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ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS AND ECONOMICS PART I: ETHICS

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

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Aristotle's Ethics and Economics Part I: Ethics*

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ABSTRACT

Aristotle (384-322 BC) came to Athens to study under Plato (427-347 BC). He remained at Plato's Academy for twenty years. After Plato and Xenophon (434-355 BC), he is regarded as the third leading writer in the Socratic school. This paper is part of a long-term research programme on the ancient Greeks. It is a companion to other work, which deals with the ancient Greek context, and the thought/work of Socrates (469-399 BC), Plato, and Xenophon. It is the first of three papers concerning Aristotle. After introducing his ethics in this paper, the following two projected papers will deal with Aristotle's politics and economics respectively. The Capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen provides the core of the framework for the investigations.

The paper is structured as follows. After a brief introduction, the second section discusses three preliminary topics: the ancient Greek household, Aristotle's divisions of knowledge and his view of human nature. The third section introduces some of Aristotle's thoughts on ethics and focuses on his species conception of humanity and *eudaimonia*. The next section spells out his view on virtue in general and the various constituent moral virtues. The fifth section discusses Aristotle's view of action, motivation, and character. The next section considers the various resource (equipment) and institutional needs of *eudaimonia*. The seventh section discusses ethics in a range of contexts. The final section provides some summary comments.

Keywords: ethics and economics; Aristotle; Amartya Sen; ethical motivation; human well-being; social achievement; ethical methodology

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aristotle (384-322 BC)¹ was born in Stageira, Chalcidice (which bordered on Macedonia) but was raised as part of the Macedonian aristocracy (Nagle 2006, pp. 12-3). In 367BC he came to Athens to study under Plato (427-347 BC). For almost twenty years he remained at Plato's Academy. After Plato and Xenophon (434-355 BC), Aristotle is regarded as the third leading writer in the Socratic school. For a time, he was the head of the Royal Academy of Macedon. During this time Aristotle served as the tutor to the royal household of King Philip II, including Alexander (later called Alexander the Great). Shortly after the assassination of Philip, and the ascent of Alexander to the kingship, Aristotle returned to Athens (in 335 BC). At this time he established his own school, the Lyceum. Immediately after the death of Alexander (323 BC), fearing the fate of Socrates (469-399 BC), Aristotle fled from Athens and died shortly afterwards.

This work is part of a long-term research programme on the ancient Greeks which will culminate in a book on the topic (Alvey forthcoming). This is the first of three papers concerning Aristotle. After introducing his ethics in this paper, the two projected papers will deal with Aristotle's politics and economics.

In earlier work in this research programme, the political, economic, and intellectual context of ancient Greece was presented (Alvey 2010a). Also work has been undertaken on the pre-Socratics (Alvey 2010a), Socrates and Xenophon (Alvey 2010b; Alvey 2011b), and Plato (Alvey 2010c; Alvey 2010d; Alvey 2011a; Alvey 2011c). In the investigations of Plato and Xenophon, each work was discussed separately. In the current paper, significant weaving together from different works will occur.² The reason for this is that Aristotle himself deals with ethics, politics, and economics in various works and, in a commentary focussing on these three themes, the separation of his works is more difficult to achieve than for Plato and for Xenophon.

The research programme outlined above has been shaped to a considerable degree by the work of two groups of writers. The first group is led by Amartya Sen. Sen and his associates (including Martha Nussbaum) built the Capabilities approach to economics. Elsewhere, I have discussed this approach (Alvey 2005). The second influence is Leo Strauss and his followers, including Joseph Cropsey, Carnes Lord, and Robert Bartlett.

In this paper we will frequently refer to the writings of Martha Nussbaum.³ One reason for recourse to her work is that Sen defers to her interpretation of Aristotle.⁴ This paper will

¹ In this paper, unless otherwise stated, all citations are to the works of Aristotle. The following abbreviation conventions have been adopted: Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics* = *EE*; Aristotle *Metaphysics* = *Meta*; Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* = *NE*; Aristotle *Politics* = *Pol*; Aristotle *Rhetoric* = *Rhet*; Plato *Republic* = *Rep*; Xenophon *Memorabilia* = *Mem*; and Xenophon *Oeconomicus* = *Oec*. Citations from classical sources follow the standard conventions.

² A similar type of weaving together of various texts will occur in the interpretation of Aristotle in the two projected papers.

³ The same is true for the two projected papers on Aristotle.

⁴ Over the years there has been considerable sharing of ideas between Nussbaum and Sen. Nevertheless, discernable differences remain and these may have increased over time (Nussbaum 2000, pp. 11-5).

keep the Sen/Nussbaum interpretation at the forefront, but insights from other interpretations (including the Strauss/Cropsey/Lord/Bartlett interpretation) will be included also.⁵

A little background on the Capabilities approach is required before proceeding. The Capabilities approach focuses on human well-being. Sen's goal is to faithfully represent human well-being, or what Nussbaum calls 'human flourishing', which lies between commodities (the physical thing) and utility (the pleasure associated with it).⁶ His approach can be presented as a chain: 'Commodities→Characteristics→Functionings→Utility' (adapted from Sen 1982, p. 30). A commodity, such as a bicycle, has the property of providing transport (i.e. its characteristic); by *using* that property, the owner can move (i.e. its functioning). The 'characteristics' approach was originated by Lancaster; 'functionings' was formulated by Sen, using insights from Aristotle, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx (Lancaster 1966; Sen 1982, p. 30; see Sen 1990, pp. 43-4).

For Sen, functionings are 'what the person succeeds in doing with the commodities and characteristics'; he also calls them well-being achievements ([1985a] 1999, p. 6). Some of these functionings are more foundational than others. Sen distinguishes between 1) 'elementary functionings', such as 'avoiding undernourishment, escaping avoidable morbidity', 'escaping avoidable mortality', and 'undertaking usual movements', and 2) 'complex functionings such as achieving self-respect, taking part in the life of the community and appearing in public without shame' (1980, p. 219; Sen 1985b, p. 199; Sen 1990, p. 44; Sen [1999] 2000, p. 66).⁷ The function 'undertaking usual movements' would be restricted by physical disability or by cultural views about female seclusion (i.e. cultural norms that require a female to be chaperoned for movements in public). Sen mentions a vast number of functionings in his writings. In addition, he recognizes the importance of freedom, agency, and choice.⁸ Hence, he often refers to the 'capability to function'. Capabilities provide for freedom to use, or not use, a functioning (e.g. the choice of fasting or eating).

Nussbaum has gone further than Sen and provided a *full list* of the main features of a human being and a list of human functional capabilities (Nussbaum 1995b, pp. 76-80, 83-5; Nussbaum 2000, pp. 78-80).⁹ In the latter she includes items such as: 'Being able to have good health'; having 'an adequate education'; and 'being able ... to participate in political life' (Nussbaum, 1995b, pp. 83-4). This year she has provided a work for the general public which summarizes her version of the Capabilities approach (Nussbaum 2011). In this work Nussbaum argues for ten central Capabilities (Nussbaum 2011, Ch 2).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses three preliminary topics: the ancient Greek household, Aristotle's divisions of knowledge, and his view of

⁵ In the two projected papers on Aristotle, the same priority will be given to the Capabilities approach over the Straussian approach.

⁶ In *The Fragility of Goodness*, Nussbaum frequently refers to human flourishing but says that term actually arose from work by John Cooper (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 6 n).

⁷ A useful listings that brings together Sen's various examples of capabilities is provided by Crocker (1995, pp. 174-6).

⁸ What Sen has in mind by freedom is not the 'negative freedom' of the libertarian but freedom to *achieve* certain constructive things (Sen [1999] 2000, pp. 65-7; see Berlin 1969).

