend political relationality, but returns to it with a higher understanding, through knowing its cause and source. The "phenomena" of daily existence are "saved," by the understanding that they are a "real" manifestation of the highest principle, which is also the supreme good. Furthermore, this good functions by means of affect, by means of desire—"it moves by being loved."[48] Just as in the works of Plato, desire, in the context of virtue, is not seen as a hindrance, but as an aid to the

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[46] Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community*, 79.
[47] Ibid.
[48] *Metaphysics*, XII.7 1072b4: κινεῖ δὴ ὡς ἐρώμενον.

discovery of the good, and, in this case, the sole instrument of the activity of the good itself. In this way, there is no conflict in Aristotle's theory of contemplation between political virtues and the virtues of thought, between the life of philosophy and society. According to this understanding there are not fully separate "selves" or truly discrete metaphysical entities, but a series of interweaving activities which are all inter-related to form the totality of the cosmos. In the activity of contemplation, one transcends the realm of the human in a way that is "most self-sufficient" and by freeing oneself from many (but not all) of the strictures of relationality and bodily necessity found in the lower virtues one is able to grasp the totality of the order and goodness of the cosmos. However, this vision of the total order in turn allows one to look back down (as it were) and more fully understand the functioning of human society as a part of that order and in many ways as a mirror of the whole. Human beings are not divinities and thus there is more that is random or un-free in their lives, and yet they are more free than animals and, through their rational faculty, are able to grasp what is divine. Thus, they are able, through the study of ethics and politics, to structure their lives in a manner that is in keeping with the truth of the highest reality. In this way ethics and politics, as well as metaphysics, do not admit of separate study, for the self is a contextual phenomenon which is always only understandable in its societal and cosmological context.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Due to the unity of Aristotle's thought—the way in which he views the world as an interconnected continuum—the self is inseparable from society in the same way that society is inseparable from the cosmic order of goodness, caused by the unmoved mover. In this thesis, Chapter 2 showed how the individual is viewed by Aristotle as more of a process than an entity, capable of sharing in virtuous activity with others and; with the guidance of its higher, rational, part; becoming itself virtuous. Chapter 3 showed how Aristotle "flattened" Plato's ontology and apparently chose to remove some of the mystical elements of Plato's thought and yet shared with him a deep commitment to the rational explication of the world as well as ontological goodness. Chapter 4 explored the themes of education and rationality, showing how Aristotle's view of what it means to be rational differs from the modern view in accord with his emphasis on the importance of good habits and up-bringing as a necessary pre-condition for shaping the rational faculty. Chapter 5 showed how the philosophical life culminates in a vision of the cosmos that simultaneously transcends human relationality and re-affirms its goodness and necessity as a part of the totality of the cosmos. In this way, it is possible to see how a proper understanding of Aristotle's thought—ethical, political, and metaphysical—must acknowledge that his view of human nature and self-hood is radically different from the modern view. Importing terms like "egoism" and "altruism" into a reading of his ethical thought, taken in isolation from the rest of his philosophy, leads to a misrepresentation of his ethical views by assigning them to categories which are fundamentally foreign to his entire world-view.

This examination of the existence of an alternative model of self and ethics necessarily calls into question the dominant assumptions on which much philosophy relies today. But how much of Aristotle's ethical view, especially due to its integration with a now over-turned cosmological model, is trapped within the system in which it was conceived? Although this is a very complex question that would require further work, it may be noted that some of the key insights of Aristotle's ethics—interdependence and goodness—are not unique. Although these insights are tied in for Aristotle to his perfectly ordered, geocentric view of the cosmos, these ideas are shared by other cultures with very different cosmological views. In the volume *Visioning a Mi'kmaw Humanities: Indigenizing the Academy*, James Sa'ke'j Youngblood Henderson describes a view of interdependence in the Mi'kmaw tradition, based on the concept of *L'nu*, a term that refers to a conception of humanity that pre-dates and is the basis of Mi'kmaw civilization.[1] He writes, "the Lnu'uk knowledge system and world view . . . is orientated to the energies of ecological places and situations rather than centred on humanity. . . . The interconnected ideas of embodied spirits, implicate order of nature and transformation are the core insights of Lnu'uk knowledge . . . . [I]t does not have a clear dualism between humans and nature . . . ."[2] This is similar to Aristotle's vision of an ordered cosmos, where humans are part of a spectrum of nature and do not stand outside it. Furthemore, Aristotle's concept of the self as more of a process than an entity is reflected in Lnu'uk knowledge, for "L'nu humanity is . . . more verb-based[,] processes based on sensations and emotions . . . rather than noun-based or object-oriented."[3]

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[1] Henderson, "L'nu Humanities," 29-30.
[2] Ibid, 47-48.
[3] Ibid, 48.

