



VIRTUES OF THOUGHT

Essays on Plato and Aristotle



ARYEH KOSMAN

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Aryeh Kosman



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For Amélie Oksenberg Rorty

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VIRTUES OF THOUGHT

Introduction

I've entitled this collection of essays on Plato and Aristotle *Virtues of Thought* for a number of reasons. The first is slight; one of the previously unpublished essays in the collection has a version of that title, and it seemed to me, given that this was its first appearance, nice to name the collection after that essay; it was rather as though I had decided to call the collection "*Virtues of Thought*" and *Other Essays on Plato and Aristotle*.

The second reason is somewhat heftier. These essays can be understood to explore, in a broad sense, some of what Plato and Aristotle have to say about modes of human thought. I say *in a broad sense* quite deliberately. Several of the essays can be said to be about *thought* only if we understand that word in the simple sense of Cartesian *cogito*—I am aware. Their concern is only incidentally with thinking through how best to plant the fourteen feet by the side of the drive, or thinking through whether it is right to eat the flesh of other animals, or trying to think about the implications of Gödel's incompleteness theorem. But "haply I think on thee" and "if the while I think on thee, dear friend" need involve no ratiocination such as is involved in these modes of thought. Asking what the poet means by these words might, but the thought that is referred to involves merely a sentient attention on our part: an animal, or more specifically a human, *awareness*—or to use a term that has become increasingly puzzling to us, *consciousness*. The question to what degree such consciousness is connected to thinking understood more amply as reasoning is a difficult one. But in discussing awareness, I am here more concerned simply to reveal it as a necessary constituent in an account of perceiving, thinking, or any other mode of human cognitive activity.

Other essays consider psychic activities like the emotions, activities which do not involve thought in the sense of reasoning, but which are clearly for Plato and Aristotle cognitive in nature. Again, some of the

essays concern activities and institutions that are ours only because we are animals who enjoy perceptual and cognitive awareness. But as I argue in Chapter 9's essay on friendship, the mode of co-perception that Aristotle ascribes to social living introduces into the conversation a variety of topics discussed by Plato and Aristotle that concern communal life and that involve co-perception. I use the word *co-perception* to translate Aristotle's apparent neologism συναίσθησις; but the *perception* part—the αἴσθησις component—is Aristotle's general term for *awareness*, and to the degree that we conceive of human awareness as rooted in the capacities for and activities of thinking, friendship and society are revealed to be communal forms of human thought.

Others of these essays concern thought in what may be its more ordinary sense of *thinking through*—engaging in modes of inferential reasoning and complex judgment. In several, I attend in particular to the thought involved in explanation, to the institutions and activities of science, as well as of philosophy, that are devoted to explaining and making intelligible the world and our activities in the world.

But in fact what will be obvious to the reader is that there is not a great deal of thematic unity to this collection; these are simply some of the essays that my reading and thinking about Plato and Aristotle have produced. And indeed the intention that governs the *thought* of this collection's title is most importantly other than thematic. It's my hope that its use might invoke (besides the subject matter of the essays) the thoughtful activity of philosophy itself. I have endeavored, as we all must do, to exhibit the virtues of such thought in writing about Greek philosophy. But I realize that I mean also to register the joys and the recompense of reading philosophy and of philosophical thought: I want *virtues* therefore to be heard in the sense of *worth possessed*. When we speak of the *virtues of industry*, we are not speaking of the good qualities that industry requires, but of the goods that it brings about as a result of its presence; we mean to signify not so much an excellence as a result of excellence. *Virtues of thought* are then the joys and blessings, above all the satisfactions, that come to us by our devotion to the activity of thought—here specifically the activity of philosophical thought—whether engaged in or witnessed.

That the activities of philosophy bring satisfaction, even to those for whom it is a struggle and may rarely afford a sense of completion, is often forgotten. We may think of philosophy merely as a form of

madness, or more mildly as linguistic or conceptual confusion, from which its best service may paradoxically be to rescue us. Or we may imagine that philosophy's worth lies in its capacity to ground or justify other practices and institutions, or to show us the proper way to live. There may be truth to these thoughts. But it was the pleasure of its activity that first drew me to philosophy; it was the thrill of it, the delight I discovered in the kind of thinking I was introduced to and the satisfaction that came as a result. That thrill and satisfaction have lasted, and their introduction to students has afforded a further pleasure and elation.

It has been my good fortune for many years to be able to teach philosophy and, in the course of that activity, to read and talk about texts that both create satisfaction in the reader, and convey, from one page to the next, the pleasures of the intricate and peculiar thinking that is philosophy. The gratification of joining Plato in the act of philosophical thought is of course not the same as what we experience in listening to Aristotle. Reading the one, we can feel the thrill that comes from the complex polyphony of Plato's several mimetic voices.¹ These voices lead us away from simplicity and nearer the complexity of truth; they clarify by complicating, by compelling the reader to join in the endorsement of divergent valences of thought.

We often think of the dialogues as inviting us to the resolution of these divergences, as though rationality required the simplicity of a single vector of thought rescued from the polyphony of dialectic. In fact, what rationality requires on Plato's understanding is our ability to hold in the space of thought a complex of concepts that grasp reality. In the dialogues, particularly in what have come to be identified as the "early Socratic" dialogues, that complex is characteristically revealed in the dialectic of accounts developed in the course of conversation, a dialectic that mirrors the complex unity of the forms.² The order and invention of this thought appear to be luxuriously accidental; but at the end of a dialogue, the discourse appears complete, despite the currents that undermine closure by hints of further complexity and qualification. Because the dialogue happens in time, it exhibits the necessary diachronic arc of the drama; but its consummation is synchronic, still, like the quiet eternity of a form.

Aristotle's voice, on the other hand, feels inveterately diachronic; it has about it the spontaneity and necessity of the linear, and its dialectic

is realized along the line of time. Here the joy is that of unraveling the real, of learning how to speak its formulae not by reflection or misdirection but by a clear and tireless voice, patient before the unfolding vistas of *what is*. Aristotle seems never to feel the urgency of seeking closure; his is the philosophical confidence able always to say: let's make a fresh start, and look at it now from another point of view.

Today it is hard for many of us to read Plato; he seems to some modern sensibilities otherworldly in his metaphysics, elitist and totalitarian in his social and political philosophy, essentialist and overly rationalistic in his epistemology, and prudish and puritanical in his ethics and aesthetics. I consider these reactions not so much a result of misreading as a result of a reading that is naïve and that finds sincerity at the wrong level of discourse; they are part of a reading that fails to make the ironic turn which, when made, reveals Plato's ultimate sincerity. Plato's voice has, moreover, been kidnapped by a gnostic vision of the real as in the far beyond, a vision that occludes Plato's clear and simple understanding of the forms as the principles that govern the immanently real and the look by which that real makes its appearance to us, its appearance as the world.

Aristotle is hard to read for other reasons; his prose is elliptical and cramped, and it requires patience and perseverance to see clearly the ultimate sanity of his generous and open naturalism, a naturalism that is nonetheless subtly nuanced. *Sanity* indeed seems to me an operative word in terms of which to think about Plato and Aristotle alike. By *sanity* I mean a stance toward culture and nature alike that makes them both understandable and desirable. It is a stance of love and acceptance, founded finally on the easy expectation that thought will reveal the world's order and grace, and that the right philosophical posture will enable us to be their witness. I end the essay on beauty in this collection by remarking that for Plato, philosophers are those who love the spectacle of truth (*Republic* 475E). The beginning and the finale of philosophical life is thus, I conclude, a love of clearly seen splendor, a love of beauty.

It is no surprise then that sanity realizes its completion in joy. That joy, the joy of the philosopher at work, communicates itself to readers, and surely engenders in us the cognate pleasure of our own philosophical thought. In my career, much of that pleasure has come in the classroom, where its satisfaction has been compounded by that of young

men and women who have shared with me that thinking, often for the first time. I have a great debt of gratitude to those students, not merely for the help they have been to me in my own philosophical thought, but more for the pleasure that has come from having helped them to give birth to understanding or curiosity or astonishment or sometimes even wisdom. These are considerable pleasures, the pleasures of the classroom and the pleasures of the rare and powerful connection that can exist between teacher and student. They are all of course ephemeral, but they are nonetheless real. I am pleased to have written the essays in this volume, but they will last only a moment or two longer than the conversations I have had with students, and then they too, like our lives, will prove ephemeral.

Thanks are therefore due to students far more numerous than I can here mention who have helped to realize these moments. Some include (in alphabetical order) Joseph Bednarick, Michael Bratman, Ethan Feinsod, Samuel Floyd, Patricia Galvin, Marie Göransson, Karen Merikangas, Grace Ledbetter, Paul Miller, Fred Ovsiew, George Reuter, Evan Rodriguez, Ravi Sharma, Nancy Sherman, Arendt Speser, George Stavis, and Martha Woodruff. For many more, quite by accident and chance, the wells of memory have gone dry as I have grown old. To them, I apologize; they will know who they are. One specific note of gratitude: over the last decade or so, I have had wonderful conversations about philosophy and much more with an early student and good friend, James Friedman, to whom I am greatly indebted.

Most of the essays in this volume have appeared previously in print, and for the most part they are here given in the order in which they were published. Essays I wrote on Aristotle's ontology and metaphysics are not included in this volume; they largely overlap with material in the book *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle's Ontology*, published by Harvard University Press in 2013.

It is sobering and sometimes embarrassing to read the earlier works of this volume; the first essays were written at the end of the '60s, when, after being trained in the history of modern philosophy and particularly analytic philosophy of the twentieth century, I first began to experience the joys of teaching and writing about ancient philosophy. But although I have made minor stylistic changes, the essays are

here essentially as they first appeared; I have resisted the temptation to rewrite the past. “Understanding, Explanation, and Insight in Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*” first appeared in *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos*, edited by E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos, and R. M. Rorty (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973); “Platonic Love” was given at a conference in memory of Robert Miller, and then published in *Facets of Plato’s Philosophy*, edited by W. W. Werkmeister (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974). “Perceiving That We Perceive, *On the Soul* III, 2” appeared in *Philosophical Review* 84, no. 4 (October 1975); “Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle’s *Ethics*,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, edited by Amélie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); “Necessity and Explanation in Aristotle’s *Analytics*,” in *Biologie, Logique et Métaphysique chez Aristote*, Séminaire CNRS-N.S.F. 1987, edited by Pierre Pelegrin (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1990); “Acting: Drama as the *Mimesis* of *Praxis*,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, edited by Amélie Rorty (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); “What Does the Maker Mind Make?” in *Essays on Aristotle’s “De Anima*,” edited by Amélie Rorty and Martha Nussbaum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); “Saving the Phenomena: Aristotle on Realism and Instrumentalism,” in *Aristotle and Contemporary Science*, ed. Demetra Sfendoni-Mentzou (New York: Peter Lang, 2000); “Aristotle on the Desirability of Friends,” in *Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2004); “Justice and Virtue: The *Republic*’s Inquiry into Proper Difference,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*, edited by G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); “Male and female in Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals*,” in *Being, Nature, and Life in Aristotle*, edited by James Lennox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and “Beauty and the Good: Situating the *Kalon*,” in *Classical Philology* 105 (October 2010).

I

Understanding, Explanation, and Insight in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*

I

The *Posterior Analytics*, like the *Theaetetus*, is an essay on ἐπιστήμη, or understanding. For Aristotle, ἐπιστήμη is, in broadest terms, the explanatory art; one who understands is someone able to explain what he understands. In this sense, ἐπιστήμη is, as Aristotle repeatedly urges, a discursive disposition or habit of soul, a ἕξις, the locus of whose ἐνέργεια is in the activity of ἀπόδειξις, an activity that I shall with qualification call in English “explanation.” The explanatory art presupposes another sort of understanding, νοῦς, which is itself a ἕξις, and whose nature and connection to ἐπιστήμη is complex and subtle.

We think we understand something, Aristotle claims near the beginning of the *Posterior Analytics* (I.2, 71b9–24), when we know its αἰτία, that is, when we know what is responsible for its being the case, and know that that is what's responsible, and that it couldn't be otherwise. There may, he continues, be another mode of understanding, which he promises to look into later; but the kind here talked about, which we might style *scientific understanding*, is central. It is knowing, he says, by ἀπόδειξις or “demonstration,” by which he says he means a piece of reasoning, a syllogism, which is said, with buoyant circularity, to be ἐπιστημονικός, that is, such that having it is to understand. Not every syllogism is ἐπιστημονικός, that is to say, is an ἀπόδειξις. If a syllogism is to qualify as such, it must exhibit certain characteristics, most notably in its ἐξ ὧν, its premises or elements. The elaboration of these

characteristics, which connect the concept of demonstration with that of understanding as causal knowledge, occupies a major part of the next few chapters of the *Posterior Analytics*.

Aristotle's account sounds like a familiar though no longer fashionable one. Scientific understanding is occasioned by causal explanation, of which a paradigm is a certain kind of deductive syllogism, most notably, though not exclusively, of the sort: All Ks are L; the case to be understood is a K; so (we now understand) it is an L. It is clearly not necessary, for such an account to pick out a seminal kind of understanding, that *all* understanding be dependent on explanation of this sort, nor, clearly, is Aristotle making such a claim. It is only a certain form of understanding about which he is speaking, namely the form that's effected by explanation.

Suppose someone asks: How could a phenomenon be *explained* by showing it to be an instance of a more general law? Wouldn't any serious perplexity about this K's being L be equally felt about the generalization as a whole? If all Ks' being L *could* explain this K's being L, then surely, on the same grounds, if it is puzzling that this K is L, the fact that *all* Ks are L would be equally puzzling, and could serve only as a disposable logical vessel for the transference of some *other* explanation. By pointing out that all Ks are L we might succeed in convincing someone that he ought not to *be* puzzled in the first place, that there is nothing here in *need* of explanation, and we might, in certain moods, be tempted to count that as an explanation. But one ought not yield to temptation; there are ways of settling perplexity concerning K's being L other than explanation. A blow to the head in Zen manner is one; pointing out that all Ks are L may be another. But it doesn't follow that either of these is an *explanation*; to dissolve perplexity is not *eo ipso* to occasion understanding.

This objection presupposes much that is crucial. For it takes as apparent that the subject that is perplexingly L *is* a K, and assumes we realize that it is and that precisely by being so it is L. But what if this realization is lacking? Then an explanation in terms of all Ks' being L may prove genuinely enlightening—not, to be sure, in every case, but just when it is in fact by virtue of being K that the subject in question *is* L. Half of the job of explaining has been performed when, in those cases in which the fact that all Ks are L is (correctly) offered in explanation of the fact that this K is L, the fact to be explained is presented

as *this K is L*. Explanation is an intentional activity. How we describe what is explained counts.

Providing an explanation then means finding a description K of some entity that is L, which description reveals the cause of that entity being L. In general, being able to explain a phenomenon in this sense involves knowing which descriptions are appropriate to a subject such that *under that description* the subject is per se such and such. Being able to explain, therefore, is not simply being able to fit a generalization to a phenomenon, but being able to exhibit just that generalization that expresses the cause of the phenomenon.

But here, as generally in Aristotle's writings, the notion of *cause* must be understood delicately. An αἴτιον is for Aristotle whatever is one of a group of factors that together *are responsible for* that of which they are the αἴτια, the *conditions* determining it as what it is. The term αἴτιον is used originally in moral and legal contexts with respect to the locus of blame or responsibility for some action or condition. So here, the notion of cause is in general correlative to questions which ask why—that is, which seek to assign responsibility for something.

But now suppose someone asks: Why should explanation and, through it, scientific understanding be linked to the concept of cause or responsible factor? What might have led Aristotle to the notion that ἐπίστασθαι is above all τὴν αἰτίαν γινώσκειν (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b10), that answers to *why* questions should be central explanatory tools? Prima facie one might expect explanation and understanding to be concerned with *what* something is rather than with *why* it is what it is; understanding the *why* of something is not understanding that thing, but some other thing, namely its cause, that which is responsible for it being the case.