⁹ There is a considerable difference between Sen and Nussbaum on this point (see Crocker 2008, pp. 192-4).

human nature. The third section introduces some of Aristotle's thoughts on ethics and focuses on his species conception of humanity¹⁰ and *eudaimonia*. The next section spells out his view on virtue in general and the various constituent moral virtues. The fifth section discusses Aristotle's view of action, motivation, and character. The next section considers the various resource (equipment) and institutional needs of *eudaimonia*. The seventh section discusses ethics in a range of contexts. The final section provides some summary comments.

2. THREE PRELIMINARY MATTERS

This section discusses three broad topics. First, a few comments are made on the ancient Greek household. Second, Aristotle's understanding of the divisions of knowledge is discussed. Third, some background on his views of human nature are provided.

--The Ancient Greek Household

The ideal household (*oikos*) is roughly what is described by Xenophon in the *Oeconomicus* (Xenophon *Oec* 1970). It is a 'highly self-sufficient' (*autarkēs*) unit which includes a farm. Such a household requires 'minimal market activity' as a supplement (Lowry 1987, p. 61; Booth 1993, p. 34). Household management in the ideal *oikos* consists, to a considerable degree, of farm or estate management; it is a significantly larger undertaking than it is in the modern, nuclear family (which consists of perhaps four people). The ideal *oikos* is a community (*koinōnia*)¹¹ and managing it is more like managing a small village;¹² it is also more diverse, as it includes ruling over family members (parents, a number of surviving children, and perhaps one or more grandparents) and it includes management of servants, such as a steward (*epitropos*),¹³ a housekeeper, waiting maids, farm workers (or field hands), and (other) slaves¹⁴ (Xenophon *Oec* 1970; Patterson 1998, p. 43; Pomeroy 2002, pp. 38-40, 42, 45-7, 56, 74-5). The ideal is material self-sufficiency and autonomy.

Second, the normal *oikos* is smaller and less able to provide self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, the gap between the normal and the ideal is not dramatic, although dependence on markets increased to some degree by Aristotle's time. Nagle (2006) implies that a normal *oikos* is about 12 people. In terms of scale, this is more like an extended family than a village. What functions does the *oikos* perform? First, it is the institution in which friendship manifests itself. Friendship within the *oikos* exists between spouses and between them and their children. In addition to friendship, reproduction, and a sense of community (and sometimes

¹⁰ The pro-feminist views found in Plato (and to some degree in Xenophon) do not seem to be shared by Aristotle (see Nussbaum 1980, p. 434 n.57; Cartledge 1981, p. 105; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 258, 371, 499 n.51; Nussbaum 1995a, p. 122; c.f. Nussbaum 1991-92). Aristotle had a male audience in mind.

¹¹ *Koinōnia* also means partnership. On the *oikos* as a community, see Booth 1993, pp. 35-8.

¹² The management of such a community might be compared to managing an estate at various times in history. Thus, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, which was dedicated to this theme, had wide appeal for many centuries.

¹³ This term can be translated as foreman or supervisor (Pomeroy 1994, pp. 316-7).

¹⁴ Kitto suggests that there was roughly one slave for two free Athenians for domestic service and the same number for production ([1951] 1957, pp. 131-2; see Amemiya 2004, p. 59). He concludes that slaves were 'not the basis of economic life' of the Greeks (Kitto [1951] 1957, p. 32; c.f. Amemiya 2004, p. 59). This understates the dependence on slavery in Sparta, where the slaves outnumbered the free; indeed, the slave proportion of the population grew over time (see Cartledge 2001, pp. 150-1).

despotism, as we will see), in modern terms, the *oikos* is the realm of ‘production,¹⁵ distribution, transmission [of property rights via inheritance], . . . and co-residence’ (Nagle 2006, p. 2; see Wilk and Netting 1984, p. 11). Further, unlike most households known in human history, it also has roles in ‘defense, law, and politics’ (Nagle 2006, p. 5, see pp. 4-5, 7-9).

Who is in charge of the *oikos*? Each *oikos* is under the control of a patriarch or master (*kurios* or *oikodespotes*). The *kurios* is responsible for household management (*oikonomikē* or *oikonomia*).¹⁶ This includes exercising gentle rule over his spouse and children. On the other hand, the *kurios* rules, or can choose to rule, slaves despotically. The art or skill (*technē*; plural *technai*)¹⁷ of the household manager (*oikonomos*) also covers military, religious, and economic duties (Lowry 1987, p. 26).

--The Divisions of Knowledge

For Aristotle, the theoretical sciences are separate from the practical sciences; they differ in their objects, method, purpose, and the faculty that they engage (*NE* 1142a25-6; [1925] 1980, p. 148; Lord 1984, pp. 17-8).¹⁸ The objects of the theoretical sciences are the unchangeable things (what we call the pure and natural sciences, plus theology); the practical sciences concern the changeable things which are associated with human action (*praxis*) (Lord 1984, p. 18). Aristotle’s doctrine--that one should look for ‘exactness in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows’--has important consequences in this context (*NE* 1094b24-5; see 1096b31-2; 1999, p. 2; see p. 6). The level of precision attainable in the theoretical sciences is *not* available in the practical sciences, which is the sphere of practical wisdom or prudence (*phronēsis*) (*Meta* 1025b1-26b33; 1933, pp. 293-301; *Topics* 145a15-8; 1960, p. 601; see Lord 1987, pp. 119-20; c.f. Bartlett 2008, p. 679). As Nussbaum says, ‘practical wisdom is not scientific understanding’ ([1986] 2001, p. 190).

Given the ‘impossibility of precision’ in the practical sciences, Aristotle concludes that the direct study of ‘principles or causes’ is not appropriate; in his writings on the practical sciences Aristotle uses a ‘quasi-conversational mode of inquiry’ and proceeds using a dialectical style of argument that engages with common opinion (*endoxa*) (Lord 1987, pp.

¹⁵ Kitto goes as far as to call the *oikos* a ‘factory’ ([1951] 1957, p. 230).

¹⁶ On the term *oikonomia*, see Petrochilos 2002, p. 623. Strauss notes that *oikonomia* has a number of meanings (1970, p. 113). One meaning concerns the divine administration of the universe (see Xenophon *Mem* IV.3.11-4; 1994, p. 127). On Xenophon’s teleology, see also the discussion in Alvey (2010b, p. 13).

¹⁷ Both technique and skill are acceptable renderings of *technē*. Bloom defines *technē* as ‘art, . . . a skill or craft; not far from science; a discipline operating under clear principles which can be taught’ ([1968] 1991, p. 478). Nussbaum says that it is often translated as ‘craft’, ‘art’, or ‘science’. She adds that there is no ‘systematic or general distinction between *epistēmē* and *technē*’ (knowledge) in Plato’s time ([1986] 2001, p. 94; see pp. 95-8).

¹⁸ The text focuses on the objects and the method. The *purpose* of the practical sciences was not knowledge *per se* but refinement of the opinions of men concerning human action (*NE* 1095a5-6; [1925] 1980, p. 3; Lord 1984, p. 18). The intellectual *faculty* involved in both sciences is the ‘rational part of the soul’. On the other hand, the latter has separate parts which are relevant for the two sciences: for the theoretical sciences, it is the ‘theoretical portion’; for the practical sciences, it is ‘the calculative or practical segment’ (Lord 1987, pp. 119-20).

119-21; see Lord 1984, p. 18).¹⁹ Contrary to the spirit of modern social science (especially economics), the possibility of using the same methodology in the practical and theoretical sciences is clearly rejected by Aristotle (*NE* 1103b28-4a3; [1925] 1980, p. 30).