Furthermore, Charles Eisenstein reports the views of another indigenous culture, the Kogi tribe of the Colombian Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: on their view, harming any part of the environment (i.e. cutting down forests, etc.) ". . . damages the whole body of nature, just as if you cut off a person's limb or removed an organ. The well-being of all depends on the well-being of each."[4] This is similar to the *we*-flourishing inherent in Aristotle's conception of virtue-friendship in Chapter 2. This convergence of cultural views is also the case with Aristotle's notion of ontological goodness. A view of the world as good is a basic feature of many other traditions as well. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche points out how the Buddha taught a view of goodness and the goodness of society.[5] He shows how this view of goodness is not unique to Buddhism, but shared with other cultures and systems of thought; he writes, "[m]uch like ancient Greece, ancient India was a place of rich cultural curiosity. Philosophy and metaphysics were not simply theoretical; they were the principles for a good human life . . . . Whether it involved ancient Greece, India, Tibet, or China [the meeting of cultures] provoked an exploration of the possibility of universal goodness."[6] Whether one views the universe as caused by an unmoved mover or not, interdependence and the goodness of being are views shared by philosophical and wisdom traditions globally.

On the other hand, Aristotle's view of the world is distinctive and is by no means identical to those of the above-mentioned ancient and indigenous cultures. Although this thesis has used modern ethical philosophy as a point of comparison with Aristotle's thought, it must be remembered that he is also considered in many ways to be the

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[4] Eisenstein, *Climate*, 258-259.
[5] Sakyong Mipham, *The Shambhala Principle*, 20.
[6] Ibid, 179.

ancestor of the modern view. This seems to rest largely in the continuance of the

Aristotelian privileging of the rational faculty as the highest part of human nature and the

most divine throughout the European tradition. It seems that this is a feature of Aristotle

that is many ways shared with Kant, although Kant takes it much further, placing the

complete dignity of the human being in the will, solely under the condition that it is

rational: "[r]eason . . . relates every maxim of the will as legislating universal laws to

every other will . . . not on account of any practical motive . . . but rather from the idea of

the dignitiy of the rational being."[7] This "dignity of the human consists just in its capacity

to legislate universal law."[8] Furthermore, Aristotle's notion of the substance, although

upon close examination revealing itself to be more process-based than entity-based, lends

itself in orientation to an interpretation of the world based on theoretically isolatable and

definable entities. While Aristotle's cosmos is far from mechanistic, his substantialist

view underlies the eventual view of the world as a mechanism, consisting of different

parts which can be understood and controlled through isolation, a view that is

fundamental to a modern understanding of nature as well as technological progress.[9]

Biologist R.C. Lewontin writes of the ". . . current dominant [scientific] view . . . that at

every level the world is made of bits and pieces that can be isolated and that have

properties that can be studied in isolation."[10] Similar to the connection between Kant and

Aristotle in terms of their privileging of rationality, the modern view of substance takes

Aristotle's idea beyond the constraints of its original formulation, yet the fundamental

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[7] Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 40.
[8] Ibid, 44.
[9] Descartes is an obvious example of an early formulation of the mechanistic view of nature as Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143ff., discusses.
[10] Lewontin*, Biology as Ideology, 15.*

approach is similar— the examination and definition of the properties of individual beings.

Because of Aristotle's continuity with the European tradition, from the standpoint of re-imagining ethical possibilities and questioning dominant assumptions he does provide only a limited alternative to the modern, Eurocentric, view. Especially when non-European systems of thought are taken into consideration, despite similarities with Aristotle in their views of goodness and interpendence, it is clear that very different conceptions of rationality and being are possible. Aristotle's privileging of the rational faculty is a point of difference from L'nu humanity, which, as Henderson argues, "has a more holistic, naturalistic, and internal orientation, rather than one based on the concept of artificial time and deductive thought."[11] Here Henderson is suggesting that the faculty of reason is not the highest and that there is a type of knowing in his cultural tradition which is more "holistic." In this way, Lnu'uk teachings have "distinct language structures and categories, which transcend the boundaries of Eurocentric humanities and sciences."[12] Similarly, in terms of substance ontology, non-Greek cultures can provide a different conception of being, other than the definition and division of living processes into discrete substances. French Hellenist and Sinologist François Jullien, writes how "Confucius does not pose the problem of definition because he is not seeking to abstract a stable—and therefore ideal—entity, separable from becoming; he conceives of the real not in terms of being (as opposed to becoming) but as a process whose nature is to be regulated." This differs fundamentally from the Platonic and Aristotelian stance that true being is only manifest in definable forms. Commenting on this feature of the Greek

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[11] Henderson, "L'nu Humanties," 48.
[12] Ibid, 47.