Any account of what leads Aristotle to identify understanding something and knowing its causes must begin with the defeat of that prima facie expectation. For it must understand *cause* to refer not to something other than the entity in question, but to the entity itself under that description that reveals certain of its καθ'αὐτό predicates. Thus it is clear, Aristotle claims, that “what something is and why it is are the same”—τὸ αὐτὸ ἔστι τὸ τί ἔστι καὶ διὰ τί ἔστιν (*Posterior Analytics* 2.1, 90a15). The *why* in terms of which scientific understanding is defined is simply *the nature of the phenomenon in question*. To ask why some K is L is to ask what is K's being L, that is, what is there about K such that

by virtue of that it is per se L. Consider Aristotle's example (*Posterior Analytics* 2.1, 90a15–18). We ask, what is an eclipse, and answer, privation of light on the moon due to the earth getting in the way. We ask, what is the reason for some eclipse, or why is the moon eclipsed, and answer, because of the failure of light due to the earth having gotten in the way. Here we respond to a *why* question with a fact about the nature of the moon *qua* entity that eclipses. The asking a *why* question is thus an attempt to understand more fully the *nature* of the phenomenon being explained.

Notice that on this model it is possible to explain accidental properties, but only accidentally. The primary object of scientific understanding is a phenomenon that, as Aristotle claims, is necessary, for explanation is from the necessary and concerns that which could not be other than it is: μή ἐνδέχασθαι τοῦτ' ἄλλως ἔχειν (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b12). Does that mean that Aristotle intends to limit his theory to those sciences whose subject matter is necessary, as, for example, geometry is? or that he understood the natural sciences in this way? Such a fact would seriously handicap the generality of this theory or reveal it to rest upon an unhappy misunderstanding of empirical knowledge.

But I think these fears are ungrounded. The demand means only that the object of understanding is for Aristotle only incidentally the contingent fact that is to be explained—for example, that something is eclipsed. Properly it is that anything that falls under a certain description eclipses, where that description is what we give in explaining why the moon eclipses. It is only accidental that *that shining globe* eclipses, but necessary that *a body with an opaque substance interposed between it and its light source, etc.*, which the moon is, eclipse. In general, Aristotle requires that if we are to gain scientific understanding of K's being L by an explanation of this fact, it must be that whatever falls under the description that we give K in explaining why it is L should necessarily be L. If it weren't necessary, what kind of explanation would we have provided? For we should still have to explain why, given that it doesn't *have* to be L, it *is*.

Aristotle's assertion that in cases of scientific understanding "things couldn't be otherwise" is thus not meant to assimilate all understanding to that of the mathematical sciences; it is meant rather to signal what we might term the "modal aspect" of ἐπιστήμη and ἀπόδειξις. To call something an accident is to block a certain kind of attempt at under-

standing it. This fact points to the connection between intelligibility and necessity; the accidental is that which *just happens*.

Still open, of course, is the question, to which Aristotle addresses himself elsewhere, of the nature of necessity in natural phenomena and its relation to the type of necessity exhibited in the mathematical sciences. Also open is the question of how, on such an account, we achieve anything like understanding of a contingent fact such as that *some body* eclipses. How is our grasp of a phenomenon in the modal terms required for scientific understanding related to our awareness of the same phenomenon under a non-necessary description, and what is the epistemic status of this awareness? This is a familiar problem for Aristotle, and one with which he struggles, in different versions, in the *Metaphysics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

I suspect that Aristotle understands the move from the first to the second of those modes of awareness as a species of practical reasoning; some version of such a solution is envisioned by him, and by Plato as well, in response to analogous problems in epistemology and ethics. But I know of no passage in which Aristotle considers this thought directly.¹

What is clear, however, is that if this account is correct, Aristotle's talk of necessity in no way entails that he takes as his model of ἐπιστήμη the deductive mathematical sciences. A proponent of a more traditional view might understandably object that the argument has in general been slanted by my tendentious Englishing of ἀπόδειξις as "causal explanation." The more traditional reading of "demonstration" or "proof" should restore us to a view of quasi-mathematical deduction as at the heart of the theory in the *Posterior Analytics*.

But although ἀπόδειξις in some contexts clearly *does* mean proof, this is not its focal sense. The root meaning of the term is "showing forth," and its most common occurrences in nonphilosophical Greek embody the sense of showing as *revealing* or *uncovering* as much as that of showing as *proving*. The nurse in Euripides's *Hippolytus* (196) says that there is no ἀπόδειξις of things below the earth, meaning clearly that these things have not been revealed to us. Aeschines (3.165) asks Demosthenes to tell the court what he had said and done on a certain occasion by requesting from him an ἀπόδειξις of his words and deeds. Thucydides (1.97) promises to give an ἀπόδειξις of the sources of certain events, meaning clearly an account or exposition, and Herodotus

opens his work by calling it an ἱστορίας ἀπόδειξις, an exposition or showing forth of his historical research. In Plato this sense is abundant. Throughout the *Statesman* (269C2, 273ES, 277A2) the enterprise of discovering and revealing what the statesman or king is, is described as ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπόδειξις or ἡ περὶ τὸν πολιτικὸν ἀπόδειξις. In the *Republic* (358B3), Socrates complains that there has as yet been no ἀπόδειξις of justice and injustice; he wishes to hear what each of them is and can do in and of itself.

What we need to render ἀπόδειξις is thus a term answering to the concept of something being revealed for what it is. Just as discourse for Aristotle is ἀπό-φανσις, the activity in which the world through the agency of another makes its appearance, so the activity of science is ἀπό-δειξις, the activity in which the world is revealed, in which the implicit is unfolded and made manifest.

We said that to look for a causal explanation is to look for a description appropriate to a subject such that the subject under that description is per se the predicate in question. Such a description Aristotle terms τὸ μέσον, the middle; it is a description that links subject and predicate both conceptually, as providing the intelligible source of explanation, and ontologically, as the real ground of the subject exhibiting the predicate. What is revealed in ἀπόδειξις in Aristotle's understanding is this middle, the cause and nature of the phenomenon in question; thus what is revealed is the entity in its true being, that is, the entity qua responsible for those features that it exhibits.

An ἀπόδειξις is a kind of syllogism, and a syllogism is a collection of terms in propositions that necessitate yet another proposition or something analogous, such as an action. The ἐξ ὧν of an ἀπόδειξις are thus the elements of an explanation, now understood as a “revealing” that makes intelligible the entity explained; *demonstration* is the exposition of these elements, and the showing forth thereby of the true causal nature of the phenomenon. Thus, “ἀπόδειξις is a piece of reasoning that brings to light the causes and reasons for something's being the case”—συλλογισμὸς δεικτικὸς αἰτίας καὶ τοῦ διὰ τί (*Posterior Analytics* 1.24, 85b23–24).

An ἀπόδειξις is productive, Aristotle says, of scientific understanding; it is defined first as a syllogism ἐπιστημονικός, where ἐπιστημονικός is parsed as “that by virtue of which we understand merely by having it”—καθ' ὃν τῷ ἔχειν αὐτὸν ἐπιστάμεθα (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b17–19),

and shrewdly rendered by the Latinizer as *faciens scire*. But ἐπιστήμη is not simply the state *brought about* by ἀπόδειξις; the relationship is more complex and subtle. In its history, ἐπιστήμη has a clear dispositional sense; the core of its meaning is a knowing *how to*, a rational *capacity to*. This sense is still prominent in Plato's use of the term, and it is equally preserved in Aristotle's; ἐπιστήμη ποιητική, for example, is knowing how to make, ἐπιστήμη πρακτική knowing how to act (e.g., *Metaphysics* 6.1, 1025b21–24; 11.7, 1064a10–15). And ἐπιστήμη ἀποδεικτική, which comes for Aristotle to embody a more focal sense of the term ἐπιστήμη, exhibits the same features; it is similarly a ἕξις, a dispositional capacity *to* act, and the specific action is that of ἀπόδειξις. The definition of ἐπιστήμη in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (6.3, 1139b31) makes this clear: ἡ μὲν ἄρα ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶν ἕξις ἀποδεικτική.

The ἐπιστήμων, the person who has understanding, is, in other words, the person who knows how to explain in the broad sense of “explain” that I have tried to articulate, just as the φρόνιμος, the person who has “practical wisdom,” is the person who knows how to act. Science is the art of discursive disclosure; it is at once brought about by and is the capacity to engage in ἀπόδειξις. We might say: we come to understand something by having it explained to us; to understand is in turn to be able to explain.

2

I said that scientific understanding, in the sense given by Aristotle's ἐπιστήμη ἀποδεικτική, is a capacity for the exposition of what is responsible for something's being the case. To understand is to be able to explain; to explain is to reveal a phenomenon's true nature via revealing those factors per se responsible for the phenomenon, as being responsible, and as exhibiting that responsibility.

But this cannot be the whole picture. For it is possible to provide an explanation of a phenomenon and still not understand it because one doesn't understand the explanation itself, or the premises of the explanation, or how the explanation explains. Scientific understanding involves not simply the capacity to provide some stretch of discourse that might be called an explanation but, after all, *understanding*—the relative absence, that is, of perplexity or confusion or bewilderment. To do justice to this fact, it is necessary that we build into any account

of understanding in terms of explanation the condition that we understand in turn that by which we explain. This necessity does not require us to retract a dispositional account of understanding, nor lead us into the tempting swamps of psychologism; it points only to the necessity of our understanding that in terms of which we understand.

Aristotle is aware of this necessity, and holds that the principles or ἀρχαί that are the grounds of explanation must themselves be understood; indeed they must, he says, be “better known” than the facts for which they are responsible and which they are invoked to explain. This is clearly a treacherous requirement: for, as Aristotle recognizes, it leads us dangerously close to the brink of an argument ad infinitum. If understanding is (a) being able to show discursively what is responsible for something *and* (b) understanding what it is that is responsible (where this means not simply knowing the answer to the question “what is responsible for K’s being L?” but, where K’s being M is invoked by way of explanation as responsible, understanding K’s being M), then to understand A one must understand the B responsible for A, and therefore the C responsible for B, and so on ad infinitum.

The danger is an old and well-recognized one, still with us. It threatens any theory that attempts to formulate an account of knowledge or understanding in terms of explanations or reasons or justifications that themselves must in turn be understood. Recall the dream theory at the end of the *Theaetetus* (201E–206C). That theory founders upon the fact that its two central theses, (1) the necessity of λόγος for ἐπιστήμη, and (2) the fact that only complexes and not elements can have a λόγος, entail yet a third and unwelcome thesis: the unknowability of the elements. This thesis is shown not only to generate serious logical difficulties for the account, but also to be contrary to our normal experience of those areas of our life where understanding is founded upon a sure grasp of fundamentals. In the case that Socrates and Theaetetus consider, for example, our understanding of words is founded upon a sure and prior understanding of the letters that make up these words.

But if on this account we abandon the second thesis, not only is the theory struck in its vitals, but we are hurtled down the endless path of the regress. We are dramatically reminded of this danger when, at the end of the dialogue, the ἐπιστήμη that has been the object of investigation flouts the investigators by reappearing in its own definition.

Surely a more inviting and vigilant move, and one that always lurks in the shadows of the latter part of the *Theaetetus*, is to abandon the first thesis, and to make the definition of ἐπιστήμη truly recursive by specifying a class of objects of understanding that are understood without a λόγος and in terms of which all others are in turn understood. This is a less dizzying prospect (recursive definition being infinite in the inspiring, not the vertigo-producing direction) and it is one that, incidentally, we feel familiar with from its analogue in modern epistemology, the foundational theory of knowledge.

Is this in fact Aristotle's solution? It looks to be, for when first faced in the *Posterior Analytics* with the threat of an endless chain of ἐπιστήμη and ἀπόδειξις, Aristotle hastens to reassure us that we are committed to no such regress, nor, alternatively, to the possibility of circular explanation. For, he says, not all knowledge is ἀποδεικτική; knowledge of the ἄμεσα, the immediate premises, is ἀναπόδεικτος, independent of ἀπόδειξις (*Posterior Analytics* 1.3, 72b18–24).

This claim is foreshadowed in our master text from *Posterior Analytics* 1.2 when Aristotle prefaces his description of ἐπιστήμη as demonstrative knowledge by promising to consider later whether there may be another, different form of understanding. This promise seems to be kept in the small discussion in 1.3, and in the discussion, infuriatingly not much longer, in 2.19, where Aristotle discusses the nature of our grasp of the ἀρχαί or first principles of scientific understanding. There is also an important discussion in 1.13, where Aristotle considers the difference between τὸ ὅτι ἐπίστασθαι and τὸ διότι ἐπίστασθαι, understanding that and understanding why, a discussion that was to play a critical role in the subsequent development of medieval and early modern philosophy of science, and to which we might suppose the promise of 1.2 to refer as well.

But there is some perplexity here; for the discussion in 2.19 is meant to establish that there is another form of understanding *than* ἐπιστήμη, where *understanding* is used quite broadly to refer to any one of a number of cognitive states including ἐπιστήμη, νοῦς, δόξα, etc., whereas the discussion at 1.13 establishes that there are different forms *of* ἐπιστήμη.

The promise at 71b16 is perfectly ambiguous, since ἕτερος τοῦ ἐπίστασθαι could mean either another form *of* or another form *than* ἐπιστήμη. Similarly the discussion in 1.3 (72b18–25) begins by arguing

that not all ἐπιστήμη is ἀποδεικτική; the ἐπιστήμη of immediate premises is ἀναπόδεικτος. It concludes, however, that there is not only ἐπιστήμη, but also the ἀρχή of ἐπιστήμη, an ἀρχή that is presumably, in light of 2.19, *not* ἐπιστήμη itself.

This may simply be an ambiguity in Aristotle's expression; perhaps there is a strict and a loose sense of ἐπιστήμη. According to the loose sense, the ἀναπόδεικτος understanding of first principles is a kind of ἐπιστήμη, whereas according to the strict sense, it is another sort *than* ἐπιστήμη. But alternatively, there may be two different states: (1) understanding that is ἐπιστήμη but is not ἀποδεικτική, and (2) understanding that is not ἐπιστήμη. This seems to be suggested by the distinction Aristotle appears to remark at 1.33 (88b35–37) between νοῦς, by which he says he means the ἀρχή of ἐπιστήμη, and ἐπιστήμη ἀναπόδεικτος, which is said to be judgment concerning the immediate premises. But it is difficult to know what Aristotle might mean by this last phrase, given the relation between ἐπιστήμη and ἀπόδειξις.

Perhaps this represents too nice a concern with the subtleties of Aristotle's diction. The overall picture seems to emerge with clarity: since the principles or elements of ἐπιστήμη must themselves be understood, it is necessary, if we are to avoid an infinite regress, that this understanding be of a sort different from that effected by ἀπόδειξις. To satisfy this necessity Aristotle introduces νοῦς, which, he says, cognitively grasps the first principles in an immediate and nondiscursive way.

3

But what is involved in the claim that a cognitive grasp of principles is a condition of understanding the phenomena they purport to explain? Consider as a start these two claims:

- (A) We must grasp that the principles *are true* (or “exist”).
- (B) We must grasp that the principles *are principles*, that is, know them *as* the principles for a given body of phenomena and *how* they are the principles, that is, how it is that the phenomena are explained by them.

Both of these claims are clearly implicit in Aristotle's account, according to which the premises of scientific explanation must be understood to be true *and* to be appropriate, οἰκεῖαι. This latter requirement de-

mands that we know not simply the cause of some phenomenon, but moreover that it *is* the cause, that is, that we understand not simply cause and effect, but the entire causal nexus in which they participate, or alternatively, that we understand the cause qua *cause*. It is thus equivalent to that part of the earliest account of ἐπιστήμη in our master text which requires that we be aware of what is responsible for something's being the case, *and* that that is what is responsible, ὅτι ἐκεῖνον αἰτία ἐστί (I.2, 71b11).

The claims are thus distinct; the second entails the first, since it is a condition of E being known as a successful explanatory principle that it be known to be true. But not vice versa. It is possible, where E is an explanatory principle of some science, to know that E is the case without understanding that (or how) it is a principle of that science. Earlier, we encountered another version of this distinction. Suppose that something which is a K is L, and that the explanation of this fact is that all Ks are L. It is possible that someone should grasp the principle of explanation in the sense demanded by (A), that is, know that all Ks are L, yet not realize that it explains the phenomenon in question because he doesn't realize that the phenomenon is an instance of a K being L. In such a case he would not grasp the principle in the sense required by (B), that is, would not know it qua principle.

Aristotle considers a case very much like this, though in a somewhat different context and for somewhat different reasons, in *Prior Analytics* 2.21 (67a13–21) and in the opening chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* (71a21–29). There the distinction is formulated in terms of the difference between merely understanding a truth καθόλου, generally, and understanding it also as οἰκεία, that is, with respect to each particular that is a proper instance of the object of general knowledge. Both distinctions rest upon the intentional character of explanation and the understanding necessary for it, upon the fact that understanding a principle of explanation qua principle involves more than the mere recognition of its truth.