While Aristotle presented insights into the practical sciences in various places, the most important are the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*.²⁰ Some authors, such as Salkever, seek to draw on insights from Aristotle's writings on the theoretical and natural sciences to understand and elaborate upon his writings on the practical sciences (Salkever 1991; see also Nussbaum [1986] 2001; Keyt 1999, p. 66). I am generally sympathetic to the notion that a great thinker, despite writing various works, has a grand vision that unites the parts. Nevertheless, in this case, seeking unity is misguided. Aristotle wants to recognize a considerable *autonomy* for practical life. If human beings are understood within the parameters of physicality and animality (as was the case with various Pre-Socratics and with Thomas Hobbes,²¹ the founder of social science), the *dignity* of ethical life within a social and political context would be lost.²²

Some difficulty occurs in grasping Aristotle's understanding of the practical sciences because of his terminology. He distinguishes between a narrow and a broad definition of politics (*politikē*) (*NE* 1141b22-34; [1925] 1980, p. 147). The peak of politics in the *polis*, the legislative art, fundamentally affects private behaviour (and choice and character) by individuals through enactment of law: 'it legislates ... what we are to do and what we are to abstain from' (*NE* 1094b5-7; [1915] 1925; see Sen 1987, p. 3). Political science, in this sense, is the 'architectonic' or 'master' science i.e. the master of the practical sciences (*NE* 1094a27-8; [1925] 1980, p. 2; Lord 1984, p. 19). It is in this 'master' role that politics can bring the potential formative (character shaping) role of law into being in a coherent manner.²³

Under the master science are three subordinate practical sciences. They are ethics (*ēthika*), or what may be called the study of character (*ēthos*); the science of household management (*oikonomikē*); and political science in the second, narrow sense, of the study of the government of the *polis* (*politikē*) (Lord 1987, p. 121). What we understand by micro-economics is primarily covered under the second branch (but aspects of economic policy would appear under the third branch). As stated earlier, household management was a much larger undertaking in the ancient Greek household than the equivalent today. Public finance and, to a very limited degree, macroeconomics are covered under the third branch.

How are these three subordinate sciences related among themselves? Aristotle presents them as interconnected and the study of virtue or character cannot be forgotten when discussing

¹⁹ Aristotle's discussion of these topics apparently does not strive to find universal principles of human nature; nor does he assert such principles and apply deductive logic to formulate conclusions; nor does he create a technical vocabulary remote from real life and proceed logically from there (Lord 1987, p. 120).

²⁰ Other relevant works include the *Eudemian Ethics*, *Magna Moralia*, and the *Rhetoric*.

²¹ On Hobbes, see Hobbes [1651] 1968.

²² In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle indicates that his intended audience is someone who has been *already* well brought up and the goal is not knowledge but action (*NE* 1095a5-6; 1095b5-6; [1925] 1980, pp. 3, 5).

²³ On the character-forming role of law, see Kitto [1951] 1957, p. 94; Alvey 2010c, p. 6; Alvey 2010d, pp. 9-10, 17; Alvey 2011a, pp. 7, 12.

economics or politics narrowly understood (Lord 1984, p. 19). All address the same theme: guiding human action toward the good life, *eudaimonia* (*NE* 1095a5-6; 1103b28-9; [1925] 1980, pp. 3, 30; Lord 1987, p. 119). More importantly, they are all subordinate to the master science. Politics in this sense comprehends all of the subordinate practical sciences, including economics (*NE* 1094b2-6; 1999, p. 2; Lord 1984, p. 19; Sen 1987, p. 3). Sen correctly argues that, for Aristotle, economics is concerned immediately with ‘the pursuit of wealth’ but ‘at a deeper level’ linked to the other practical sciences ‘involving the assessment and enhancement of more basic goals’ (1987, p. 3; Sen [1999] 2000, p. 14; see *NE* 1094a7-10; [1925] 1980, p. 1).

--An Introduction to Human Nature

All of the practical sciences address *human* action. At this stage we need some preliminary comments on how Aristotle understood ‘human’. As stated earlier, his discussion of humanness in the practical sciences is *not* based on the observations of a trained biologist, or what Williams calls the ‘absolute view of nature’ (1985, p. 52). It is not an ‘external’ account of human nature, rather it is an ‘internal’ account based on common beliefs (Nussbaum 1995a, p. 88).

Even with this caveat, it is correct to state that, for Aristotle, human beings are ‘a part of nature’ and, despite the variability of human affairs, one can speak of *a* human nature (Lord 1987, p. 121; see Nussbaum 1995a). Aristotle holds a species conception of humanity because human beings have features that qualitatively distinguish them from other natural beings. Humans alone have intellect; they alone have reason or speech (*logos*) (*Pol* 1253a8-9; 1984, p. 37).

To these remarks from the *Politics* we can add some from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In a variation on Plato’s three-part division of the soul, Aristotle divides the human soul as follows: the first part is strictly rational, the second part is irrational but capable of obeying reason, and the third part is strictly irrational.²⁴ The third part has features in common with animals, and even plants. Aristotle’s focus on the first two parts of the soul leads to his division of human excellence into two parts: the intellectual virtues and the moral/ethical virtues.

We should bear in mind that, what Aristotle means by nature, and natural, is *not* what first emerges but the perfected form, the *telos* or end. Hence, the truly natural life for human beings is the life in which these excellences are fully developed. This sense is flowering, or flourishing, is central to his understanding of *eudaimonia*.

3 AN INTRODUCTION TO EUDAIMONIA

²⁴ *NE* 1102a28-03a5; [1925] 1980, pp. 25-7; Lord 1987, p. 124. In the *Republic* Socrates asserts here that there are three parts of the human soul: the desiring (or appetitive) part (*epithumētikon*), the spirited (or emotional) part (*thumoeides*), and the reasoning (or calculating) part (*logistikon*) (Plato *Rep* 435e-436b; 441c; [1968] 1991, pp. 114, 121; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 139, 205, 209, 214, 471 n. 7; Miller 2006, p. 286; Strauss 1987, p. 47).

This section discusses two broad topics. First, it discusses *eudaimonia* and disputes as to its meaning. Second, it discusses Aristotle's species view of human beings, especially his function argument, and how this relates to his understanding of *eudaimonia*.

--*Ethics and Eudaimonia*

Despite the quasi-conversational tone, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is closer to a treatise on ethics than any Platonic dialogue. At the opening of this work Aristotle declares that '[e]very art'--indeed every inquiry, action, and choice--'seems to aim at some good' (*NE* 1094a1-2; [1925] 1980, p. 1). What he studies in this work 'seamlessly' introduces the *Politics*; the *Ethics* is a part of a larger study of the 'good' (Pakaluk 2006, p. 378; *NE* 1181b25; [1925] 1980, p. 276). The study of the comprehensive human good covers all of the practical sciences: ethics, politics, and economics (the latter is discussed in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*).

Aristotle reports that all parties agree that the comprehensive human good is *eudaimonia* (*NE* 1095a17-9; [1925] 1980, p. 5). Particularly because some interpreters claim that Aristotle has a different understanding of *eudaimonia* to other Socratics, it is important to state that what he means by the term has no direct counterpart in English. It is often translated as well-being or happiness, followed by various qualifications and elaborations (Ross 1980, p. xxvii; Lord 1984, p. 276; Lord 1987, p. 122; Irwin 1999, p. 175).²⁵ As Nussbaum points out, *eudaimonia* is more than a psychological state, as it requires action, and is better translated as 'living well and doing well' or 'human flourishing' ([1986] 2001, p. 6n.; see Aristotle *NE* 1095a18; 1999, p. 3).

The human *telos* is *eudaimonia*; it is a kind of self-sufficiency (*NE* 1097b7-11; [1925] 1980, p. 12). It is sought for its own sake and never as a means (*NE* 1097b6; [1925] 1980, p. 12). By contrast, honour, pleasure, reason, and even the virtues are chosen as both means and ends (*NE* 1097b2; [1925] 1980, p. 12). Because some of these things are ends in some sense, they can become the focus of a whole *way of life* (albeit defective in some cases when viewed from the perspective of human flourishing).