position Jullien writes, "Socrates, on the other hand, to escape from the impasse created by nascent ontology, assumes the necessity of definitions (even if its ontological dimension is not made explicit until Plato)."[13] This approach is continued by Aristotle. On the Confucian model, although it is dialectical and uses reason, by never becoming established in the rational certainty of definition, one ultimately is thought to develop wisdom: "Confucian thought rejects, on principle, any search for definition (which could only be the search for the identical through the difference of moments and situations). Confucian thought therefore leads to no truth; there is no quality that it can abstract as essence to be constituted as generality. At the same time, because it refuses to isolate itself in a particular determination, it remains ever open to various possibilities . . . this wisdom is characterized by non-exclusivity."[14] This view, like that of the Mi'kmaw, claims to be more "holistic" than the Greek model, as one's perception of the flow of reality ("the difference of moments and situations") is not impeded by the fixity of definitions— the attempt to establish coherent, definable, substances—but rather remains non-exclusive and fully open to "various possibilities." A comparative study of the status of rationality in ancient Greek, indigenous, and Eastern cultures lies well outside of what is possible to discuss here and would need be the subject of future work. However, here it is merely relevant to see how, even though some of Aristotle's ideas are indeed similar to other cultures around the world, many essential aspects of his thought also fall within a very particular, European, cultural framework. Thus, he is both different from, but also deeply similar to, the later European tradition.

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[13] Jullien, *Detour and Access*, 228.
[14] Ibid, 243.

Finally, a mention must be made of Aristotle's prejudice against non-Greeks and women and his restriction of virtue to freeborn Athenian men. The idea that one must have the appropriate type of blood was touched on briefly in Chapter 4. This issue of the restriction of virtue on biological grounds is an issue which has been taken up recently by scholars such as Mariska Leunissen and Anne Ward.[15] While this doubtlessly requires more work to untangle, it suffices to say for now that all ethical systems are influenced by the culture of their time. Thus it seems quite possible to suggest that the basic tenets of Aristotle's account of virtue could be stripped of unnecessary cultural bias and applied in a much less restricted way to all members of society in a way that does not fundamentally undermine the parts of his ethics which are helpful. Furthermore, as discussed in the Introduction, the inclusion of a more embodied conception of the self has been an important factor in the development of more effective modern mental health treatment. In this way, Aristotle's insight about the connection between material nature and ethical character is in a very basic but important way correct, but mired in a type of biological determinism which is not in line with the facts of modern observation.

In fact, taking Aristotle's thought and and using one's own intelligence to determine what to accept and what to let go of is exactly what Aristotle himself suggests. At *NE* X.8 he writes:

> "the truth in practical concerns is judged by deeds and life experience; that is what is authoritative (κύριον) in these matters. It is necessary to examine what I have said and compare it to deeds and life experience (τὸν βίον), accepting that which is in harmony with experience and abandoning what proves discordant."[16]

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[15] See Leunissen, *From Natural Character*, which treats of Aristotle's understanding of the biological basis of social hierarchy. Ward, *Contemplating Friendship*, dicusses a number of feminist critiques of Aristotle's ethical thought and explores the role of mothering in his account of *philia*.

[16] 1179a18-22: τὸ δ᾽ ἀληθὲς ἐν τοῖς πρακτικοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἔργων καὶ τοῦ βίου κρίνεται: ἐν τούτοις γὰρ τὸ κύριον. σκοπεῖν δὴ τὰ προειρημένα χρὴ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὸν βίον φέροντας, καὶ συναδόντων μὲν τοῖς ἔργοις ἀποδεκτέον, διαφωνούντων δὲ λόγους ὑποληπτέον.

This is the essence of what makes Aristotle's virtue ethics so vital, even in terms of modern ethical thinking. Rather than searching for absolute maxims in ethical thought, one can pay attention to what is happening in one's own experience to determine for oneself what is helpful and what is harmful. In this way, certain of Aristotle's prejudices, such as those rejecting the potential for virtue in "barbarians" and women, which have not proven to hold true over time, can readily be rejected. Consequently, the parts of Aristotle's thought which are no longer beneficial can be let go, while others, such as those shared and corroborated by other traditions, as in the case of fundamental goodness and interdependence, can be re-examined and nourished after centuries of neglect in Europe and North America. In this way, although Aristotle's ethics do not provide a ready-made guide book for the challenges of modern times, they can nonetheless serve as an inspiration to continue to try to cultivate the *we*-flourishing that is inherent to the very nature of humanity as society continues to negotiate the question of how to be, not merely for the sake of living, but "for the sake of living well."[17]

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[17] *Politics*, I.1 1252b29-30: οὖσα δὲ τοῦ εὖ ζῆν.

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