It follows that the sense we are after cannot be that given by (A); what is required cannot simply be awareness *that* principles are true. This can be seen in another way. The introduction of νοῦς at 2.19 is in response to the fact that we cannot have ἐπιστήμη of the first ἀρχαί in the sense required. But we can have ἐπιστήμη *that* the ἀρχαί are the case, as is clear from I.13, where the distinction is drawn between τὸ

ὅτι ἐπίστασθαι and τὸ διότι ἐπίστασθαι in such a way as would allow ἐπιστήμη concerning principles. Nor will it do to argue that ἐπιστήμη is here being used in the broad sense, and that this is the ἐπιστήμη ἀναπόδεικτος by which we were earlier perplexed; for the ἐπιστήμη ὅτι envisioned in 1.13 *is* achieved by a kind of ἀπόδειξις, that which the later tradition was to label demonstration *quia* or *a posteriori*.

It cannot be, therefore, that Aristotle invoked νοῦς to provide simple knowledge *that* principles are the case. And this is surely what we might have expected. For the problem in 1.3 was: an explanation provides understanding only on the supposition that we understand the explanation. We must, that is, understand the middle's exhibiting the predicate if we hope to understand the subject's exhibiting the predicate. Clearly, therefore, mere knowledge *that* the middle exhibits the predicate won't do. In fact, we should expect a third and stronger claim, a claim that demands

- (C) we *understand* the principles, that is, have a grasp of them that stands in the same relation to simply knowing them to be true as scientifically understanding a phenomenon stands to simply knowing it to be the case.

This would seem to be the sense required by the argument of 1.3, expressed in the demand that principles themselves be understood in some such way as phenomena explained by the principles are understood. It must then be this sort of understanding that νοῦς is meant to achieve. How?

4

Perhaps the natural place to turn for an answer to this question is *Posterior Analytics* 2.19. At the beginning of that chapter Aristotle proposes to talk “about the ἀρχαί: how they come to be known and what is the ἔξις by virtue of which we know them” (*Posterior Analytics* 2.19, 99b17–19). It is important that we follow Aristotle in distinguishing two different questions, (1) what is the process by which we come to grasp principles, and (2) what is the nature of this grasp, or, in Aristotle's terms, what is the nature of the ἔξις that we should be said to enjoy when we know ἀρχαί. This distinction between acquisitive process and acquired state has its parallel in the distinction with which we are fa-

miliar, that between ἀπόδειξις and ἐπιστήμη. We saw that ἀπόδειξις is not only the active manifestation of scientific understanding; it is that by virtue of which we are *led to* scientific understanding (as the Latinizer has it, *faciens scire*).

But νοῦς is not the process by which we come to know the ἀρχαί, but the state we are in when we have, by whatever means, come to know them. It is of course *by* νοῦς that we know principles, just as it is, for example, *by sight* that we see what we are looking for; but νοῦς is no more the *process by which* we gain knowledge of these principles than sight the *process by which* we find what we are looking for.

The analogy suggests ways in which the situation is more complex than what I have said makes it seem; for we could not look for something without being able to see, and in that sense vision is the principle as well as the goal of our quest. Just so, νοῦς, as we shall discover, is the ground of that process by which we are led to an actualized understanding of principles. Nevertheless, the distinction is a real one, with an important consequence. We must avoid thinking that Aristotle takes there to be some immediate act of mental seeing that in itself is the source of or validates our knowledge of principles. The situation is again parallel to that of ἐπιστήμη. We determine whether or not we have ἐπιστήμη not by examining our state of mind, but by determining whether some syllogism is or is not an actual case of ἀπόδειξις. (And, as Aristotle points out [*Posterior Analytics* 1.9, 76a26], this is not always an easy matter to settle; it is difficult, as he says, to know whether or not we understand.) It is surely this last question that is the important question of scientific *method*. It is hard to formulate rules for how to discover explanations that are not rules for how to check whether apparent explanations really *are* explanations. The skill of finding explanations is not a discursive skill; indeed it is perhaps less a skill than a talent. Aristotle calls it “quick wit”—ἀγχίνοια—and devotes a scant ten lines to it at the end of book 1 (*Posterior Analytics* 1.34, 89b10–20). The philosopher can be of assistance only in helping to formulate the kinds of criteria by which we might determine whether or not what we take to be ἐπιστήμη is in fact ἐπιστήμη.

Thus when we concern ourselves with questions about the logic of ἐπιστήμη we are concerned with the characteristics and criteria of ἀπόδειξις. Should we expect the same relationship between νοῦς and the activity associated with it? But what is that activity? Let’s begin by

considering what Aristotle says about the process by which we are *led to* a knowledge of principles.

The general term by which he designates this process is ἐπαγωγή, which is usually Englished, somewhat misleadingly, as “induction,” and which is generally contrasted by Aristotle with συλλογισμός or with ἀπόδειξις. This tells us very little of a specific nature about the process, for although the term ἐπαγωγή sometimes has a narrow sense in which it refers to a particular method of acquiring knowledge of principles, it often refers more generally to any one of a number of paths by which we are led to such knowledge. Reference to a wide range of processes by which we reach principles does not represent simply terminological variation on Aristotle’s part, but the belief that there are in fact many such ways. Besides ἐπαγωγή, or alternatively, as different forms of ἐπαγωγή, methods of reaching principles are said to include αἴσθησις or perception, ἐθισμός or habituation, definition, and dialectic (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7, 1098b2; 7.8, 1151a15; *Topics* 1.3, 101a36; 1.2, 158b4).

Certain methods are applicable to certain sorts of principles, that is, to kinds of principles appropriate to certain activities. For example, ἐθισμός is clearly the method by which we are led to principles in ethics; for the principles of ethics are principles of πράξις, of a certain kind of action, and so it is understandable that they should be acquired through *habituation*. For moral action is at one and the same time the act of exhibiting moral principles and the method of habituation by which they are acquired; in general, in arts and sciences concerned with ποίησις and πράξις, the making and doing are, as we have seen, both means and goal, though making is itself conceptually dependent upon what is made.

And they are equally proof. The question of whether someone has learned the principles of shipbuilding and whether the principles he has learned are the right principles will be ultimately tested by whether he can build ships. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the proof of the baking is in the pudding, for in each case that is the *end*. And in general the proof is in the end: in the productive arts, the product, for that is the end of production, and in the practical arts the practice itself, for πράξις is its own end.

What of the theoretical, the explanatory arts? Where is the proof here? Recognize first that this is a question concerning our knowledge

of principles. It is not the question of how we come upon principles, nor the question, though it is connected with it, of how we know whether principles are true. But it is the question: how do we come to know principles *qua* principles, where this means, how can we test to see whether principles in fact *are* principles, that is, are οἰκεῖαι to the phenomena.

But this is simply the question whether the principles in fact *explain* the phenomena, and thus the question is in a sense answered by itself. And it is answered in the same way by Aristotle. In a long and irritable aside in *On the Heavens* (3.7, 306a5–17), Aristotle criticizes certain of the φυσικοί whose explanations aren't consonant with the phenomena they purport to explain. The reason for this, he says, is that they haven't chosen their principles well; they were eager to bring everything into line with certain prejudices, and out of love for them acted like people who had to defend a position in a debate; committed to their ἀρχαί, they were willing to accept any conclusion that might follow. Whereas, Aristotle continues, ἀρχαί have to be *judged* on the basis of what follows from them, and above all from the τέλος. In the productive sciences, the τέλος is the ἔργον, the work one is trying to produce; in the case of theoretical sciences, like physics, it is, he concludes, the phenomena, the facts that are given to perception. The concept of τέλος is here correlative with that of ἀρχαί: goal and source of the explanatory process. And the test of whether the source has been well chosen is whether one achieves the right τέλος from it. Our ability or inability to *use* certain principles, to explain by them phenomena with which we begin and thus to gain with them scientific understanding of these phenomena, constitute the criteria of adequacy for these principles.

5

Consider again the distinction marked in 1.13 (78a22–30) between ἐπιστήμη ὅτι, understanding *that*, and ἐπιστήμη διότι, understanding *why*, the proper understanding achieved by causal explanation. To explain, for example, the non-twinkling of the planets in terms of their nearness provides a reasoned causal account of their non-twinkling, whereas a syllogism that shows that the planets are near because they do not twinkle provides only a limited kind of understanding of *the fact*

that the planets are near. These examples embody the distinction between what are here described as two forms of ἐπιστήμη. The one proceeds from cause to effect, from the prior and better known in nature, and effects causal understanding that is ἐπιστήμη properly speaking; the other proceeds from effect to cause, from the prior to us but posterior in nature.

But how do we know which is which? What are the criteria on the basis of which one is said to be demonstration from the cause, the other syllogism from the effect? It clearly will not be possible to articulate such criteria on purely formal grounds, whereas to distinguish on the basis of which description is the cause of which will beg the question. For we must be able to explain one being the cause of the other.

But isn't that in fact how we make such distinctions? We are able to give a further explanation of, to understand why it is that because the planets are near they do not twinkle—Aristotle offers such an account in *On the Heavens*—but not vice versa. In one sense, this fact is the very genesis of the problem at 1.3, and later. For it seems to reveal the necessity of yet further explanation to the required understanding of principles of lower-level explanation, and it is this necessity that apparently generates the infinite regress.

But it is important in another sense; for it reveals the fact that being a principle of explanation is a function of place within a larger body of discursive understanding and explanation. First principles are *first* within that larger body; they are capable of the most comprehensive explanatory coverage. Men of science, Aristotle writes in *On Generation and Corruption*, grow able to formulate theoretical principles that are capable of bringing into consistency and coherence wider ranges of phenomena: ἀρχαί αἱ ἐπὶ πολὺ δύνανται συνέριεν (*On Generation and Corruption* 1.2, 316a6–12). Understanding these principles as *principles* is just seeing them in their capacity to effect this consistency and coherence with regard to phenomena, their capacity to make phenomena intelligible. It is, in other words, seeing them in their capacity to *explain*.

The *fact* of these ἀρχαί may be discovered by syllogism from effect; we may have of them ἐπιστήμη ὅτι. But their *understanding*, the noetic grasp we have of them as principles, concerns our ability to *use them* in explaining and making intelligible the world of phenomena. Νοῦς

therefore is a feature of our understanding of all explanatory principles or premises, not simply the first (though only a necessary feature of the first), just insofar as we understand them in the act of explaining by them—that is, just insofar as we understand them qua principles and not qua explananda.

6

Earlier I asked whether the understanding of principles might be made clear by considering the process that leads us to that understanding. That will be a misleading way to pose the problem if it leads us to suppose that there is some independent mode of coming to know the principles of scientific understanding *distinct* from the enterprise of formulating explanations. For the way in which we come to see whether explanations are explanations, that is, come to recognize principles as principles, just is the act of explaining. Ultimately for Aristotle the process by which we explain is the process by which we acquire and grow to understand principles; it is in employing them in the act of explanation that we come to see their truth, recognize their explanatory power, and thus *understand* them qua principles. So νοῦς then *is* related to an activity of the intellect in roughly the same way as ἐπιστήμη is related to ἀπόδειξις. This activity is ἐπαγωγή; but it is not an activity radically independent of ἀπόδειξις.

At the beginning of the *Posterior Analytics*, ἐπαγωγή is defined as the cognitive activity that proceeds by “revealing the general through the particular’s being clearly understood”—δεικνύντες τὸ καθόλου διὰ τοῦ δηλον εἶναι τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον (*Posterior Analytics* I.1, 71a8). If ἀπόδειξις is the act of *demonstration*, of revealing particulars in light of their more general causal natures, ἐπαγωγή is thus the act of *insight*, of seeing in revealed particulars these more fundamental natures that are their principles and explanations.

Thus ἐπαγωγή and ἀπόδειξις are related as teaching and learning, or seeing and being seen. They are one and the same thing, but their εἶναι is different; that is, they are one and the same thing under different descriptions. For it is the same actual ἐνεργεια, scientific activity, in which we do ἀπόδειξις and ἐπαγωγή, by which we explain phenomena and come to acquire the understanding of principles necessary to explanation.

The states with which these activities are associated exhibit a similar dialectical relationship, as discursive understanding and insight. Thus νοῦς as the general goal and condition of ἐπαγωγή is insight as capacity and achievement; it is the ability, dispositional and actualized, to see the true causal nature in the clearly understood particular, just as ἐπιστήμη is the ability to understand the particular in light of that causal nature.

Since understanding is possible only by virtue of such insight, of the capacity to see structure and pattern in the flux of particularity, it is ultimately νοῦς that is the principle and source of all understanding, and thus, in particular, the ἀρχή of ἐπιστήμη (*Posterior Analytics* 2.19, 100b15). Thus νοῦς is the ground of our ability to perform science, that is, to construct logically connected bodies of rational discourse that explain and lead to understanding the world about us, to articulate λόγοι that fit and reveal nature.

The account I have suggested applies equally, I think, to Plato. Implicit in the *Theaetetus* and explicit elsewhere (e.g., *Statesman* 278) is the view that letters are learned by our learning to spell *with them*, and this embodies, at the level of analogy, the solution to the problem of the *Theaetetus* to which I earlier referred. This solution is consonant with our general knowledge of Plato. The understanding of Forms for Plato is the understanding that comes to us when the world that is made intelligible by those Forms itself comes to be understood. We may say that this is a direct noetic awareness of the Forms, but in another sense it is what we might call a transparent and instrumental understanding, the understanding that comes through the use of an entity as the medium of something's becoming intelligible for us.

All this is rooted in the ontological fact that for Plato, as for Aristotle, the Forms themselves are the transparent principles of coherence and intelligibility of the cosmos, so that we understand them in understanding the manifold of experience, that is, in discovering its intelligible order, in making sense of and understanding *the world*. This is not to deny that the Forms are *transcendent*; we are able to understand the world because it is understandable.

For Aristotle as well, the capacity of νοῦς to understand is rooted in the intelligibility of the world, in the fact that the prime mover is νοῦς. But it should come as no surprise to us (though it may be the object of awe and wonder) that the world is intelligible, that we are able to un-

derstand its structure. For νοῦς is a faculty designed precisely for the purpose of apprehending that structure. We might say, although Aristotle perhaps wouldn't and some of us might feel we would rather not, that the intelligent human organism had evolved specifically toward that end, so that it is only part of its natural history that it should succeed. Finding the world intelligible is no more surprising than finding the world visible. The look of the world, after all, is precisely what the eye has been developed to capture; so with intelligence and intelligibility.

But no less surprising. One might after all imagine a world without light or without eyes, a world in which creatures made their way, discovered obstacles, detected their goals by other means than vision. Such is the world of bats, moles, subterranean fish, the world of the blind. So we might imagine a world without thought, without the vision of intellect; such is the world of the other animals, the world of the dumb. In part, our ability to see bats and understand dumb animals is a commentary upon our human nature, but only in part. That human nature is not arbitrary; it is determined by what Aristotle terms ἀνάγκη, the necessity imposed upon it by the nature of the world. If the eye is to see, it must be a certain sort of organ, fashioned within constraints set by the nature of light and body. And so with mind, if it is to understand. And its constraints are determined finally by the real intelligible order of the world, an order manifest in a god who is itself νοῦς.

7

And what of 2.19? Part of the burden of my argument has been the possibility of avoiding discussion of this terminal chapter in which, it seems to me, Aristotle is concerned more with the general and abstract nature of insight than with any question of how we acquire insight into specific principles of understanding. But there are many things I don't understand about that chapter and its relation to the rest of the *Analyt-ics*. So with the many other questions that I have left unanswered, only a part of the reason for which has been the intentionally broad scope of my discussion.

I feel only minimally apologetic for these lingering questions; for in large measure the purpose of this essay has been protreptic and programmatic. I would like only to show that the *Posterior Analytics* is

not the hopeless work some have found it to be, and that it may well deserve the amount of study and commentary that it received in other hermeneutic traditions.² It is a work, it seems to me, that may lack some of the conceptual force and imaginative daring of the *Metaphysics* or the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But like so much of Aristotle's writings, it is subtle, wholesome, and clearheaded, and reveals the obvious to us with startling clarity and ramification.

Platonic Love

It is not surprising that love, like other concepts that seem to have their first home in individual and personal contexts, should have assumed for Plato cosmic and mythic proportions. Throughout the dialogues may still be heard the voices of Hesiod and Empedocles, the voices of poets, philosophers, and myth makers for whom the human soul is a miniature of the world soul and Eros and Philia principles of cosmic magnitude.