Consequently, disputes have arisen, Aristotle admits, as to which way of life constitutes *eudaimonia*: for most people, it is the life of pleasure (but Aristotle says that they also speak of wealth, honour, and even health); for the more refined, it is the political life of honour (i.e. of a *politikos* or statesman); and for the few, it is the contemplative or philosophic life (*theōria*) (see *NE* 1095a22-96a6; [1925] 1980, pp. 5-7; Lord 1987, p. 123). Aristotle rules out the life devoted to acquiring wealth (i.e. the life of the subsistence farmer, the artisan, the trader, and the retailer) because it is only a means to the end. The purely private life of household management is also ruled out but it can constitute a *part* of another way of life.

Hence, Aristotle concludes that there are only three serious contenders for the best way of life. Each requires reasoning. The philosophic life requires intellectual contemplation. The other two require lesser forms of reasoning.

The investigation of *eudaimonia* begins with the opinions of real people about what the term means and how these opinions manifest themselves in disputes about the best way of life. After presenting the opinions and arguments that support them, Aristotle arbitrates between them. In his final judgment, he may advocate some sort of composite.

²⁵ Hutchinson's translation of *eudaimonia* as 'success' is especially misleading (Hutchinson 1995).

As Nussbaum correctly points out, for historicists and cultural relativists, notions such as the good, happiness, how one should live, and the human *telos* are subjective or determined strictly by history or culture (1992, pp. 203-5, 209-12). By contrast, Aristotle adopts a species or essentialist conception of man (Nussbaum, 1992).²⁶ Because humans are capable of reason and speech--and thus capable of what we will soon call higher functionings--they are separate from, and better than, the (other) animals (c.f. Singer 1976).

--*Eudaimonia and Human Functioning*

Aristotle's species view of man is the bedrock for his opposition to relativism. Defining humanness is an essential pre-requisite for his whole inquiry. First, Aristotle tries to establish the *functions* of human beings, some of which are shared with plants and animals. Second, he tries to show how human beings, because of their *higher* functions, constitute a sort of middle ground between the (other) animals and the gods. Discussion of human *eudaimonia* is fruitful only after these two points are clarified.

In Book I Chapter 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle gives an extended discussion of understanding a thing in terms of its function (see Nussbaum 1995a, pp. 110-20). The characteristic action of any craft is its function (*NE* 1097b27; 1999, p. 8). Similarly, functions can be ascribed to each part of the human body. Next, Aristotle refers to plants, whose function is living, or 'the life of nutrition and growth' (*NE* 1098a2; see 1102b1-12; 1999, p. 9; see p. 17; Pack 2010, pp. 20-1). These plant-like functions are shared with human beings. We can call these Tier 1 functions. Humans need nutrition and hydration to live (i.e. to eat, drink, and so on). As a general rule, the passions that drive us to satisfy these needs amount to compulsion (fasting shows the triumph of volition but it is of limited duration). Let us move from the vegetative element to other functions.

Animals experience the 'life of sense perception' (*NE* 1098a3; 1999, p. 9). While plants do not share these functions with animals, humans do. We can call these Tier 2 functions. The senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and so on, are animal senses but they are also *human* senses. Can one call a living being, who looks like a human but lacks all of these senses, a human being? Second, all animals feel pleasure and pain and can communicate these sentiments to others by making 'sounds' (*Pol* 1253a9-11; [1946] 1948, p. 6; Pack 2010, pp. 21-3). Human animality is manifest in a wide range of pleasures and pains (some associated with the vegetative function) and Aristotle never forgets these needs.²⁷ He declares that the pleasant is one of the three objects of human choice; the other two are 'the noble, [and] the advantageous' (*NE* 1104b32; [1925] 1980, p. 33; Meikle 1995, p. 56). The noble is chosen for its own sake; the advantageous or useful is chosen for the sake of something else; the pleasant is simply chosen for the pleasure it produces in us (Meikle 1995, p. 56). The opposites, which are to be avoided, are: the shameful or base; the injurious or harmful; and the painful (*NE* 1104b32-3; [1925] 1980, p. 33). The purpose or end of the choice is fundamental.

²⁶ Consistent with the bias in the Greek original, references throughout this paper tend to be to the male gender.

²⁷ Further, although it is doubtful that animals have a fear of death, humans do. This fear drives many human actions. By contrast, an immortal god would not fear death; indeed, the concept of such a being experiencing fear is puzzling (*NE* 1178b12-4; [1925] 1980, p. 267). The roots of the human fear of death may be 1) the possibility of painful death (Hobbes [1651] 1968, p. 186) and 2) the thought of the cessation of pleasure. If these are useful starting points, we can see how this fear amplifies the animal concern with immediate pleasure and pain. An alternative may be the pleasures and pains in the afterlife.

In the end, despite an acceptance of animalistic elements in human beings, like Plato, Aristotle rejects the life of the many: in the life of pleasure one is ‘slavish’ to the passions and it is a ‘life for grazing animals’ (*NE* 1095b21; 1999, p. 4; see Xenophon *Oec* I.22; 1996, p. 43).²⁸ The animals demonstrate ‘neither virtue nor vice’ (*NE* 1145a26; 1999, p. 99).²⁹ At this point let us break off the discussion of the two sets of lower functions.

This leaves us with Tier 3 functions. These ‘functions’ are essential in order to identify a being as a ‘human being’, or a life as a ‘human life’ (Nussbaum 1995a, p. 94). They relate to human excellence or virtue (*aretē*).³⁰ As stated earlier, virtue can be divided into the intellectual and the moral virtues. Recall the dispute concerning the best way of life, especially between the contemplative life and the political life. The former excellences are captured by Aristotle’s view that man alone is the rational animal; of the corporeal beings, humans alone have reason or speech (*logos*) (*Pol* 1253a8-9; 1984, p. 37). The latter excellences are perhaps best captured by Aristotle’s notion of human beings as a social or ‘political animal’ (*Pol* 1253a3-8; 1984, p. 37; see *NE* 1097b11-2; 1999, p. 8; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 345n.; Lord 1987, p. 124; Nussbaum 1995a, p. 103).³¹

What Aristotle is really seeking, however, is ‘the *special* function of human beings’ (*NE* 1098a1; 1999, p. 8 emphasis added). His initial response is that this is ‘the practical life of that which has reason (*praktikē tis tou logon echontos*)’ (*NE* 1098a3-4 Nussbaum translation in Nussbaum 1995a, p. 113). The special function is the life of practical reasoning.

At this stage we should refer to an interpretive dispute. Some commentators stress Aristotle’s subsequent statement that the human function is action in accordance with virtue, and especially the highest virtue (*NE* 1098a14; see 18-21; 1999, p. 9). Hence, the conclusion of the function argument is that *eudaimonia* consists of *only* Tier 3 functions (virtuous actions), although some ambiguity remains as to whether it is intellectual virtue alone (Kraut 1989). In the early Platonic dialogues stress is placed on intellectual virtue (Devettere 2002, p. 87).

Other commentators see *eudaimonia* as a composite (Strauss 1964, p. 31; Ackrill 1980; Urmson 1988; Nussbaum 1995a, pp. 113-6). The composite may extend to functions within all three Tiers of functioning; this composite goes a long way to completing the picture of the *eudaimōn* life (one in accord with *eudaimonia*). Why are Tier 1 and 2 functions included? ‘Feeding, hearing, and seeing are parts of a human life’ to the extent that they are part of

²⁸ In the *Politics* Aristotle contrasts the life of an animal with a human one and describes the former as living but the potential goal of a human being as living well (*Pol* 1252b29; 1257b41; 1280a31-2; 1984, pp. 37, 48, 98). At one point he describes some distant foreigners who ‘live only by sense perception’ (*NE* 1149a9-11; 1999, p. 107; see also *Pol* 1338a21; 1984, p. 233). In reality, despite having a human shape, they live as beasts.

²⁹ Actually, aspects of friendship (one of the Aristotelian virtues) are found in animals (*NE* 1155a17-20; [1925] 1980, p. 192).

³⁰ Lowry uses *aretē* in different ways. First, he uses it as a type of efficiency; winning in an environment of ‘total win’ or ‘total loss’ (1987, p. 27; see p. 42; Hutchinson 1995, p. 200 n.4). Second, he uses it as part of ‘quantitative evaluation of decision making’ (1987, p. 33). The first is not how *aretē* will be understood in this paper (or in the two projected papers on Aristotle). Only occasionally in Aristotle is it useful to use the term in the second sense. See also Lowry 1987, p. 265 n. 13; Winspear 1956, pp. 193, 298.

³¹ One may say that the Tier 3 functions are too broad and that only intellectual virtues count. It must be said, however, that this is a very narrow definition of human functioning. Such a view is more consistent with the description of a non-corporeal being.

praktikē tis tou logon echontos, or the life of practical reasoning (Nussbaum 1995a, p. 119). This brings to mind Plato's argument that eating and drinking can be undertaken in a range of manners from the bestial to the *truly human* mode.³² Properly conducted common meals were rare in human history but, when combined with elevating conversation, they represented the only truly human type of feeding. We have adopted this second, more inclusive interpretation of functioning, which is closer to the view of the late Platonic dialogues. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that virtue is the most important part of the composite.

Next, we must consider the life *above* human beings. The life of a divine being cannot be chosen, or lived, by a human being.³³ Indeed, attributing the label 'virtuous' to action by a divine being is troubling. Ascribing courage to a divine being seems like a *non sequitur* (*NE* 1178b10-6; 1999, p. 166; Hutchinson 1995, p. 205). After extending the argument to justice and generosity, Aristotle concludes that moral virtue is irrelevant to divine beings (*NE* 1159a8-10; 1178b10-20; 1999, pp. 127, 166; Hutchinson 1995, p. 205).³⁴ In an ethical discourse devoted to human *eudaimonia*, the aim is to focus neither on the beastly nor the godly but the middle ground of human possibilities (see Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 341-2). It is proper to speak of virtue only in this middle ground (*NE* 1145a26; [1925] 1980, p. 159; Nussbaum 1995a, p. 92).

Where does this leave the life of most people, including the money-maker? Being generally limited to satisfying little more than Tier 1 and 2 functions, their lives are stunted, not flourishing.³⁵ Like Plato, Aristotle holds that only a few are capable of the rule of reason *over* the passions. It is in this context that Aristotle says that the life of money-making 'is undertaken under compulsion' (*NE* 1096a6-7 in [1915] 1925). Money-making is generally concerned with the lower functions and, unless it is joined to something else, it is unlikely that we are at the 'middle ground' discussed above.

Sen is quite right to emphasize the previous quote and Aristotle's following remark that 'wealth is evidently not the good that we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else' (*NE* 1096a7-8 in [1915] 1925; see Sen 1987, p. 3). The lower functions may be viewed as *necessary* but *not sufficient* for *eudaimonia*. Despite his dismissal of the way of life of the many, Aristotle admits that pleasure (and money-making) is relevant to the *eudaimōn* life.³⁶ As we will see below, assessment of the quality of human life depends on much more than money.

³² *Laws* 780b-781d, 806d-807b, 842b-c; 1980, pp. 168-70, 196-7, 234; see Strauss 1975, pp. 97-8, 107; Pangle 1980, pp. 472-7.

³³ c.f. the reference to a 'divine man' (*NE* 1145a20-30; 1999, pp. 99-100; Urmson 1973, p. 223; Pack 2010, p. 24). Even if one considers the choice to become divine a possibility, the loss of one's own personality would cast a shadow on the choice (Nussbaum 1995a, pp. 90-2).

³⁴ Aristotle's examples refer to a 'community' of divine beings. The gods could still demonstrate virtuous acts towards human beings.

³⁵ To the extent that they temper their bodily desires for food and sex, they will demonstrate the virtue of *sōphrosunē* (moderation).

³⁶ Some pleasures 'are choiceworthy in themselves' (*NE* 1174a10-1; 1999, p. 157).

The function argument can lend itself to a physiological study along the lines of the ‘theoretical science’ of biology. Such an ‘external perspective’ on nature, as Nussbaum points out, has to be resisted (1995a, pp. 87-90).

4. THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL VIRTUES

Let us now start to investigate some of the Tier 3 functionings: the higher components of *eudaimonia*. Recall from Section 2 Aristotle’s interest in the domain of human action, and his own ethical task of *improving* human action. It is within the framework of the practical sciences and an understanding of their goal (complete *eudaimonia*) that we can make better sense of Aristotle’s project of nudging human action towards excellence. This is evident in several areas. Before any exhortation or nudging can occur, we need to go back and ask some questions. What is excellence or virtue? What are the intellectual and moral virtues? How are they defined? Is there a hierarchy of virtues?

First, virtue is a complete whole and the virtuous life is one that brings all of the elements of virtue together.³⁷ In this sense it is correct to speak of virtue as a singular: ‘complete virtue’ (*NE* 1101a16; c.f. 1129b31-2; 1999, p. 14; c.f. p. 108). The inseparability of the moral virtues was the standard view of the ancients (Kent 2001, p. 226). Nevertheless, in obvious tension with this position, Aristotle claims it is *also* correct to speak of virtues in the plural and that they are separable. One may possess or demonstrate one or more of the virtues without possessing or demonstrating others; similarly, one may be disposed towards or commit one of the vices but not all (*NE* 1130a17-22; [1925] 1980, p. 109). Further, demonstration of any virtue is not simply all or nothing; gradations of achievement occur (*NE* 1173a20-2; [1925] 1980, p. 251). Individuals who demonstrate some virtue, have elevated themselves somewhat from their animality and achieved a richer life but they will fail to achieve complete *eudaimonia*.

As soon as one speaks of virtues in the plural, one must recognize Aristotle’s distinction between the intellectual and the moral virtues. His list of *intellectual* virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* includes prudence (*phronēsis*), which guides decision making in the world of human action (*NE* 1138b19-45a13; [1925] 1980, pp. 137-58).³⁸ There are several versions of prudence (legislative, household, deliberative, judicial, and individual) the peak of which seems to be legislative prudence (*NE* 1141b25-34; 1999, p. 92).

It is Aristotle’s famous list of *moral* virtues, however, that is of more interest at present: courage; temperance or moderation; liberality or generosity; magnificence (*megaloprepeia*); magnanimity, high-mindedness, or greatness of soul (*megalopsychia*); proper ambition; gentleness; friendliness; truthfulness; wit; and justice (*dikaiosunē*) (*NE* 1109b30-38b10;

³⁷ Kenny argues that Aristotle’s view in the *Eudemian Ethics* is closer to this position than in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1992, pp. 16-22).

³⁸ Prudence plays an important role in Aristotle’s politics, as well as in the work of Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics. On prudence in Adam Smith, see Alvey 2003, pp. 60-1.

[1925] 1980, pp. 48-136; see Bartlett and Collins 2011, pp. 303-4).³⁹ Some of these virtues require immediate comment or clarification.

Two of the virtues are concerned with the good *use* of wealth/money. While generosity is reasonably clear (and clarified further below), magnificence is not. It requires grand, visible displays of generosity towards the operation of the *polis* (or towards other members of the *polis*) and is not available to most people, especially the poor (*NE* 1122a17-23a34; [1925] 1980, pp. 85-9). Following the other Socratics, *none* of the virtues are concerned with acquiring wealth/money.