In Plato, the cosmic dimensions of love are most explicitly articulated in the early *Symposium* speeches, in Erixymachus's invocation of Eros as a principle operative not simply "ἐπὶ ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων," in the dealings of human life, but "ἐπὶ πᾶν," everywhere in the universe, in all matters human and divine alike (*Symposium* 186A), in Agathon's pompous and cliché-ridden account of ἔρως as that by which all living things are begotten and come forth, a principle governing alike the Muses, Apollo, Hephaestus, Pallas Athene, and Zeus himself, who by love attained "the governance of gods and men" (*Symposium* 197A–B). These cosmic descriptions of love are not simple mythological atavisms that Plato overcomes in directing his philosophical attention to the moral questions of human intercourse. For in general, even in the earlier and middle dialogues, the apparently local moral concerns have much broader and more ambitious overtones, metaphysical and epistemological in nature, every bit as much as does the much later search for the sophist.

Nor is this a feature of those concepts alone that have clear and determinate histories as mythic personalities in Homer or Hesiod. Justice, as much as Eros, is writ small, so to speak, in the human soul, and although finally it may be that habitat which most concerns Plato in the *Republic* (443D, 592A), δικαιοσύνη is undeniably a principle by which the universe itself is apportioned according to the virtues of its

parts, a principle by which the good distributes itself properly into forms and then into particulars, and thus perhaps the fundamental metaphysical principle according to which each thing is itself in conformity to its true nature. The ultimate justice is thus the justice of appearance to being, that is, of the “lower” to the “higher” world (*Republic* 361A).

So with ἔρωϛ; as each thing in the world of appearance strives to incorporate its nature, that is, to “imitate” its true form, it exhibits and acts out that world’s erotic striving toward the world of being. But appearances are not outlandish; they are citizens, ambassadors perhaps, sometimes in exile, but citizens nonetheless of that higher world, and their striving is thus revealed to be, as it were, autoerotic, the ἔρωϛ of a world in love not with some alien empire, but with its own true order, that which is to it φύσει οἰκεῖον: by nature its appropriate place.

I

None of this is surprising given the proximity of Plato’s to an older and still vital, if already ironically appropriated, mythopoeic view of the world. Indeed what philosophers have found disturbing about Plato’s views is not that they are confined to those contexts of interpersonal love that most of us would take as paradigmatic instances of love, but that it is precisely those contexts that they fail to give an adequate account of or positively exclude.

Two basic objections to Plato’s theory of love are by now commonplace in the literature, and both find that theory inadequate precisely insofar as it fails to account for the love between persons, the love between parent and child, man and woman, lover and lover, friend and friend.

(1) Love in Plato’s theory is basically egoistical and selfish. A person cannot, according to Plato, love or desire another for the sake of that other, that is, for the other’s good, but only for his own sake, that is, for whatever good that other might provide him; indeed, as Gregory Vlastos writes,

If A loves B, he does so because of some benefit he needs from B and for the sake of just that benefit. . . . No reason is offered why we could love anyone except for what we could get out of him.

The egoistic perspective of “love” so conceived becomes unmistakable when Socrates, generalizing, argues that “if one were in want of nothing, one would feel no affection; . . . and he who felt no affection would not love.”¹

(2) Proper love in Plato’s view is not love of an individual person, but either (ideally) love of beauty itself, love of that unchanging, ingenerate, perfectly proportioned καλόν revealed veiledly in the final ἐποπτικά of Diotima’s speech, or at best love of the cluster of beautiful and desirable qualities instantiated in the individual. Vlastos again:

This seems to me the cardinal flaw in Plato’s theory. It does not provide for love of whole persons, but only for love of that abstract version of persons which consists of the complex of their best qualities. This is the reason why personal affection ranks so low in Plato’s *scala amoris*.²

And Irving Singer:

The Platonic lover does not love *anyone*: he loves only the Good, either in abstraction or in concrete manifestations.³

These objections are independent of one another, though sometimes they are confused, and sometimes merged into a portmanteau objection, according to which Plato’s theory allows as the object of legitimate love only the collection of egoistically useful characteristics that merely happen to be instantiated in an individual. But that the two are independent is clear. A theory of love might fail to allow individual persons as appropriate objects of love without being egoistic. A theory, for example, that assimilated love to worship either of gods or of impersonal and admirable universals might maintain that the love of individual persons is idolatrous, without locating the origin of love for an appropriate object in the benefit that such love or that object might occasion in the lover.

Conversely, a theory of love might recognize individuals as proper and appropriate objects of love while still being egoistic, that is, while still maintaining that the love of another is only for the benefit or advantage that might accrue to the lover. It may be that such a theory ought ultimately to be described as deficient in that the individual is not loved for his own sake; but to make that out, it will be necessary to

add some argument to the effect that individuals are being loved *qua* individuals only when they are being loved for their own sake, and that argument couldn't be generated from the concept of an individual alone.

The two objections might be thought to be connected in the following way: it is precisely because of the egoistic nature of Plato's love, precisely, that is, because the love is directed toward and conditional upon specific qualities that are instantiated in the beloved and considered to be advantageous to the lover, that the beloved individual is, so to speak, bypassed.

We cannot love another person for himself, but only as a vehicle and partial embodiment of what we really want—the Good. By seeing that this is the real object of his love, the Platonic philosopher disintoxicates himself from the interest in persons as such. For what is a person but a conglomeration of accidental properties that chance and nature have thrown together? No, Plato would say, to love anyone is really to love the goodness which is in him.⁴

But it is not a condition of this bypassing occurring that the qualities for which and conditional upon which the individual is said to be loved should be advantageous to the lover. To generate the paradox that conditional love of the individual is not love of the *individual*, it is necessary only that the love be conditional, that is, bestowed in response to and on the condition of qualities that the individual happens to have, whatever the independent relation of these qualities to the lover. To say of a theory that it understands love to be determined by or conditional upon the worth of the beloved is thus not the same as to say that the theory is egoistical. A non-egoistical theory might distinguish between worthy and unworthy objects of love in such a way as to generate the same difficulties. This makes clear that if we are to escape the difficulties attributed to Plato's theory we will need something more than a non-egoistical theory of love; we will need a theory in which love is unconditional, given regardless of the worth or worthlessness of the object. As long as love is in response to or conditional upon the object's worth, or in general its being *lovable*, then it would seem to be those features in virtue of which the object is lovable that constitute the true and proper objects of love, not the individual who happens to have them. Note that this is a feature of a theory of love that is the

result not of its being a theory of *love*, but rather of the demand that it be an *individual* who is the object of love. What we are asking for is some axiological analogue of *de re* necessity. We are demanding, so to speak, *de re* and not *de dicto* valuation; but valuation seems possible only under some description, and then it doesn't seem to be of the individual, who only *accidentally* enjoys that description. If then we wish love of an *individual*, it seems that we had best resign ourselves to dispensing with the valuation.

In fact, it is in accordance with just such reasoning that the second criticism has been directed against Plato, contrasting the Platonic theory unfavorably with what Anders Nygren and others have characterized as the agapic, Christian view, a view according to which love is not conditional and contingent upon worth, but unconditional and creative, spontaneous, uncaused, indifferent to human merit.⁵

There may be much to be said in favor of a love of this sort, but it doesn't seem to me that one of the things that can be said is that it restores the individual as the proper object of love. For what is demanded when we demand that an individual person be the object of love is not simply that love be directed toward the individual, *per accidens*, but that it be directed toward the individual *qua* that individual; we demand, that is, that love recognize the individual as being particular and unique and as loved for being precisely who he is. But wholly unconditional love cannot provide this recognition; it is again only *accidental* that *I* am loved. Since there is nothing about me that has occasioned the love, there is no important respect in which I, in contrast to the person who happened along in this place at this moment, am loved. I have become, so to speak, the recipient of an erotic lottery.

The difficulty of articulating a theory of love that recognizes the individual *qua* individual as object of love thus seems perplexingly to infect any theory, whether it views love as conditional or unconditional. The individual frustrates our efforts by a maddening transparency. Insofar as I love him for his qualities, the qualities seem to constitute the proper object of my love; insofar as I love him irrespective of his particular qualities, it becomes unclear in what sense I may be said to love, specifically, *him*.

The problem may be put in another way: we want a theory that will account for our prereflective paradoxical demands that love be charitable and unconditional, yet not independent of features of the beloved

that the lover recognizes and values. We want our lovers at once to accept us as we are and admire us for what we are. In theology, this is the problem of reconciling God's merciful love and demanding judgment, a problem which, as the prophets testify, even God was not comfortable with. We may wish, if we find the demand finally an impossible one, to choose for other reasons in favor of what Plato's critics have characterized as agapic love; but we ought not to characterize this as a choice in favor of a love that recognizes individuals.

2

In the *Symposium*, Socrates's speech introduces a fundamental shift in the direction and understanding of the nature of ἔρως. In the first place, beginning with the conversation with Agathon (*Symposium* 199Dff.), Socrates reveals or first makes explicit (a) the intentional, object-saturated character of love, and (b) the separation of love from its object, the fact, that is, that the object which defines and determines love is always something that love lacks. These facts, in the second place, lead to an important shift in the description of the nature of ἔρως, a shift strikingly represented in the mythological account of ἔρως no longer as a god, but as a daimon poised in metaxy, in intermediate state, between being and nonbeing, and thus not itself good and beautiful, but of, that is in love with, the good and beautiful (*Symposium* 202Cff.). This shift, finally, is connected with a change in rhetorical strategy, as Socrates turns from a praise of love to a praise of love's object, a praise that culminates in the moving if problematic description of αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν with which Socrates's speech ends (*Symposium* 211Aff.). The importance of this last move may be overlooked. If love is intentional of an object not yet realized, then the love or praise of love will constitute a project essentially self-contradictory in nature, for in constituting love with the opacity of an object, it will frustrate the intentional transparency that love must have toward *its* proper object. The love of love, the establishment as a *goal* of the unconsummated erotic stance, constitutes a project represented in the worse elements of the courtly love tradition, a project to whose dangers and attractiveness the Greek philosophical sensibility was always sensitive.⁶ Much of the brilliance of the *Symposium* rests in the subtlety with which we are led to the very threshold of this position, and at the last minute averted by Socrates's

rhetorical transformation, his move from a *praise* of love (an encomium of ἔρωϛ in λόγῳ—in word) to an *exhibition* of love (an encomium of ἔρωϛ in ἔργῳ—in deed) in the form of a speech praising the *beautiful*.

The metaxy of ἔρωϛ does not come upon us completely by surprise in the dialogue; it has run as an undercurrent in several of the previous speeches, and is most importantly prefigured by the startling statement of Socrates at the beginning of the evening that the subject of τὰ ἐρωτικά is the one subject on which he is an expert (*Symposium* 177D9).⁷ This claim does not contradict his more usual profession of ignorance; for that profession is essentially a claim to be situated between ignorance and wisdom, a claim to be a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, where that love is revealed in and constituted by the recognition of ignorance, the recognized separation from and desire of wisdom. These two states of intermediateness are brought together in the earliest part of Diotima's reported conversation (*Symposium* 202A).⁸

I have rehearsed these obvious features of Socrates's speech as preparatory to focusing attention upon the important question: What, according to Plato, is the proper object of ἔρωϛ? Two further points must be made prior to turning directly to that question, one methodological, one a minor point of phrasing.

The methodological point is this: no unambiguous answer to the question of what Plato held can be obtained by mere attention to the views put forward by Socrates. I say this not because of a difference between the views of the historic Socrates and the historic Plato, a difference often thought to be signaled in the *Symposium* by the presence of Diotima and her warning that Socrates may not understand fully the "higher mysteries" (*Symposium* 210A1), but because of the differences of view between the fictional Socrates and the authorial Plato. Plato is a philosophical poet, which means that the arguments we encounter are mimetic; they are imitation arguments, not of Plato, but of the fictional Socrates, Theaetetus, Lysis, and so on. The reasoning in favor of and consequences of this claim, which I think are of the utmost importance to understanding Plato, would take us far afield here. But as a methodological principle I will try to avoid taking the speech of Socrates, especially at the end of the *Symposium*, as unqualifiedly and in its totality representing Plato's position.⁹

The second is a minor point, but one that opens up the important question of love's proper object. Plato's love is sometimes described as

desire for an object not possessed. But this is a seriously misleading representation of the view found in the dialogues. It is true that in the *Symposium* ἔρωσ is characterized as loving that which it loves when it doesn't have it: [οὐκ] ἔχων αὐτὸ οὐ ἐπιθυμεῖ τε καὶ ἐρᾷ (*Symposium* 200A5). But that characterization does not specify an essential feature of love's object; it specifies rather an accidental consequent of a stronger feature, namely that love is the desire for that of which the love is ἐνδεής, the desire for what one *lacks* (*Symposium* 200B9; *Lysis* 221D–222A).

That of which one is ἐνδεής is not simply that which one does not have, nor which one wants in the sense of desires, but that which one *lacks*, or wants in the sense of needing, missing, and requiring for the fulfillment and completion of some nature. That of which a person is ἐνδεής is thus something to which he has, under some description and relative to it, a claim or right. Only relative, of course, to that description: a person might desire something upon which he has no claim, which in no sense belongs to him, and still, relative to that desire, be ἐνδεής of the means of acquiring it.

When we understand that, an important and perplexing discussion in the *Lysis* becomes somewhat clearer, though far from clear. In the course of the complex and important discussion of whether like loves like, Socrates and Menexenus have been led to say that that which is neither wholly good nor wholly bad loves what it loves for the sake of the good because of the bad that it despises. For the sake of health, for example, we love the art that leads to health, the τέχνη ἰατρική. But then, of course, we must love health, and if so, we must love *it* for the sake of some good, and we thus stand at the edge of one of the dizzying and wearying regresses that so fascinated Plato and Aristotle after him. Mustn't there then be, Socrates concludes, some πρῶτον φίλον, a first love for the sake of which we love all else that we love and of which all our other loves are εἶδωλα, images, and which alone is ἀληθῶς φίλον or τῷ ὄντι φίλον, which is alone our sole *true* love?

The argument, after a short interlude, proceeds with Socrates's claim that what desires, desires that of which it is ἐνδεής and therefore loves that of which it is ἐνδεής. Suddenly three further conclusions materialize as if out of the air: (1) that which lacks lacks that which has been taken away from it, (2) ἔρωσ love and desire are therefore of that which is φύσει οἰκεῖον, that which naturally belongs to us, and so (3) the φύσει οἰκεῖον is seen to be that which we necessarily love (*Lysis* 218D–222B).

The logic here is sketchy, as the perplexity of Lysis and Menexenus attests to and the “rapturous blushing” of Hippothales ironically underscores. But the conclusion is clear and interesting, for it suggests that the *πρῶτον φίλον* is that of which we may be said to be *properly ἐνδεής* and this is our own true but fugitive nature, that which is for us φύσει οἰκεῖον, even if we are separated from it.

The proper object of erotic love is thus understood by Plato to be τὸ οἰκεῖον, that which belongs naturally to oneself, but from which one has been separated. Erotic love is thus primarily for Plato *self-love*, for it is finally our true self that is at once native to us and lacked by us. “Self-love” does not here mean love *of love*, like the understanding of understanding in the *Charmides*, but one’s love of one’s *self*. Nor does it mean *selfish* love, the vanity and egocentrism that is assailed in book 5 of the *Laws* (*Laws* 5, 731E). It means at the human level the erotic self-striving that characterizes all being: the desire of each thing to become what it is.

As is generally true in Plato, a manifold of false images of the true understanding is possible. Just as there is a wide variety of ways to misunderstand the sense in which the philosopher practices the art of dying (*Phaedo* 64B), so there might be a wide variety of ways to misunderstand the sense in which the philosopher’s love is self-love. I take it that in part Phaedrus, Agathon, perhaps above all Alcibiades, represent, in ways that would be interesting to spell out, modes of that false understanding.

The most striking articulation of this view of ἔρωσ as self-love is in the speech of Aristophanes (*Symposium* 189C–193D). Aristophanes’s myth invokes for us in comic fashion the fugitive sense of that dearer self we see in dreams and in rare moments of lucid vision or action. The force of the myth lies in its claim that that self is *my* self, the self that I am not but am (as Sartre might say) in the mode of always being about to become. Central to Plato’s vision as articulated comically in Aristophanes’s myth is that the self that I am about to become, my “ecstatic self,” is ideally no mere projection of my fantasies or desires, but is my true nature from which I am only in some accidental sense, by a willful and jealous act of the gods, alienated.