Friendship, as Aristotle understands the term *philia*, covers a very wide range of relationships, including what we mean by friendship but also love and affection within the family (between husbands and wives and between parents and children), fellow-feeling for other citizens, and perhaps even fellow human beings.⁴⁰ Consistent with the three ends of human choice mentioned in Section 3, there are three types of friendship: virtue, utility, and pleasure (*NE* 1155b18-56a9; [1925] 1980, pp. 194-5). Again, the *purpose* of the friendship is fundamental. Some types of friendship are more like exchange and others are more sublime. The highest type of friendship ('the friendship of good men based on virtue') is extremely rare (*NE* 1156b8-32; [1925] 1980, pp. 196-7; Lord 1987, pp. 129-30).

Aristotle understands justice to embrace a large number of components or manifestations. Some groupings of the terms may be helpful. Aristotle refers to 1) a 'wide', general or universal justice and to 2) 'particular' justice (*NE* 1130a33-30b5; [1925] 1980 p. 110; Gordon 1975, p. 55).⁴¹ General justice refers to 'all the objects with which the good man is concerned', whereas particular justice is concerned with things motivated by 'the pleasure that arises from gain' (*NE* 1130b4-6; [1925] 1980, p. 110).

Second, let us shift our focus from specific virtues to virtue in general. Aristotle propounds his 'doctrine of the mean' as a way of providing a better description of the moral virtues (Urmson 1973; Hursthouse 1980-1). In discussing these virtues, he argues that (for most of the moral virtues) what is virtuous is a sort of 'mean' between immoral extremes. For example, generosity is some point (the 'mean') between 'prodigality' (or extravagance) and 'meanness' (or stinginess) (*NE* 1119b20-20a5; [1925] 1980, p. 79; see tabular presentation in Bartlett and Collins 2011, pp. 303-4). The doctrine refers to choice and action in the context of practical or prudential reasoning but it also refers to the *emotion* manifest in action; the latter must be 'mean' between extremes (this in turn is related to character, see below).⁴²

³⁹ Two points should be made about the list of virtues presented in the text. First, the items taken from Books III to V of the *Nicomachean Ethics* may have different translations. Second, Aristotle actually mentions other virtues elsewhere, such as 'equity' (*NE* 1137a31-38a3; [1925] 1980, pp. 132-4).

⁴⁰ *NE* 1155a17-20; 1162a16-7; 1999, pp. 119, 133; *Pol* 1280b35-40; 1295b23-4; 1984, pp. 99, 134; Barker [1946] 1948, p. 373 and n.1; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 354; Lord 1987, p. 129.

⁴¹ While some things that Aristotle calls 'just' fit neatly under these two headings, it is not clear that all of them do.

⁴² What is needed is the mean in the sense that, at the right time (before action), one has the right feelings for the right reasons, and chooses correctly (*NE* 1106b22-4; [1925] 1980, p. 38; see Urmson 1973).

The doctrine of the mean may give the impression that Aristotle is trying to construct a *mathematical* ethics (see Anagnostopoulos 1994). As stated in Section 2, this is incorrect. Actually, the doctrine is not the mathematical mean and frequently not even analogous to the mean (Hutchinson 1995, pp. 217-9; see Jaffa 1972, p. 113; Temple-Smith 2007, pp. 34-5, 42-3).

Further, the doctrine of the mean does not fit all of the moral virtues. As we have seen, justice is an umbrella term covering many parts. Some parts clearly do not fit this doctrine (*NE* 1129a5-38b10; [1925] 1980, pp. 106-36; Urmson 1973, pp. 227-8; Bartlett and Collins 2011, p. 304).

Third, while each virtue is given some attention by Aristotle, it emerges that some virtues are more important than others. In elaborating upon three of the virtues, he gives us some insight into the hierarchy of the virtues and why possessing the full set of moral virtues is extremely rare (*NE* 1109a25-30; [1925] 1980, p. 45). Greatness of soul refers to one capable of great things and who fulfils the promise (and hence deserves great honour) (*NE* 1123a35-25a36; [1925] 1980, pp. 89-95). From the *perspective of the individual*, ‘greatness of soul’ unites all of the other virtues: it is ‘the crown of the virtues’ (*NE* 1124a1-2; [1925] 1980, p. 91; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 337-8; Lord 1987, p. 127). Two other virtues are important from the *perspective of society*, or one’s relations with others (Lord 1987, p. 127). Aristotle ascribes a high rank to justice (*NE* 1129b26-30a7; [1925] 1980, pp. 108-9). Finally, some sort of friendship is fundamental: it is the glue that holds a *polis* together (*NE* 1155a24; [1925] 1980, p. 192).⁴³

Despite the difficulties of achieving full *eudaimonia*, Aristotle is not disinterested in what can be achieved by most people and most societies. First, the range of individual virtues plays an important role in *evaluating* individual lives and societies. Second, and just as importantly, the range of virtues plays an important role for setting *aspirations* for improvement. Naturally, this is fundamental for politics as the master art.

5. ACTION, MOTIVATION, AND CHARACTER

Listing, defining, and ranking the various virtues are important tasks for the theoretical part of ethics. More important, within the realm of the practical sciences, however, is *applying* this knowledge for the purpose of improving human action (*NE* 1095a5-6; 1103b28-9; [1925] 1980, pp. 3, 30). This section focuses on the connections between action, motivation, and character.

First, in order to achieve *eudaimonia*, humans must demonstrate virtuous *action*. ‘[L]ifelong inactivity’ will not do (*NE* 1095b34-96a1; [1925] 1980, p. 7; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 323-4). ‘[A]ctivities in accord with virtue control happiness [*eudaimonia*], and the contrary activities control its contrary’ (*NE* 1100b8-10; see 1098a7-18; 1099a24-31; 1999, p. 13; see pp. 9, 11). Even with a virtuous character, there can be impediments to human action and

⁴³ We will return to justice and friendship, in the two projected papers on Aristotle.

these diminish *eudaimonia*. Obviously, resources can be insufficient and we will discuss these shortly. More important, in the current context, is Aristotle's view that many circumstances in life arise that 'bring pain ... and hinder [the performance of] many activities', including virtuous actions (*NE* 1100b28-30; [1925] 1980, p. 21). Nussbaum mentions a wide range of these potential impediments ([1986] 2001, p. 332).

Further, the action must be within a *human* community. As stated in Section 3, it is difficult to ascribe morally virtuous acts to a divine being engaged only in contemplation. On the other hand, a solitary human, or hermit, acts but does not act *in relation to other humans* (*Pol* 1253a3-28; 1984, p. 37). Once again, it is impossible for such a being to demonstrate most of the moral virtues.

Second, humans may act well on particular days, or in certain circumstances, but this does not capture what Aristotle is really concerned about. What he stresses is a disposition *throughout one's lifetime* or a virtuous character (*ēthos*) (*NE* 1098a19-20; [1925] 1980, p. 14; Urmson 1988, pp. 25-37). Aristotle's doctrine of the mean mentioned earlier is concerned with choice and action but particularly on the basis of a settled, adult character (Urmson 1973).

At one point, Aristotle sketches three pairs of human character (i.e. six) (*NE* 1145a15-45b22; [1925] 1980, pp. 159-60).⁴⁴ Three character types are defective: they consistently *act* badly; the other three act consistently well. Many of the details are not relevant here but a few points can be made. In distinguishing the three good types (and thus the three bad types), Aristotle refers to two important features: the disposition of the passions in each character type and self-control. Someone showing excellence of character (*ēthike aretē*) is 1) disposed to act well, 2) decides to do so, and 3) acts well *without* struggle (Type 1). Another type (Type 2) has 1) passions and emotions disposed towards bad action, 2) decides to act well for other reasons (e.g. fear of detection or punishment), and then 3) acts well because of self-control (*enkrateia*). The defective counterparts of these two types who act well are: the human being who 1) is disposed to act badly, 2) decides to do so, and 3) acts badly *without* struggle (Type 3); and the human being who is 1) disposed to act badly, 2) decides to act well, 3) struggles with self-control, ultimately fails and 4) acts badly anyhow (Type 4).⁴⁵ The passions, emotions and dispositions of the Type 4-person may be identical to the Type 2-person but has a weak will or lack of self-control (*akrasia*).⁴⁶

Several points emerge. First, action is the consequence of a complex ethical train that begins with character. Character is fundamental to the overall evaluation of an individual's life; it also has a significant influence on action (*NE* 1106a23-4; [1925] 1980, p. 37). Second, Aristotle recognizes gaps between one's character and passions (i.e. preferences), one's decision, and one's action (c.f. Buchanan 1991, p. 225). Decision making involves practical reasoning (prudence) but action involves self-control or its opposite. Third, action in accord with the virtues is an outcome that Aristotle is seeking but it is not sufficient. Truly virtuous

⁴⁴ This paragraph draws on the discussion in Urmson 1973.

⁴⁵ The other two types are the 'divine' and the 'bestial' (*NE* 1145a20-5; 1999, p. 99).

⁴⁶ *NE* 1145a15-52a36; [1925] 1980, pp. 159-83; see Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 240-7 c.f. 111-9; Sen 1974; Sen 1977, p. 340; Lord 1982, pp. 156-9, 170; Lord 1987, p. 130.

acts are performed *for their own sakes*, not out of utilitarian calculation (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 341; Lord 1987, p. 125-6; see also *EE* 1216a23-7; 1248b8-49a17; [1935] 1952, pp. 215, 469-73). Acting out of the desire for external reward (i.e. a good reputation) or fear of punishment is different from having a truly virtuous character. It is at this point we can see clearly that Sen is on the right track when he says that Aristotle has an ‘ethics-related view of motivation’ (1987, p. 4).

Does virtue, thus understood, mean that pleasure must be rooted out (as the Spartans attempted)? No. Virtuous acts *may* be pleasurable. It is not beastly pleasure, however; for those with a good character, the pleasure seems to be a *by-product* of action rather than the goal (*NE* 1099a7-21; 1117b16-7; [1925] 1980, pp. 16-7, 72; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 336).

Third, Aristotle is concerned not just with the analysis of virtuous action, motivation, decision making, and character but with *how* the fundamental thing, character, is formed. Aristotle places great stress on the different modes by which the intellectual and moral virtues are acquired. The former can be attained by being taught; the latter are associated with character (*NE* 1103a15; [1925] 1980, pp. 28).⁴⁷ While humans are not born with these virtues, they are not contrary to nature; they are *latent* in human beings but the potential to develop them depends on the *practice* of acting virtuously. Hence, habituation from youth (when character is very plastic) plays a crucial role; as one progresses through adolescence, the individual’s virtues/dispositions become less malleable; in adulthood they become *relatively* stable, although never completely fixed (*NE* 1103a25-03b26; [1925] 1980, pp. 28-9; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 359; Bartlett 2008, p. 679).

For Aristotle, character is shaped by various forces throughout one’s lifetime. Like other Socratics, he held that better circumstances, better habituation, and better education are likely to produce individuals with better character. Such character will also bear a strong relationship to motivation and action in particular cases.

Aristotle’s whole ethical project depends on improving human action within the community. Outward conformity to the virtuous standards is a start but the deeper task is to create the best possible conditions throughout one’s life for the formation and consolidation of better human character.

6. EQUIPMENT (RESOURCE) AND INSTITUTIONAL NEEDS OF EUDAIMONIA

This section begins by discussing resource pre-requisites of *eudaimonia*. It then turns to the institutional pre-requisites of the latter.

As stated above, human beings need resources or equipment (*chorēgia*). Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle states that the ‘external goods’ include ‘friends’, a certain

⁴⁷ The moral virtues are *primarily* the product of habituation (Bartlett 2008, p. 679).

amount of ‘wealth ... political power, ... good birth, good children, [and even] beauty’ (*NE* 1099a28-b3; 1999, p. 11; Lord 1987, p. 124).⁴⁸ Some of these are investigated below.

⁴⁸ Further, the friends and children must not be vicious or have died earlier (*NE* 1099b5-6; [1925] 1980, p. 17).

Concerning Tier 1 functionings, all human beings ‘need the necessities of life’ (*NE* 1177a29-30; [1925] 1980, p. 264). They need food, water, and exercise of the *right type* (*NE* 1104a15-20; 1106b1-7; 1114a24-5; 1173b14-6; [1925] 1980, pp. 30-1, 37, 61, 252-3; *Rhet* 1362a; 1926, p. 61). Rest (and eventually sleep) is required after extended physical exertion (*NE* 1176b33-6; [1925] 1980, p. 262). Although these are ‘necessaries’, one can have too much of them (*NE* 1096a33-5; 1104a12-9; 1106b2-8; [1925] 1980, pp. 8, 30-1, 37). Freedom from physical and mental diseases is also required (*NE* 1148b20-49a13; [1925] 1980, pp. 171-2; see Megone 1998). The medical, gymnastic, and money-making arts play important instrumental roles in achieving these functionings.

Tier 2 functionings are based on sense experience, including pleasure and pain. The boundary between Tier 1 and Tier 2 is blurry, however. The lack of food leads to ‘pain’ and ‘replenishment’ can be pleasurable (*NE* 1173b14-6; [1925] 1980, pp. 252-3). Indeed, Aristotle says that ‘some pleasures are necessary, while others ... are necessary up to a point’ (*NE* 1150a17-8; [1925] 1980, p. 176). Hence, the Tier 2 functionings include enjoyment of pleasure. Permanent injury or disease may lead to severe pain and limit the performance of virtuous actions. Both effects hamper Tier 2 functionings achievement. *Moderate* health (not Spartan brawn or body-building medals), therefore, is a requirement of these functions. The medical and the money-making arts are also relevant to Tier 2 functionings.

Tier 3 functionings are the highest human potentialities. Nevertheless, the lower boundary of Tier 3 is not perfectly clear.⁴⁹ Disease can also play a role here; it may make it difficult to show self-control over even mild pleasures and pains (*NE* 1150b13-5; [1925] 1980, p. 177). Recall character Type 4 in Section d). Health is important at all three tiers of human functioning.

Generally, the presence of other people is required for the demonstration of the moral virtues (*NE* 1177a30-3; [1925] 1980, p. 264). How can one demonstrate friendship without the presence of others? Similar issues arise for other virtues.

Tier 3 functionings depend less on the money-making art than the other two tiers. Consider, for example, courage, gentleness, truthfulness, and wit. Nevertheless, there is *some* relationship between the demonstration of the virtues and resources. There must be sufficient resources or equipment to permit the virtuous acts to be contemplated and undertaken. Generosity requires that one have more goods or more money than is sufficient for the needs of one’s own family (*NE* 1119b20-23a34; [1925] 1980, pp. 79-85). Magnificence, however, requires grand displays of generosity (*NE* 1122b18-23a34; [1925] 1980, pp. 85-9). The former may be open to many but the latter is restricted to a rare few. Another requirement, which is also probably restricted to a few, is the opportunity to have free time and be able to choose well how to spend that time; Aristotle discusses leisure (*scholē*) at length when he turns to the ideal society (Broadie 1991, pp. 4, 417-27; Sparshott 1994, pp. 332-40).

Some people may be born into a hopeless situation where they are denied sufficient equipment throughout their lifetime. Others may have been fortunate to be born into

⁴⁹ Friendship is found in humans and animals. The virtue of moderation is concerned with bodily pleasures associated with food and sex: Tier 1 and 2 functions (Nussbaum 1995a, p. 115).

circumstances where the resources available to them are plentiful but then lose them. This may be through war, political instability, insufficient care of the equipment, or various other causes. The sober conclusion is that (in the absence of a redistributive *polis*) only in rare cases will a person have sufficient equipment throughout the whole of a full, lifetime.