To recognize my erotic striving as fundamentally directed toward my true being is to recognize, with Aristophanes, Eros as that “great god who leads us εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον . . . εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν, who restores

us to our native selves, to our true and original nature” (*Symposium* 193D).

3

That human ἔρως is most properly autoerotic is only an instance of the fact that for Plato the world itself is autoerotic. But if this is true, three questions arise: (1) Why is it that in the final sober sections of the *Symposium*, that is, in the speech of Socrates, it is the beautiful and the good, αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν and αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν, that are described as the proper object of philosophic love? (2) What does it mean anyway to talk of one’s “true self”? (3) What after all about the love of others?

The first two questions can be answered only provisionally. *Good*, as we know, is an *incomplete predicate*, as is *beautiful*. To say of something that it is good must always be relative to some description under which the entity said to be good is specified. In the most revealing cases, cases of the sort that greatly interested Plato, one and the same individual may be good and bad under alternative descriptions. One and the same copper is at once a good conductor and a bad insulator; one and the same pickpocket a good thief and a bad person to be standing next to. Predications of good take the form “x is a good φ,” where “φ” specifies some description that provides the criteria for determining the truth of the predication, the description in terms of which the entity is said to be good. There is then, as Aristotle was quick to note, no being good neat, any more than there is just being (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6, 1096a23ff.). Where we employ predications of the form “x is good” (period), these stand (just as with being) for more replete predications of the form, “x is a good φ,” where “φ” states what x is essentially. “Abramowitz is a good philosopher,” “. . . is a good backgammon player,” “. . . is a good lover,” are clear. “Abramowitz is good” neat, means generally, I suggest, “Abramowitz is a good *person*” (except in contexts—in the classroom, over the board, in bed—that make clear that some other description is implicitly understood). So it is with *beautiful*, except that here we are more ready to link the predicate with an essential description, more reluctant to qualify by some limiting accidental description. “She is beautiful” will have a different descriptive content depending on whether she is a crystal formation, a giraffe, or a woman who has taken my fancy. The concept of my being beautiful is depen-

dent upon and specified by my being *what* I am.¹⁰ To love the beautiful in me is thus to love my essential being, my “realist” self. Alternatively, that is beautiful in me which is my essential self, and which is what I properly love. Philosophy, as the discipline that trains us in seeing things as they are, is thus at the same time the discipline that trains us to know what to love in ourselves, that is, teaches us what we really *want* by teaching us what we really *are*. Thus it is philosophy that is that therapeutic art of which Erixymachus speaks (*Symposium* 186D), the art that teaches us what is proper and improper in our loves, that by teaching us what is good in us, teaches us how to and what to love in ourselves.

Provisionally and within the context of self-love, I suggest then that talk of beauty as the proper object of ἔρωϝ is talk of ἔρωϝ as directed toward what is truly native to us, and that in turn (that is, circularly) may be thought of as the self which manifests our good and beautiful nature, that is, the nature which we love. The fact of my being and not being my true self, like the fact of two sticks being and not being equal, is the source of the fallenness of the world, the source of the separation (but also of the nonalienness) of being and appearance, of the world of forms and the world of particulars. It is also, at some deep level, the source of the recurrent motif throughout the *Lysis* and *Symposium* of the *aporiai* concerning love and its relation to the like and the unlike. In self-love, lover and beloved are one, but such love is always love of the “ecstatic” self. What is loved—the self, that is, which one is not but is always about to become—is at once like and unlike the lover. The self is thus itself a metaxy, poised between, so to speak, that which it just “is” and that which it *is*.¹¹

4

I have said that one central kind of erotic love is self-love, where that means the desire to become what one truly is—to be that self of which one can find descriptions throughout Plato, a self that, being like and unlike the self that loves, constitutes at once the true φίλον of the *Lysis* and the archaic οἰκεῖον nature of Aristophanes, as corrected by Diotima (*Symposium* 205D–E): lovers aren’t looking for any old other half, but the good, the better half, as we might once have said.

What now about other people? If erotic love is desire for the possession of that which one lacks, then the only rationale for the erotic love of another in this strict sense could be comic and mythic, as in Aristophanes. For otherwise the erotic love of another would constitute seeing the other as part of oneself that one is desirous of possessing and making one's own. I have no doubt that love often enough takes that pathological form with others. But if the criticism of Plato's theory is that it makes impossible erotic love of other individuals in *this* sense, and of *this* sort, then it strikes me as strange we should count it a criticism.

It now becomes possible to say something about the claim that Plato's theory of love is egoistical. Plato's theory is said to be egoistical since according to it, A loves B only insofar as B produces some good for A. But surely a theory that holds that A *loves* B insofar as or because B produces some good for A is not an egoistic theory in any normal sense, unless we make one of the following qualifications: (1) A *desires* B only insofar as B produces some good for A, or (2) A loves B only insofar as *loving* B produces some good for A. Without one or another of these qualifications, A's loving B for some good B produces for A could no more be said to be egoistic than could A's thanking or rewarding or praising B for some good B produces for A. But (1) has now been ruled out, and (2) represents simply the *general* problem of egoism in moral theory.

That's a problem I have never quite understood, but it does strike me as odd, as it struck Bishop Butler and others, to claim that because I fulfill a desire of *mine* in wishing or doing good for another, it somehow fails to be the case that the wishing or doing has been real. For years I have wanted to give you, because I love you and know how much you love Dante and Rauschenberg, a prohibitively expensive edition of Rauschenberg's illustrations of the *Comedy*. One day, trying to counter melancholy, I decide to give myself a present that I have long since denied myself and that will give me great pleasure. I give you the Dante illustrations. The genuine love of others can satisfy selfish needs, as can genuinely altruistic acts on their behalf. Indeed, we should feel some apprehension if we thought our lovers didn't get satisfaction from their love of us. I don't mean by this that all love needs to be requited (this may or may not be true), but that A's love of B is cause for concern if loving B does not itself give A satisfaction.

If I love A because of φ , is what I love in A the object of my love and different from A in such a way that what I really love is φ and not A? Is there any way to escape the difficulty concerning love of the individual of which we spoke earlier? Here I want to translate what we said concerning self-love to the love of others. If I love A because of φ or love the φ in A, I should not be said to love something other than A if φ is *what* A is. Thus to love A for its beauty is to love A for itself. “You only love me because of my money (body, connections, whatever)” means “that’s not what I am; you don’t love me for *myself*.” But loving another for himself is not totally unconditional agapic love, because in loving A for himself, I don’t love what A *happens* to be, but A *qua* beautiful, and this means loving A for what he *is*, in spite of what he may happen to be, or for the mode of his being what he is. My love is the condition of my asking the other that he be himself, that is, the self that I love and that I recognize as in the accidental being of that other, even perhaps in the mode of nonpresence.

Love on this view is *recognition*; it is seeing another as what that other might be, not in the sense of what he might be other than himself, but how he might be what he is. It is, in other words, coming to recognize the *beauty* of another. Compare great portrait painters, who evoke the beauty of their (often plain) subjects not by artifice or camouflage, but by their skill in capturing the subject in just that attitude, in just that light, in which the subject’s true beauty is revealed. The love that does not unconditionally accept another’s accidental being, so to speak, but calls the other to be his true self, is a love that at once recognizes and bids the other to his true virtue and beauty.

This is the thrust, in comic and half-understood form, of Aristophanes’s myth, and in more serious and subtle form (though in imagery no less sexual) of the first part of Socrates’s speech. Love is the power by which, recognizing the beauty in another, we bring forth that beauty by eliciting it and calling it forth: giving birth to it.¹² We thus call forth the other’s true *virtue*, for virtue is, as we know, ontologically like goodness and beauty; it is the mode of an entity’s *being itself well*. So cosmically love is that principle that draws the world toward *itself*, not just, as Erixymachus claimed, toward something else, but toward its own good and beautiful being.

To see that love recognizes the present but unrealized beauty and virtue of another and bids him to the impersonation of that beauty is

to see love's generative power and the proper telos of that power. It is here that Aristophanes's myth is transcended in a typically Platonic fashion, the archaeology of love taken up in its teleology.¹³ This is the force of Diotima's insistence that love is not simply a bringing forth upon the beautiful, but is itself directed toward and is a longing for that conception and bringing forth (*Symposium* 206E). Love, as Aristotle clearly recognizes, is thus a virtue, not merely a passion. We need to ask not simply what leads us to love another, but what is the discipline by which we might learn to love another. How may we develop the virtue that elicits beauty, that brings virtue to birth? In this respect it is important to recall that the majority of those we love—parents, family, children, perhaps above all ourselves—are not people we are necessarily attracted to or choose, but people in whose lives we find ourselves implicated, whom we discover ourselves fated to love and must learn to love. So, I think Plato would say, with the world itself.

The philosophical nature begins, as we know from the *Republic*, with a love of spectacle, and is, in its more refined form, simply a love of τὰ ὄντα, of the world as it truly is (*Republic* 5.475D–476A, 6.501D). Just as proper self-love is merely a special instance of the universal erotic striving of the universe for itself, so authentic personal love is merely a particular, special instance of the philosophical love of the world in its true being. To recognize shining through this world the world of forms, to see the world aright through that discipline of philosophical κάθαρσις that is generated by and results in love of the world's true nature, this is according to Plato the task and goal of the philosopher; proper self-love and love of others is simply this visionary and accepting power focused upon human beings in the world. These two loves are not unconnected; ἔρωσ as self-love, in recalling us to our own true nature, frees us from the desire to practice homophilia upon our friends and loved ones, that is, frees us to give them in our heterophilia (whether homo- or heterosexual) their own other being, frees us to the shared joy we experience when those we love are capable of erotic self-love.

The beautiful is the description under which beings—τὰ ὄντα—are given insofar as they constitute the object of our desire and love. Like *true* and *good*, *beautiful* is thus an intentional description: in the case of *beautiful*, of love's object. To describe the philosopher as coming to love *beauty*, or *the beautiful*, as Diotima does in her revelation to Socrates,

is thus to describe him as coming to understand what is beautiful, that is, as learning to love things as they are. Loving things as they are, the philosopher will then not be seduced by the appearances of beauty, exchanging one beauty for another. As in the *Phaedo*, true virtue consists not in the exchanging of one pleasure for another, but in the cathartic wisdom that detaches the philosopher from pleasure and pain, and allows him to accept but transcend his pleasures and pains (*Phaedo* 68D–69C), so true philosophic love is the result of a catharsis that allows the philosopher to exhibit the detached nonerotic love of the saint. It is this love that is true “agapic” love, a love in which the philosopher, by transcending the world to a vision of its perfect form, is able to accept it as an appearance and manifestation of that form.

The ascent to this vision and detached love is the ascent of which Diotima speaks. It is part at once of the genius and of the mystery of her description that the practice of ἔρωσ is an important element of the κάθαρσις leading to this state, and not, as we might be tempted to think, its sublimation. As Descartes courts doubt to transcend doubt in that calm certainty that can accept doubt, and as in general philosophers of various persuasions have realized that salvation from finitude can come only in the joyous acceptance of finitude, so Plato shows us ἔρωσ as the ladder to that state in which ἔρωσ is transcended, but transcended in the mode of acceptance. To deny ἔρωσ, to flee from it into the arms of false chastity, is, as Hippolytus learned, to flee into its destructive snares; Cypris is benign only to those who pay her homage.

The ascent described in Diotima’s higher mysteries is that typically Platonic ascent out of the cave and into the real world, that is, into this world seen aright, and thus seen as beautiful, as recognized for what it is, and as consequently to be loved. If then we feel called upon to say that for Plato “the Idea, and it alone is to be loved for its own sake; the individual only so far as in him and by him ideal perfection is copied fugitively in the flux,”¹⁴ we must remember that that fugitive copying, which other traditions have called incarnation, is the highest mystery. Understood, it reveals the deceptive fact that the luminous world of forms is this world seen aright. That seeing (itself fugitive)¹⁵ is accomplished by the catharsis, which makes appearance transparent, which allows the world itself to shine through its appearances. The philosopher, unlike the sophist, recognizes the world as image, that is, as its own appearance, and loving it, thus calls it to itself.

I will end with a remark now almost traditional in discussions of Platonic ἔρωϛ. Several scholars in their accounts of Plato's views have directed our attention to the similarities between the erotic ascent described in Diotima's speech and the poet's upward journey at the end of Dante's *Comedia*, a journey whose motive principle and goal are also love, that love which, just as it moves the poet's will and desire, moves the sun and other stars (*Divine Comedy, Paradiso* 33.144).

These similarities are invoked on the supposition that ascent— ascent from the cave, the ascent in the *Symposium*, the poet's ascent from purgatory to paradise—are ascents to abstract visions of a transcendental being beyond the world around us, the world so cunningly called *this* world. But it is important to remember the nature of the poet's final vision in *Paradiso*, for it is not a vision of the sphere, but a vision of the sphere incorporate in the image—a vision, that is, of nothing less than the incarnation. Anything short of such a vision might be wondrous, but would hardly be a mystery. And surely it is such a mystery to which Diotima alludes: the mystery of loving being itself, incorporate in the world, of loving in my very beloved himself, humanity incarnate.

Perceiving That We Perceive

DE ANIMA 3.2

I

In the opening sections of *De Anima* 3.2, Aristotle presents an account of what appears to be a mode of perceptual self-consciousness, the awareness on our part that we are, when seeing or hearing, for example, seeing or hearing. I shall first present Aristotle's account in a fairly literal and minimally interpreted translation.

- (a) Since we perceive that we see and hear, it must either be (1) by sight that one perceives [for example] that he sees or (2) by some other [sense].
- (b) But then [if it is by some other sense] the same [sense] will be both of sight and of color which is the object of sight, so that either there will be two senses of the same or some sense will be of itself.
- (c) Furthermore, if the sense which is of sight indeed be different, either there will be an infinite regress, or [again] some sense will be of itself. So this ought to be done with regard to the first.
- (d) This involves some difficulty. For if to perceive by sight is to see and if it is color or what has color which one sees, if that which sees is itself seen, then that which first sees will have color.
- (e) But it is clear that to perceive by sight is not one simple thing; for even when we do not see, it is by sight that we discriminate dark and light, though not in the same way [as we see by sight].
- (f) Furthermore, that which sees is in a sense colored. For each sense organ receives the sense object without its matter; that is

why even after the sense objects have gone, sensations and images remain in the sense organs. (*De Anima* 3,2, 425b12–25)

The structure of this passage seems clear and straightforward enough. In section (a) Aristotle poses in dilemma form a problem of accounting for what he takes to be a recognizable phenomenon, perceiving that we see and hear. In (b) and (c) he presents arguments against one disjunct of the dilemma, the second, and in (c) ends with an apparent decision in favor of the first disjunct. In (d) he poses a difficulty for that decision, which difficulty is met in (e) and (f), with two alternative solutions.

But the arguments themselves are not so straightforward or clear, nor is the phenomenon for which the explanation is supposed to account. Consider first the argument of section (b). If it is by some other sense than sight that we perceive that we see, then this other sense will have for its object both sight and that which is the object of sight. Therefore, if we are in fact to avoid the first disjunct, a single entity, color, will have to be the proper object of two different senses, namely, sight and the hypothetical “other sense” that perceives sight. But this surely does violence to our notion of the proper object of a sense.

For this conclusion to follow, it is necessary that the other sense perceive not simply sight, but also the color that is sight’s proper object. The necessity of this is not immediately obvious; why should a sense that perceives another sense perceive as well that sense’s object? Two modern commentators, Hicks and Hamlyn, have expressed perplexity at this supposition on Aristotle’s part. “It is not clear,” writes Hamlyn, “why Aristotle supposes the consequence to follow. He seems to assume that if I perceive by sense Y that I see X, I must therefore perceive X by Y. . . . But one can clearly be aware that one is seeing without being aware of what one is seeing.”¹ Hicks is also perplexed: “Aristotle assumes that the sense which perceives sensation must perceive the object of sensation. . . . But is this assumption self-evident? It is so only within the narrow limits laid down, according to which color alone is the object . . . of seeing.”² Hicks’s perplexity, however, is not Hamlyn’s, for Hicks apparently thinks that could color be shown to be the object of seeing, then it will also be the object of the hypothetical other sense. This is clear from the fact that in explication of Aristotle’s assumption, he cites Themistius, who mystifyingly says, apparently in support of Aristotle’s claim: “For it is not possible concerning sight to

say that one sees without being aware of what one sees.”³ But why should Themistius have thought that to be an argument in favor of Aristotle’s claim that the sense that perceives a sense would also perceive its objects? And why indeed should Aristotle have thought that the other sense *would* also have color as its object, as appears necessary to the argument’s cogency?

The second argument, that of section (c), is described by Hamlyn as “better.” But I find it a puzzling argument. If it is by another sense than sight that we perceive that we see, an infinite regress will result, presumably from the need for yet another sense to perceive the other sense, and so on. But why? What will generate the regress past the second step? In order that this should happen, it will have to be *necessary* that we also perceive that we perceive that we see, in other words that by some sense or other, we perceive the sense by which we perceive sight, and then so on ad infinitum. But it is nowhere claimed to be a *requirement* of perception in general that we perceive that we perceive in such a way that the regress would *have* to continue. It seems rather an empirical claim on Aristotle’s part that we *in fact* perceive that we hear, see, and so forth. No such claim, in the context of the present argument, could seem to be made about the other sense itself. For were we in fact to perceive that by another sense we perceive that we see, we would be immediately aware that there is such another sense and the entire argument would become superfluous. In order then for the regress to be generated as a genuine ad infinitum argument, it will be necessary to show that meta-perception is a condition of perception. But where is this in the argument?

The situation is not much happier with regard to the difficulty and purported solutions of sections (d) to (f). It does not follow from the fact that we see that we see, and that what we see is a color or is colored, that that which sees is colored, unless it further can be shown that seeing *that* we see involves seeing *that which* sees when we see. But why from the fact that we see (with our hypothetical other sense), ὅτι ὁρῶμεν, *that* we see, should it follow that we also see τὸ ὁρῶν, that *which* sees, and thus that τὸ ὁρῶν, that which sees, is colored? Ross, apparently feeling this difficulty in his earlier edition of *De Anima*, reads, on the slimmest imaginable textual evidence, “τὸ ὁρᾶν,” seeing, for “τὸ ὁρῶν,” that which sees, in the two instances at 425b19.⁴ If we were, even in the face of the overwhelming evidence against “τὸ ὁρᾶν,” to adopt this

reading, it would then become unclear why 425b22, with its evident and unchallenged “ὄρων,” should constitute an *answer* to the objection. In his later edition, Ross returns to the far better attested “ὄρων,” leaving us with the task of making the argument coherent, a task that Hamlyn describes as impossible.⁵

Finally, we need to ask what Aristotle after all *means* when he speaks of “perceiving that we see and hear.” There is a simple sense of my “perceiving that I see,” which cannot be what Aristotle has in mind. This is the sense in which I might watch myself in a mirror and perceive that I see or hear or smell. This does not constitute my perceiving that I see in any sense significantly different from that in which I might see that you see, or even hear that you hear (“I hear that your wife has heard about us”). No special philosophical problems are attendant upon that phenomenon, such as would require a special discussion additional to the general account of perception already given.⁶

Far more likely is what I have already suggested and what most commentators take for granted: Aristotle is here speaking of one form of self-consciousness, namely, the reflective awareness that we have of our specific perceptual acts. Such reflective awareness is not restricted to philosophers or psychologists. Tourists and pilgrims, for example, are often as aware of the fact *that* they are witnessing the goal of their peregrinations—that they are, for example, seeing Philadelphia—as they are of the actual object itself of their vision—that is, Philadelphia. Expressions of the form “See Philadelphia and die” lead us to value, so to speak, having the experience more than the experience, that is, *having seen* Philadelphia more than seeing *Philadelphia*, and thus in the middle of the experience to become more aware of the fact that we are seeing Philadelphia than of the Philadelphia that we are seeing. This is called being self-conscious.

More ordinary, if less frustrating, instances of reflective self-awareness, however, should be clear to all of us. It is always possible, it would seem, to attend to the acts of our perception in much the same way we might attend to any of our acts, mental or otherwise, and, by making them the objects of our conscious attention, generate just such reflective self-consciousness. What more obvious way to describe such self-consciousness than as “perceiving that we perceive”?

But isn't it in fact strange to refer to such awareness as *perception*? What might lead a philosopher to suppose that perceptual self-

consciousness is self-perceptual in nature, as though the awareness that I am engaged in an act of tasting might consist in or be achieved by *tasting*—not by attending in some general sense to my tasting, but, whatever this might mean, by *tasting* it? What *could* it be, in this sense, to *taste* that I taste, or to hear that I hear, or (except metaphorically) to *see* that I see?

We might imagine an animal equipped in such a way as to make possible such self-perceptual modes of perceptual self-consciousness. Suppose, for example, that whenever my hearing was operative, my body emitted a distinct clicking sound, hearing which would assure me that I was hearing. The oddity of this supposition might be somewhat mitigated by cross-wiring the perceptual signals; suppose I were to emit the clicking sound whenever I was seeing, and give off a distinctive odor whenever I was hearing, so that I could hear that I see, and smell that I hear.

Surely none of *this* is what Aristotle has in mind. Perhaps, however, the difficulty has arisen from my taking “perception” too narrowly; αἰσθάνεσθαι is often used by Aristotle to refer to awareness *in general*, and not specifically to sense or perceptual awareness. Perhaps it is just such a general sense of awareness that he here intends, in which case none of the foregoing considerations are relevant.⁷

But surely it is still *strange* that he uses αἰσθάνεσθαι, given a discussion in which that term appears in a more special sense. We might, after all, have expected Aristotle to employ some other of the general terms available for awareness, εἰδέναι, for example, or γινώσκειν, in a context in which αἰσθάνεσθαι bears an obviously special and local meaning. Above all, should we not have expected Aristotle to make use of the orthodox expression for self-consciousness in classical Greek, σύνοιδα ἑμαυτῶ? This expression is in Plato, as at *Apology* 21B4, “ἐγὼ γὰρ δὴ οὔτε μέγα οὔτε μικρὸν σύνοιδα ἑμαυτῶ σοφὸς ὢν,” and is on occasion explicitly used by Aristotle, at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095a26, for example, “συνειδότες δ’ ἑαυτοῖς ἄγνοιαν.”

Aristotle’s failure to use this ready-made phrase becomes more puzzling in light of the description of the phenomenon we are considering in the book *On Sleep and Waking*. For there Aristotle uses a specifically perceptual word, describing a faculty by which “ὄρᾳ ὅτι ὄρᾳ”—we see that we see (*On Sleep and Waking* 2, 455a16ff.). If we thought it possible to argue that αἰσθάνεσθαι makes sense in our text as a term for describing

the activity of reflective self-consciousness by virtue of its broad sense, that possibility becomes highly problematic when we consider this parallel passage from *On Sleep*.

These last points perhaps represent an overly nice and fastidious concern with Aristotle's diction. Too heavy an argument cannot be hung upon them; from the point of view of Aristotle's language alone, it is clearly both possible and reasonable to read his claim in the traditional way. But more disturbing are questions I have raised concerning his arguments in support of that claim. In what follows I offer an alternative interpretation of Aristotle's claim, which has these virtues: (1) it makes greater sense of the arguments at the beginning of our chapter; (2) it makes greater sense of the internal unity and general argument of the chapter as a whole; and (3) it makes greater sense of the progressive argument concerning the nature of perception that begins in *De Anima* 2.5.

2

Beginning in 1.5 of *De Anima*, Aristotle develops and articulates a theory of perception in keeping with the general theory of life put forward in the first several chapters of book 2. His theory, strongly echoing parts of the account of perceptions in the *Theaetetus* (165ff.), recognizes in sense perception four components, so to speak: (1) The αἰσθητήριον or *sense organ*—the eye, for example—is that part of the body capable of perceptual sensitivity by virtue of the organization of its matter; it possesses, that is, a first potentiality for perception. The organ is that part of the “natural body which potentially has life” specific to the aspect of life that is perceiving. (2) The αἰσθητικόν, the perceptual faculty or *sense*—sight, for example—is that part of the soul understood as first actuality. It is, so to speak, actually capable of perceiving. (3) The perceptual activity in which that first actuality capacity is realized, analogous to living, is the act of αἴσθησις or *sensing* itself—seeing, for example. (4) Finally, the αἰσθητόν is the proper sensible *object* of the perceptual act: sounds, colors, tastes, and so forth. The exact nature of these entities and the relations among them are complex and often problematic, and are importantly connected with general features of Aristotle's theory of actuality and potentiality. At different points in his discussion, Aristotle claims that organ, sense,

and sensing are one and the same thing, though their “being” is different, and, as we read later in our chapter, that the activity of sense and of the sensible object are one and the same thing, though their “being” is different. To this point we shall shortly return.

Sense perception, most simply put, occurs for Aristotle when the facultied sense organ (a part of the alive body) takes on the form of the sense object without its matter. When I see a door, my sightful eye takes on the door’s form without its matter, without, that is, becoming wooden or metallic.⁸ Even given this qualification, Aristotle’s doctrine will seem perplexing unless we further make clear that it is not the form of the door qua door that the eye receives; for that would mean that when seeing a door, I should be able to open, walk through, lock, or slam my eye in a fit of pique. But it is only the form of door qua sensible object, ἡ αἰσθητόν, as Aristotle would say, that the eye takes on in the act of perception.

Viewed this way, Aristotle’s doctrine becomes an attractive one. Any entity in the world is a nexus of many beings—that is, is the locus of a range of true predications of the form “x is so and so.” A particular oak slab, for instance, is a door, is heavy, is visible, and so forth. Each of these beings, as we know from the *Metaphysics*, is correlative to a certain form, and an entity’s sensible forms are among these, as determining the entity’s *being sensible* in some determinate way. The form by virtue of which an object is *visible*, for example, is its capacity to generate a visual image. The eye, on its side, is simply an engine for capturing such images, as the body is an engine for living. The capacity of my eye to capture images—its ability, that is, to *see*—is my sight, in the same way that the capacity to live of the complex machine that is my body is my soul.⁹ When, as we shall shortly see, the visible entity is acting out its visibility (is, so to speak, actually being vizzed), and the eye is acting out its visionary potency (is actually vizzing), then what takes place is the single perceptual act of vision, of seeing and being seen.

3

Consider, however, the following adventure. In my refrigerator next to an open plate of cheese I rashly and thoughtlessly place an open and uncovered onion. In the clear light and air of the morning, I discover to my chagrin that the cheese smells of onion. I discover, let us be

clear, that the cheese smells *of* onion, has an onion smell *about* it, is perhaps redolent of onion: but not that it *smells the onion*. I smell the onion, and smell the onion smell that the cheese has acquired. But the cheese does not, of course, smell the onion; it merely smells, as we say, *of* the onion.¹⁰

Suppose now Aristotle were to try to draw this distinction. With what theoretical right could he do so? What has happened seems fully to satisfy his description of an act of perception; the cheese has taken on the olfactory form of the onion without its matter. Still we do not say, nor do we want to say, that the cheese smells the onion. There must then be something wrong with Aristotle's account in the bare version I have given of it.

It will not be satisfying simply to point out that in the one case it is a *nose*, the sort of thing capable by its nature of (sensitive) smelling; for we wish to know why it is that the cheese, like my fingers, might smell *of* onion, but only my nose, or I with my nose, smells the onion. What is the difference between what noses do and what cheese does such that the one smells whereas the other merely smells, and more specifically, what do noses do, or what do animals do with their noses, beyond *receiving* or *taking on* an odor?¹¹

Again, while it may be part of a causal explanation of this difference, once it has been properly delineated, to distinguish between flesh and cheese, such a material distinction cannot constitute the entire difference. Why after all our penchant for flesh? Discovering the extreme receptivity of cheese to olfactory forms might alternatively lead us to speculate whether, if it had not been necessary for noses also to be breathed through, blown, and followed, they might not have been made rather successfully out of cheese.

Aristotle considers just this difficulty in *De Anima* 2.12. If, he there argues, perception is simply a *πάσχειν τι*, a certain mode of being affected by the sensible object, then why not say that air smells? Changing the example from cheese to air reveals that it is not a special problem restricted to those of us who forget to wrap our onions. For the mechanics of perception at a distance, even on our view and most certainly on Aristotle's, would demand that all media of perception that propagate images, smells, and sounds *formally*, be percipient. If we are to avoid the position of those pre-Socratics who thought the air alive or, worse, of those who thought everything sentient, we shall have to give an ac-

count of what perception is other than the affection that equally characterizes air when it is serving as the medium of a sensible form.

It is just this question, as the ancient commentators recognized, that Aristotle poses at the end of chapter 12 at 424b16: “τί οὖν ἔστι τὸ ὀσμᾶσθαι παρὰ τὸ πάσχειν τι”—what then is smelling beyond being affected in a certain way? This question is meant by Aristotle to raise a serious and troublesome problem with the theory of perception as developed up to this point. There is more to *perceiving* than just being affected, more to seeing, for example, than meets the eyeball. To perceive, we might say at the risk of circularity, is not simply to be affected but to *perceive that one is affected*, or to be affected and perceive that one is affected. More generally, perception is not simply bodily affection, but affection of which the living organism is *conscious*, a form, after all, of *awareness*. The question then at *De Anima* 2.12, 424b16 is just the question, what is the nature and seat of the awareness that we recognize to be a necessary condition of *perception* in contrast to some mere affection?

4

Perhaps the way I have put the problem contains the answer; perhaps perception consists of a certain bodily affection *plus* the awareness of that affection, an awareness that is the function and office of a faculty distinct from any specific sense faculty—a “common sense,” so to speak, that monitors and is aware of the body’s affections, an apperceptive appendix to the body’s perceptive parts. This is not an uncommon view in antiquity, one that we see clear leanings toward in the argument of the *Theaetetus*, and clear traces of in later writers, for example Lucretius.¹² But is it Aristotle’s?

One obvious place to look for light on this topic is immediately after Aristotle’s posing of the question; but some preliminary work needs to be done, for the sentence immediately following at 424b16 embodies a confusing textual crux. The line is especially perplexing if we approach the text through the two editions of Ross cited earlier.¹³ In the first of these editions, Ross reads “ἢ τὸ μὲν ὀσμᾶσθαι καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι”: or is smelling also (does smelling also involve?) perceiving? and this reading suggests precisely the above solution. But in his later edition, Ross drops the “καί,” reading only “ἢ τὸ μὲν ὀσμᾶσθαι αἰσθάνεσθαι”: or

is it that smelling is (a form of) perceiving? a reading that suggests a rather different solution. Unfortunately, in the critical apparatus of neither of Ross's editions is there any explanation of the inclusion or exclusion of the volatile "καί." In fact, the conjunction was first introduced into the text by Adolf Torstrik.¹⁴ It is found in only one manuscript, that which Bekker called E (Parisiensis, 1853), a ninth- or tenth-century manuscript that is in general the best and most authoritative source for *De Anima*. But E has the peculiarity of being in reality two different manuscripts. Books 1 and 3 are in one hand, but book 2, except for some fragments, has been cut out and replaced by a different recension in a later hand, a hand that has written in our text "ὄσμάσθαι καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι." Fortunately, the bits and pieces of the earlier recension include chapter 12, which at this line reads "ὄσμασθαι αἰσθάνεσθαι." One way in which this textual corruption might have occurred is by a scribe dropping the kappa from the text "ὄσμάσθαι καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι." But certainly a more obvious possibility, given the absence of "καί" in any other manuscript, is that the earlier text is the result of dittography, and that the "καί" in the main but later text is the mistaken attempt of a scribe operating on the dropped-kappa assumption to make sense of a corrupt reading.

Did Torstrik, in choosing to read the "καί," simply overlook this possibility? His notes reveal, as one might have expected, that this is not so. Torstrik has edited with an ear sensitive not just to the philological but also to the philosophical demands of the text. That is, as we know, a desirable but dangerous editorial principle; here I think it has led Torstrik to a very questionable textual choice. "I have written ἢ τὸ μὲν ὄσμάσθαι καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι," he notes,

taking the καί from the E manuscript and the earlier edition, which has αἰ. And if the καί were not there, it would be greatly desired. For after Aristotle has shown how entities lacking sense still can be affected by the sorts of things which strike the senses, for example by a smell, he now raises here the problem which he has previously failed to treat with the care it deserves: whether the activity of sensing is a mere being affected. And this is no idle question; for if air is capable of being affected by a smell no less than a nose, it is unclear whether air might also be capable of smelling. (I would not be surprised if some Pythagorean had

made such a claim.) Therefore Aristotle answers: a nose is not affected by a smell in the same way that air is. For to smell is (beyond a being affected), in addition to perceive [*odorari est (praeter passionem) etiam sentire*]. . . . [But] the sense organ itself becomes in a certain sense αἰσθητόν, from which it follows that τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι and τὸ αἰσθητὸν γίγνεσθαι are not simply opposed to one another in such a way that the one excludes the other; rather τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι is both τὸ αἰσθητὸν γίγνεσθαι and in addition something else, namely the proper act of sense.¹⁵

The “καί” is thus conceived by Torstrik as Aristotle’s solution to the problem of consciousness, a solution according to which the affection of the sense organ is itself merely the object of the true activity of conscious sensation that takes place at some higher level of perceptual activity. Perception consists of the mechanism of perception occurring in eye, ear, and nose, *plus* the activity of apperceptive awareness that transforms that mechanism into perception proper.