This leads us into the question of how far Aristotle's understanding of the various virtues requires redistribution of resources. He is opposed to the poor stealing from the rich and the rich stealing from the poor, even if these actions are in accord with the legal procedures (*Pol* 1281a16-8; 1984, p. 100).⁵⁰ Let us now turn to an elaboration on the institutional prerequisites for Tier 3 functionings.

As we have seen, for Aristotle, good character is fundamental. The starting point for this is the family. Aristotle retains the family and the household (following Plato's *Laws*). He holds that some rudimentary education can occur within the household and this is certainly where various habits are formed (*NE* 1180b2-7; [1925] 1980, p. 273; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 346). Aristotle calls for, and expects, some basic moral education within the household. He does not think, however, that this is sufficient; public education is required. This requires legislation.

Aristotle places responsibility on the political authorities to provide a proper, compulsory, public educational system: one that pays proper regard to the moral virtues (*Pol* 1137a21-5; 1984, p. 229; see *NE* 1103b4-25; [1925] 1980, p. 29; Lord 1987, p. 125). Nussbaum addresses this at some length ([1986] 2001, pp. 346-7). The law must cover the ethical education of the young; this must be combined with habituation. Aristotle notes that the Spartans were almost unique in providing public education but they wrongly promoted only martial virtue (*Pol* 1324b8-10; 1333b13-4; 1338b12-6; 1334a40-b38; 1984, pp. 200, 221, 223, 232-3).

This educational law is one of many formative laws. In the highest (and truest) sense, laws form character; they enforce the virtues that are necessary to achieve *eudaimonia*. Recall the discussion at the opening of this paper on politics as the 'master' science. Good 'legislators make their citizens good by forming [good] habits in them' (*NE* 1103b5; [1925] 1980, p. 29). Character-forming laws are instruments of moral education (Strauss 1964, p. 22).

The character formation role of law is combined with habituation and this operates even on adults. Prescriptive law must guide adults, because even with proper education and habituation, people often show moral weakness, incontinence or lack of self-control (*akrasia*). Recall character Type 4 from Section 5. At least for the many, 'through fear of punishment', the law helps reinforce good morals (*NE* 1179b11-2; [1925] 1980, p. 270; Lord 1987, p. 131). Recall character Type 2.

Politics as the master science can play a significant role in the achievement of Tier 1 and 2 functions of a human being.⁵¹ It must play an active role, however, in the high achievement of Tier 3 functions. Legislation in the true sense is aimed at human character. Fundamental

⁵⁰ I plan to address this further in a future paper on Aristotle's politics.

⁵¹ This will be addressed in a future paper on Aristotle's economics.

to Aristotle's whole ethical project is encouraging law makers to institute and retain laws that promote the various virtues (*NE* 1099b30-3; [1925] 1980, p. 18). Because legislation and public education are pre-requisites of *eudaimonia*, life in a city must also be a pre-requisite. Elements of the virtue of justice are also dependent on the existence of the city.⁵²

7. ETHICS IN A RANGE OF CONTEXTS

In this section we will show some of the subtlety of Aristotle's views on ethics. First, he recognized that individuals often operate within *different* ethical contexts. Second, he was aware that some individuals operated *simultaneously* in more than one ethical context.

There is a wide variety of denizens in the *polis*, including the free adult females, children of both genders, *metics* (for most of his life, Aristotle lived in this condition),⁵³ and slaves. Each has its own ethical context. Aristotle states that excellence must be promoted in children of *both* genders and adult females (*Pol* 1260b13-8; 1984, p. 54). His focus, however, is on the citizen (*politēs*) i.e. adult males in a democracy.

In a democracy, the citizens come from households. In addition to one or two slaves at the base of the *oikos* 'pyramid', there are a range of free members of the typical household. In the middle of the 'pyramid', there are male and female children, and female adults. At the apex of the 'pyramid' there are four or five citizens in the typical *oikos* in a democracy (Nagle 2006, pp.75). The household head (and to a lesser degree all of the four or five citizens in the *oikos*) operates within at least three ethical contexts: as an individual (a good man or *agathos*), as a household manager (*oikonomos*), and as an active participant in politics (a *politikos*).⁵⁴ In all three contexts the household head requires practical reasoning (prudence) (Hutchinson 1995, p. 207). We will address only the good man here.⁵⁵

We have seen that the good man needs certain refinement or at least self-control (which can come from one or more of the following: good habituation, education, wealth, or close surveillance) and certain equipment. The good man succeeds to a considerable degree in acting well. Recall character Type 2 from Section 5. The noble and good man (or perfect gentleman) (*kaloskagathos*) succeeds better in performing these actions *for their own sake* (*EE* 1248b8-49a17; [1935] 1952, pp. 469-73; Strauss 1970, pp. 119, 128; Lord 1982, pp. 200-1; Lord 1987, pp. 126-7). Recall character Type 1. As a general rule, Aristotle argues that the virtues should be treated as ends in themselves. Hence, despite their rarity, he endorses the *kaloskagathos* rather than the *agathos* (Lord 1987, p. 126).⁵⁶

⁵² This will be addressed in a future paper on Aristotle's politics.

⁵³ On Aristotle as a metic, see Whitehead 1975.

⁵⁴ Similarly, Xenophon states that gentlemen (*kaloī kagathoi*) are 'able to deal with (*chrēsthai*) their household, domestic servants, friends, city, and citizens in a noble manner' (*Mem* I.2.48; 1994, p. 14). As a *metic* in Athens, Aristotle did not participate in political life in Athens (or in Macedonia, presumably) (Nagle 2006, pp. 12, 14).

⁵⁵ The ethics of the good citizen in political life will be discussed in a projected paper on Aristotle's politics and the ethics of the household manager will be discussed in a projected paper on Aristotle's economics.

⁵⁶ Actually, even this description of the *kaloskagathos* is somewhat misleading. A *kaloskagathos* demonstrates most of the virtues but may lack 'greatness of soul'. The complete or full *kaloskagathos* is one with greatness

8. CONCLUSION

First, the autonomy and dignity of the practical sciences is recognized by Aristotle. One consequence is that he rejects the application of the methodology of the theoretical sciences in this realm. Abstract model building is rejected. In this light, much of modern economics is misguided. Aristotle endorses an ‘ethical methodology’.

Second, Aristotle recognizes a wide range of human motivations. Self-interest is what motivates most people, most of the time. Nevertheless, he not only described a range of virtues (and showed their relevance in a wide range of contexts) but sought to promote them.

Sen is quite right to stress the questions that Aristotle asks: What is *the* ‘good’ human action strives for? How *should* one live? (*NE* 1094a3-96b11; 1999, pp. 1-5). For Sen, ethical deliberations are relevant ‘to actual human behaviour’ (Sen 1987, p. 4). This is the foundation for the ‘ethics-related view of motivation’ that he finds in Aristotle.

Third, in developing his species view of man, Aristotle presents us with a useful understanding of human functioning. His three tiers of human functioning appear to be compatible with the list of functionings developed explicitly by Nussbaum (and implicitly by Sen). As the various functionings are put together, we begin to see Aristotle’s rich vision of human flourishing (*eudaimonia*). Reading Aristotle makes sense only when the *eudaimonia* framework is kept in mind.

We now have the first building block for understanding the work of Aristotle. Further work on Aristotle’s politics and economics must be undertaken in order to complete the foundations of Aristotle’s ethics and economics.

of soul. In this instance at least, Aristotle’s bias towards the aristocratic *kaloskagathos* (and the associated regime, aristocracy) could not be clearer (*NE* 1124a1-2; [1925] 1980, p. 91; Lord 1987, pp. 126-7).

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