5

But in fact this is not Aristotle’s solution. On the contrary, chapters 1 and 2 of book 3 are designed by Aristotle in part to make clear that such a solution is not allowable, and in part to suggest what solution is appropriate. In chapter 1, he considers arguments that there cannot be, in addition to the five senses, another sense whose special office might be the apperceptive function demanded by a scanning theory of awareness.

Then, in chapter 2, he begins the question again with our text, and here he poses the problem directly: “ἐπεὶ δ’ αἰσθανόμεθα ὅτι ὁρῶμεν καὶ ἀκούομεν, ἀνάγκη ἢ τῇ ὄψει αἰσθάνεσθαι ὅτι ὁρᾷ, ἢ ἑτέρῳ” (*De Anima* 3.2, 435b12–13). This, I suggest, is not to be read: “since, in addition to normal perception, we sometimes make seeing and hearing themselves the objects of special reflective perception, the seat of that perception must either be in sight and hearing, or in some other sense.” Instead we are to read: “since in all cases of seeing and hearing, we are, after all, *aware* when we are seeing and hearing, seeing and hearing being modes of awareness, and since such awareness is a condition of seeing and hearing constituting *perception*, the seat of such

awareness, the *awareness*, for instance, that one has when one sees, must either be in sight itself or in some other sense.” The apperceptive awareness that characterizes sensation, that is, must be explained either by the specific perceptive faculty of sight or hearing, or by some other observant sense that is aware of the affection of eye or ear.

If we understand our text in this way, the difficulties felt earlier concerning Aristotle’s arguments begin to vanish. The first arguments consider critically the model that explains consciousness by a special apperceptive sense which is the seat of awareness, and which takes as its objects the affective states of the inter-mediate perceptive senses. If that model is successfully to explain our awareness of perceptual objects, then clearly the apperceptive “other sense” central to it must take these very objects—color, for example, in the case of sight—as its objects as well. Otherwise the awareness that this sense achieves will not be objective, as is demanded by the problem; but if so, the difficulties of the argument of (b) (425b14) follow. If, moreover, awareness is explained by a prior reflective sense *that must itself be aware*, then the wearying regress of section (c) (425b16) will follow.

Given these difficulties in the view that it is by some other sense that we are aware in the act of seeing, we might be inclined to suppose it is sight that provides this awareness. But now in (d) (425b17), Aristotle considers difficulties in this possibility. On that model, the faculty of sight performs two offices: (1) it enables the eye to be affected by the sensible form of the visible; (2) it is the seat of the awareness of that affection, the perceptual consciousness that in addition to some formal affection characterizes seeing. But then (425b18) since this second awareness is by sight, it will be seeing, and since what we see is colored, its object will be colored. Therefore if it is claimed that seeing is more than just what happens under (1) (is more than what occurs at the eyeball or the retina) and is in addition the observing by sight of this first visual happening, then (425b19) “καὶ χρωμα ἕξει τὸ ὁρῶν πρῶτον”: that which sees at the eyeball or retina, the first agent of seeing (τὸ ὁρῶν πρῶτον), will have to be colored.

Aristotle next (e) offers two possible responses. (1) 425b18 is false; not all perception by sight is seeing. Perhaps the apperceptive element of seeing that is contributed by sight is not itself seeing, in which case the difficulties of 425b19 do not follow. (2) They are not difficulties. For that which sees is in a sense colored, since the sense organ takes on the sensible form without the matter.

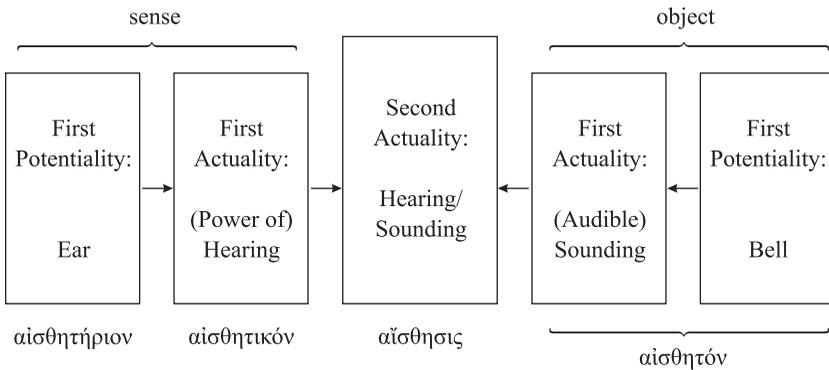
This last discussion (which makes little sense on the traditional reading of this text) suggests, as I shall argue, that what Aristotle objects to is not simply the specific location of an extra sense serving the function of apperceptive awareness, but the separation of perception into two elements, *ὁμαῖσθαι* (for example) and *αἰσθάνεσθαι*, sensing and perceiving, wherever they are housed.

6

In a moment I shall come back to this point, and to some puzzling questions I have left unanswered; first, however, I want to say something about the section of chapter 2 that begins at 425b26. The doctrine here put forward is an instance of a familiar Aristotelian theme. A and B may be one and the same thing, but what it is to be A different from what it is to be B. The refinement and development of the intentionality of being, seminal in so many Platonic dialogues, is, I think, one of the most central and critical motifs in Aristotle's thinking. The technical expression that Aristotle frequently employs for this phenomenon is to say that A and B are the same in number (*ἓν καὶ ταὐτὸν ἀριθμῶ*) but their being is different (*τὸ δ' εἶναι ἕτερον*). This latter is shorthand for the claim that *τὸ A εἶναι* and *τὸ B εἶναι* are different, where "*τὸ A εἶναι*," with "A" in the dative case, is the well-known Aristotelian technical phrase for what it is to be A. The claim here is such a claim; the dative "A" and dative "B" are embodied in the single dative "*αὐταῖς*" of 425b27. So Aristotle writes (*De Anima* 3.2, 425b26–27) that the activity of the sensible object and the activity of the percipient sense is one single entity in number, but their being is different; that is, what it is to be the one is different from what it is to be the other.

We have been prepared for this doctrine earlier, nor is it a difficult one, as I have already explained. Objects are visible, capable of being seen; the eye is capable of seeing. What it is to see is not the same as what it is to be seen; but when seeing and being seen take place, there is only one event that occurs. Eyes and objects thus exhibit first actualities whose realization in second actuality is one and the same thing (compare the ability of the builder to build and of the bricks to be built into a house, or the respective powers of learner and teacher). This realization is the activity of sensing, being sensed itself, in which the sense is acting out its nature qua sensitive, and the sensed object is acting out its nature qua sensible. Hamlyn has difficulty with this passage,

complaining that “there are many sounds actually occurring that no one hears.”¹⁶ This complaint supposes that on the side of, for example, a bell, the relation between first and second actuality is between a silent and a sounding bell; but what Aristotle has in mind is the relation between a bell sounding but unheard, and one sounding and heard. The sounding is a first actuality, like the power of hearing, which is realized in actual, being heard, sounding. A silent, unsounding, “dead” bell is analogous not to a living ear in a quiet room, but to a dead or deaf ear. On the subjective side are the ear and its (power of) hearing, and corresponding to them on the objective side, the bell and its (unheard) sounding; both hearing and sounding are realized in the same second actuality, which is one and the same actual hearing/sounding.



Interesting consequences for the theory of perception follow from these facts, among them one important to our consideration. We cannot locate awareness outside the perception as an awareness of the perception different from an awareness of what is immediately perceived. For given that the activity of the object of perception as such is the same as the activity of perception itself, there must be a single awareness of them both. Whatever else we may say, the separation of sense and the faculty of apperceptive awareness neither can nor need be achieved.

7

Why does Aristotle describe apperceptive awareness in the terms he uses, and to what faculty *does* he finally refer it? The naturalness of the

locution used earlier to introduce the problem of apperceptive awareness (“to perceive is to perceive that one is affected”), as well as the argument of the last section, which makes clear that perception of perception is just perception of the object of perception, should help to make the first question less perplexing. But if Aristotle’s description of perceptual consciousness as perception that we perceive still seems strange, consider the following two descriptions, taken from quite different philosophical traditions.

[1] The element that is common to them all [sensations], and which I have called “consciousness,” really is consciousness. A sensation is, in reality, a case of ‘knowing’ or ‘being aware of’ or ‘experiencing’ something. When we know that the sensation of blue exists, the fact we know is that there exists an awareness of blue. . . . To be aware of the sensation of blue . . . is to be aware of an awareness of blue; awareness being used, in both cases, in exactly the same sense. . . . The moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see what, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous.¹⁷

[2] The existence of consciousness is an absolute because consciousness is conscious of itself. This is to say that the form in which consciousness exists is to be consciousness of self. And it achieves consciousness of self insofar as it is consciousness of a transcendent object. All is thus clear and lucid in consciousness; the object is before it with its characteristic opacity, but consciousness is purely and simply consciousness of being consciousness of that object; this is the law of its existence. We must add that this consciousness of consciousness—except in the case of reflective consciousness which we shall consider shortly—is not positional, that is to say consciousness is not for itself its object. Its object is by nature outside itself and that is why consciousness posits and grasps it in the same act.¹⁸

The self-consciousness that Sartre here, in [2], calls reflective or positional self-consciousness is what commentators have generally thought Aristotle to be speaking of in our chapter. My argument has

been that it is the more ubiquitous, general notion of prereflective, nonpositional self-consciousness, the *conscience de soi* that Sartre claims characterizes all perceptual awareness, that Aristotle is attempting to account for.

Self-consciousness, we must be careful here to note, does not mean being conscious of oneself, but consciousness being conscious of itself. Reflective self-consciousness cannot be pure and immediate self-consciousness in this latter sense, since consciousness when taking itself for object is immediately alienated from itself, dividing itself into subject and object, the witnessing and witnessed self.

Confusion between these two senses of “self-consciousness” might lead us to suppose that a condition of apperceptive awareness is awareness of the self, that is, of the I that is the subjective center of our perceptual experience; it might lead us wrongly to suppose that the cogito and its attendant ego must thetically and explicitly accompany all our experience.¹⁹ Such a confusion should be reminiscent of the parallel but inverse confusion concerning self-knowledge into which Socrates leads Critias in the *Charmides* (164D and following), when he conducts him through the cleverly fallacious argument that leads from ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ as a person’s knowledge of himself to ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτῆς as ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης, knowledge of knowledge. There, Socrates’s fallacy opens the discussion to many of the very same difficulties as in our chapter of *De Anima*; but the argument finds its way, κατὰ μοῖραν, to its proper conclusion. For σωφροσύνη is precisely the virtue of general and unself-conscious self-possession, of universal grace and effortless command neither specified by particular action, which would transform it from σωφροσύνη to some particular virtue, nor checked by any opacity, which would translate it into a mode of self-control. What could work better for its model than a pure, objectless knowledge?²⁰

In much the same way, the perceptual awareness of which we are speaking presents itself, as Moore notes, as total transparency. The radical intentionality of perception, the fact that our perceptions are object saturated, ensures the difficulty of specifying the awareness itself implicit in our perceptions, since the intentionality ensures that it will be the object of perception and not the awareness of that object that presents itself. It is not surprising then that Aristotle should, just as Plato does in the *Charmides*, attempt to specify the transparent awareness of apperception by describing it in terms of a pure reflective

perception-perception, that is, without an object—nor that this awareness should have come to be assimilated with that self-consciousness in which the subject takes itself for object.

8

What seems to have been ruled out in our chapter is an explanation of perceptual awareness that invokes a separate reflective center of awareness operating upon the special senses. But if Aristotle means to argue that such awareness is achieved by the sense itself, what of the apparent claim in *On Sleep and Waking* that it is not by sight that we see that we see?

To each sense there belongs something special and something common. The special activity of sight, for example, is to see, of hearing to hear, and similarly with the rest. But there is also a common power associated with them all, by which one is aware [αἰσθάνεται] that one sees and hears; for it is not after all by sight that one sees that one sees [οὐ γὰρ δὴ τῆ γε ὄψει ὁρᾷ ὅτι ὁρᾷ]. (*On Sleep and Waking* 2, 455a12ff.)

This passage does not deny that sight is the seat of visual awareness, but that such awareness is a second-order sight housed in the eye. It is rather the result of the eye's integration into a unified network of senses, each of which performs its special activity of sensing, but is capable of awareness by virtue of the common faculty of sensitivity shared by them all as elements of a percipient organism. Aristotle means to argue, then, that (1) it is not by virtue of any *reflective capacity* within, any more than without sight, that visual awareness is achieved, and that (2) such awareness is not achieved by sight *in isolation from the powers of a whole living, sentient organism*. Just how the connections of a sense to the entire living organism of which it is a part make possible conscious perception is a complex, further question for philosophers and scientists. But that they do explains why it is sight that is the seat of visual awareness, and yet not sight alone. For the entire mechanism of the living *eyeball* might be operative, and yet one have only an imaged retina, analogous to smelly cheese. It is only because the eye is part of a single living organism that it is the seat of a mode of sensitive awareness called *seeing*. “For there is,” as Aristotle continues, “really

only one sense, and that which is strictly speaking the sense organ is one, though what it is to sense is different for each mode of sense object" (*On Sleep and Waking* 2, 455a20ff.). This is not to make the claim that there is only one heart, but that the body, the ultimate organ of percipient sensibility, is one whole and connected organism.

This passage does not, then, suggest the existence of a common sense that performs a reflective and super-apperceptive function that explains awareness; it says, on the contrary, that the living body is a common, single sensitive organism, with, to be sure, a center in the heart, but a center that is not separate from but one with the various senses, which are at once special in their individual activities and common as modes of a single organic sensibility. To see then is, as Aristotle says in our text (*De Anima* 3.2, 425b18), τὸ τῆ ὄψει αἰσθάνεσθαι, to be aware, we might say, sightfully.

Finally, then, Torstrik's "καί" is wrong: there is nothing *in addition* to the πάσχειν τι that constitutes the awareness of perception. In this sense Aristotle is a "materialist" or, as we might now say (using "mind" as Descartes did), a mind-body identity theorist. Just as form, though not nothing, is not something in addition to the elements of an entity, and just as soul, though not nothing, is not something in addition to the living body, so awareness, though not nothing, is not something in addition to the active, embodied perceptual faculty at work in a unified sensitive organism. In a sense, then, the naïve answer that I rejected earlier is correct: the reason noses smell and not cheese is that they are noses, *given all that that means*.

The argument I have been making is suggested by Charles Kahn toward the end of his important article "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle's Psychology." Kahn, however, thinks that the primary question, considered in our chapter, is self-awareness, and that Aristotle only later comes to the language of self-awareness to describe (embryonically) consciousness in general.²¹ To view the matter this way is to posit the origin of awareness in self-consciousness. Such a view is understandable in a post-Cartesian, post-Kantian world in which the cogito is linked to awareness of self. But Aristotle is not tempted to draw the line of awareness between self-conscious, presumably human animals, and the brute (for Descartes, mechanical) beasts. For him the line is drawn lower, between animals in general capable by the organization of their living bodies of percipient awareness, and those living

things like plants that presumably are not. It is by virtue of being sensitive that we are aware of our lives, and not vice versa. That the question is largely one of organization and participation in a general community of highly organized perceptive organs called an organism—a point made specifically in the discussion at *De Anima* 2.12—is the source of Aristotle's concern in the remaining sections of our chapter. At the end of this chapter, *as though he were summing up a reasoned theory of perception*, Aristotle is able to say: “so much then, concerning the principle by which we say animals are perceptively aware” (*De Anima* 3.2, 427a14–15).²²

4

Being Properly Affected

VIRTUES AND FEELINGS IN ARISTOTLE'S *ETHICS*

I

A moral virtue, or as we might say, a good state of character, is for Aristotle an established disposition for free and deliberate conduct of the right sort, a *ἕξις προαιρετική*, as he puts it (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6, 1106b36; *Eudemian Ethics* 1.10, 1227b8). In providing an account of the moral life in which the concept of a virtue or state of character is central, Aristotle reveals what is clear throughout the *Ethics*: that he, like Plato, thinks of the question of moral philosophy as not simply how I am to conduct myself in my life, but how I am to become the kind of person readily disposed so to conduct myself, the kind of person for whom proper conduct emanates characteristically from a fixed disposition. Of course the good life is a life of activity—a life, that is, in which such dispositions are realized and not simply possessed by persons of worth. Otherwise a perfectly desirable life might be spent asleep. But the good life is one whose activities are not simply in accord with the virtues but are the appropriate realizations of these virtues, and the virtues themselves are ready dispositions toward these activities. The good person is not simply one who behaves in a certain way, but one who behaves that way out of a certain character.

2

When we recognize the Aristotelian virtues to be dispositions toward deliberate and proper human conduct, it becomes tempting to take

Aristotle to be thinking in terms of human *action*, of the virtues as fixed tendencies toward modes of *praxis*. But is that right? It is clear that no thoughtful reading of the *Ethics* can help but note the centrality of *praxis* in Aristotle's moral theory and its important connections to the other key notions of that theory—for example, responsibility, choice, and practical reasoning. But virtues are not in Aristotle's view dispositions solely toward modes of acting. Throughout his discussion of the moral virtues and particularly in his earliest account of them in book 2, Aristotle makes clear that the activities for which virtues are dispositions are of two sorts: actions and feelings, πράξεις καὶ πάθη (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.3, 1104b14). He rarely mentions virtue in book 2 with respect to action alone, but rather in terms of this dual phrase. The first account of the notion of a disposition with which moral virtue will be identified, indeed, is exclusively in terms of feelings: καθ' ἃς πρὸς τὰ πάθη ἔχομεν εὖ ἢ κακῶς (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.5, 1105b26; 2.2, 1104b14; 2.6, 1106b17, 1106b25, 1107a9). So the virtues are dispositions toward feeling as well as acting.

Acting and feeling are not simply two modes of human conduct among others. This can be seen if we use the older and more etymologically parallel English renderings of Aristotle's πράξις and πάθος and describe the moral virtues as dispositions toward *action* and *passion*—toward characteristic modes of conduct, in other words, in which the virtuous person acts and is acted upon—is the moral subject, as it were, of active and passive verbs. A view of feelings and emotions as passions or affections—that is, as instances of a subject being acted upon, of an agent, so to speak, as patient—is embedded in the very word we translate by “feeling” or by “emotion,” the Greek word πάθος. This word, like the verb πάσχειν, of which it is a derivative form, has an earliest sense of what is experienced or undergone by way of misfortune or harm—what is, as we say, *suffered*—but comes subsequently, as with “suffer,” to have a general sense simply of what is experienced, a mode of a subject's being acted upon.¹

Insofar as Aristotle sees fear, anger, desire, pleasure, and pain as *pathe*, as passions, he views what we would call feelings or emotions as modes of a subject's being acted upon. This fact is further revealed in the list Aristotle offers us of emotions with which moral virtues are concerned and in which there can be excess, deficiency, and right measure. The majority of items on this list are described by passive verbs;

in thinking of fear, anger, pleasure, or pain, Aristotle is thinking of being frightened, being angered, being pleased, being pained. When I am afraid, something is frightening me; when I am angry, something is angering me. When in general I am experiencing an emotion or feeling of the sort that Aristotle would call a *πάθος*, something is affecting me; I am being acted upon in some way, where the concept of being acted upon is reciprocal to that of my acting in some way (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6, 1106b17ff.).² Actions and feelings are thus for Aristotle modes of human being—action and passion—seen in terms of reciprocal concepts basic to our understanding of entities in general, the concepts of acting and being acted upon.

The opposition between acting and being acted upon, that is, the *πρᾶξις* / *πάθος* opposition, is, to be sure, peculiar to human activity, because *praxis* is, according to Aristotle, peculiar to human activity. But it is only a special instance of a more general structural duality, that of *ποιεῖν* and *πάσχειν*, doing and being done.³ This dualism is encountered early in and throughout Aristotle's writings, from its special appearance as an apparently reciprocal pair of relatively minor modes of being in the *Categories* to the important cosmological role recognized in the treatise *On Generation and Corruption* (*Categories* 9, 111biff.; *On Generation and Corruption* 1.7, 323biff.).

This more general opposition of *ποιεῖν* and *πάσχειν*, insofar as it governs and structures the most basic forms of being understood as activity, is thus a central and fundamental structural principle of Aristotle's ontology. Action and passion then similarly represent terms of a fundamental structural principle of human activity. *Activity* here must take on a sense broad enough to include both acting and being acted upon—it must, that is, include modes of active human being in which the human individual is both subject and object of the action, both agent and patient.

The notion of including as an aspect of human activity what an individual suffers, what is done to an individual in addition to what the individual does, may go against our intuitions. It is only an individual's actions, we might feel, that truly belong to the being of a human individual in its most basic sense. This intuition is something to which we will have to return. But it should not blind us to the fact that the affections and passive sufferings of entities seem to be among the authentic characteristics that such entities have, and this is true for both human and nonhuman beings.

If the kinds of human activity now understood in this broader sense include not only what are, more strictly speaking, instances of human action but also instances of human passion in the sense of being acted upon, and these latter are understood as paradigmatic instances of feelings or emotions, then Aristotle's moral theory must be seen as a theory not only of how to *act* well but also of how to *feel* well; for the moral virtues are states of character that enable a person to exhibit the right kinds of emotions as well as the right kinds of actions. The art of proper living, we should say, includes the art of feeling well as the correlative discipline to the art of acting well.

3

Moral philosophy, then, should count as an important question that of sentimental education and should recognize the proper cultivation of our feelings as within the domain of our moral concerns. But how could this be? It appears to be a distinction between our actions and our passions that actions are within our control, whereas passions are not; we are the initiating principle of what we do, but not of what is done to us. Aristotle seems to make exactly this point in claiming that we are angered or frightened, for example, not by *choice*—ἀπροαιρέτως, as he puts it (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.5, 1106a2).

But if we give allegiance to the metaethical dictum that “ought” implies “can,” then it seems problematic how a moral philosophy could concern itself with questions of our feelings in contrast with questions of how we ought to act in response to or in light of those feelings. What is, as Aristotle would say, ἐφ’ ἡμῖν—within our power (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.5, 1113b5ff.)—is surely what we do, but not what is done to us.

One way in which this objection might be met is by pointing out what I have emphasized earlier: the important role of the concept of *virtue*. Since we are primarily called upon by a moral theory not to act and be acted upon in certain ways but rather to be the kinds of persons disposed so to act and be acted upon, the question of what feelings are or are not immediately within our powers may be moot.

But could a moral theory be concerned with sentimental education even in this sense—namely, with the cultivation of proper sentimental dispositions? For in what sense might such dispositions themselves be said to be within the domain of choice or προαίρεσις? Why, in other

words, wouldn't the question be pushed one step further back? And how then could we be said in the first place to have a *disposition* to be acted upon rather than to act in certain ways? Let me first say something preliminary about this latter question.

Aristotle's claim that virtues are dispositions toward feeling as well as action can be seen, in light of our recognition that feelings are passions, to rest upon a theory of potentiality that recognizes the existence of passive as well as active powers. For since a disposition is a power—that is, a potentiality that renders an entity capable of a mode of actual being—and since feelings are passions, the virtues in question must be passive powers: the potentialities, that is, for being actively affected in a certain way.

That Aristotle has a *general* theory of passive powers is evident. The discussion of potentiality in book 9 of the *Metaphysics* makes this clear (in the context of a discussion that once again reveals the reciprocal relation and basic dialectical unity of ποιεῖν and πάσχειν). Passive potentialities, we there learn, are elements within an entity's nature, not simply external to it, and are connected to other more obviously integral aspects of the entity's being. To say that oil is *burnable* is to ascribe to the oil a power that belongs to it and is a potentiality for being affected in a certain way, for having something done to it, and is at the same time to link this capacity to certain positive states and characteristics of the oil (*Metaphysics* 9.1, 1046a11ff., 1046a19ff.).

More obvious forms of potentialities with respect to being affected are those by virtue of which an entity is capable of withstanding or not suffering a certain affection. Aristotle often refers to such a type of power both in the discussion in the *Categories* and in that in the *Metaphysics* (*Categories* 8, 9a23; *Metaphysics* 9.1, 1046a13). In both cases, however, we are considering powers exhibited by an entity for discrimination among affections, for being affected in this way and not that.

Another class of such powers, and one that for Aristotle is paradigmatic and important, includes the faculties of the soul. The perceptual capacities, and the faculties of reason and thought as well, are potentialities of the sensitive and intelligent subject to be *affected* in certain ways, to be acted upon by the sensible and intelligible forms of objects in the world (e.g., *On the Soul* 2.12, 424a17). When we think of them in this way, there is nothing particularly mysterious about these powers: they are simply the abilities to be open to certain affections and closed

to certain others—the reciprocal capacities, we might say, of being discriminatingly receptive and resistant.

The doctrine of passive potentiality enables Aristotle to envision a state of character by virtue of which an individual has the power to be affected in certain ways, the capacity to undergo certain passions and avoid others. A moral virtue with respect to feelings or emotions is just such a capacity; it is the power to have and to avoid certain emotions, the ability to discriminate in what one feels.

4

But this suggests only how there might be said to be powers to be acted upon in certain ways; what concerned us was whether such powers might be said to be dispositions involving choice. We still therefore need to be concerned with the question of choice, and that question may now be put this way: How is it possible for Aristotle to see a virtue as a disposition toward a feeling or emotion, given the following facts about choice? In his first characterization of virtue Aristotle denies that virtues might be feelings themselves by pointing out that a feeling is not the sort of thing that is chosen; our anger and fear are, as he might have said, “*aprohairetic*,” whereas the virtues are kinds of choice or at least not *aprohairetic*, not devoid of choice. But then we should ask: How could choice be involved in a fixed tendency toward that which does not involve choice, indeed for which we are in no wise praised or blamed? Won't there have to be a radical asymmetry between the relation among dispositions, actualizations, and choice in the case of feelings and that relation in the case of actions? For in the latter case a virtue appears to be a disposition toward *prohairetic* acts; the actions themselves are instances of choice, and it seems to be only by virtue of this fact that the disposition that is a virtue with respect to these acts is said to be *prohairetic*. But in the case of feelings, virtues would, on the view we are considering, themselves be chosen but at the same time be dispositions toward actualizations that are not chosen.

One solution to this problem that I hinted at before would be to abandon the notion that virtues are dispositions with respect to feelings in the sense of being fixed tendencies to feel in a certain way. It is not that courage as a virtue with respect to fear disposes us to feeling fear in certain ways or in certain circumstances or to a certain degree

but rather that it disposes us to certain actions with respect to and in light of our fear. Some support may appear to be given to this reading by Aristotle's description of a disposition as a state by virtue of which we are ill or well disposed with respect to the emotions: καθ' ἃς πρὸς τὰ πάθη ἔχομεν εὖ ἢ κακῶς (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.5, 1105b26).

This is the view of Joachim in his commentary on the *Ethics*; he writes:

In the development of the orectic soul there is a ἕξις when the soul ἔχει πῶς (viz. εὖ ἢ κακῶς) πρὸς τὰ πάθη: i.e. when a permanent attitude towards his emotions (towards any possible disturbances of his orectic self) has been reached—an attitude which expresses itself in actions which are either the right or the wrong response to such disturbances.⁴

But this reading is surely wrong: Aristotle, in the passage in question, immediately goes on to explain that

if for instance, with respect to being angered we do so excessively or insufficiently [σφοδρῶς ἢ ἀνειμένως; if we're too violent or too easygoing] we're badly disposed, but if moderately [μέσῳς] then we're well disposed. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.5, 1105b26ff.)

Aristotle's more detailed discussions of the virtues make clear that it is with respect to how one feels and not simply how one acts in light of one's feelings that one is said to be virtuous. The courageous person is one who is frightened by the right things, in the right way, in the right circumstances, and so on, and who is not frightened when it is appropriate not to be. The temperate person is one who is pleased by the right things, in the right ways, and so on. The so-called "gentle" person (whose virtue Aristotle finds to have no proper name) is angered by the right things, in the right way, and so on.⁵ There is here no indication that these moral virtues defined in terms of feelings are dispositions toward some range of actions appropriate in light of these feelings, and, on the contrary, every indication that they are dispositions toward appropriate feelings themselves.

What emerges in addition, however, is the recognition that these feelings are accompanied by concomitant actions. I have talked so far as though feelings could be understood as particular affects of an individual independent of anything else that might be true of the individ-

ual. In a sense this is exactly Aristotle's theory and is why he says that *pathe* are those things with regard to which we are said to be moved (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.5, 1106a4). But considered more broadly, there is no way to identify a feeling or emotion without taking into account (1) what we might call the cognitive element in emotions and (2) actions on the part of the agent that are characteristically and naturally associated with such feelings (*On the Soul* 2.1, 403a25).⁶ Fearing is related to fleeing, desiring to reaching for, anger to striking out at, in no accidental way. In each of these cases, a certain action or range of actions is connected to a pathos in some important logical sense. That connection is defeasible, but it is not a merely accidental connection.

These considerations suggest that there may be two elements to the actuality corresponding to any given virtue. A virtue is a complex disposition in the sense that its actualization is complex, and specifically in that its actualization consists of a characteristic set of feelings *and* a correspondent characteristic set of actions.

But if this is true, our discussion of virtues has been seriously misleading. The fact that virtues are dispositions with respect both to actions and to feelings ought not to suggest to us that there are a number of virtues that are dispositions with respect to actions and a number of other virtues that are dispositions with respect to feelings, any given virtue being a disposition with respect to one or the other, but rather that a given virtue is a disposition with respect to a characteristic set of actions *and* feelings. These feelings are not, as in the view we have just been considering, merely the occasion for actions that are the proper realizations of the virtue; they are part of the concept of that virtue considered as a disposition. But neither are they the sole realizations of the virtue; they are part of the set of corresponding actions and feelings for which the virtue is a disposition.

5

With this understanding in mind, let us, as Aristotle would say, make a fresh start. Recognizing that virtues are dispositions toward feeling as well as toward action, we found ourselves perplexed by Aristotle's apparent claim that virtues involve choice, while feelings do not. It appeared to us that there was an unexplained asymmetry in Aristotle's

understanding, such that virtues might involve choice without their appropriate feeling-realizations involving choice, even though virtues seemed to involve choice in the first place because they are dispositions toward actualizations that are deliberate and chosen. Is it possible to make sense of the notion that a virtue involves choice even though the feelings that are its realization do not? Could a person be said to be courageous in a deliberate and chosen manner without it being the case that the feelings such a person characteristically exhibits by virtue of being courageous are themselves chosen?

Consider a parallel situation in the case of actions. A person may exhibit a vice such that the actions performed as a result of that vice are involuntary considered in themselves, and we may still want to say that the vice itself is voluntary. Thus someone, as Aristotle notes, may in one sense not be responsible for individual actions performed while he was intoxicated or ignorant of what he was doing or in general acting in accordance with some trait of character that made it impossible or extremely difficult for him to do the right thing, and yet in another sense clearly be responsible, at least for being in the first place unaware or drunk or in general of such and such a vicious character (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.5, 1113b3off.).

These examples provide only a partial parallel to our case. In the first place, they concern the somewhat weaker notion of voluntariness, not that of choice. In the second place, they concern only instances of vice and the concomitant breakdown of moral action. Nowhere do we find an instance of Aristotle's characterizing as voluntary a virtue whose resultant actions could be said to be involuntary. Finally, the examples that come most readily to mind—cases of drunkenness, ignorance, or negligence—concern what seem to be in a sense “meta-vices”: states that condition our general capacity for virtuous conduct. As a consequence the relationship between the action and the vice that occasions it is not a straightforward relationship of disposition to realization. Only under a partial description could an act of negligence be said to be the actualization of the vice of negligence in the same sense in which an act of courage is the realization of an agent's courageous disposition.

But we could extend the basic point to cases of specific vices. It seems a part of Aristotle's views on moral responsibility that vicious actions are in some important sense not chosen, and indeed under cer-

tain descriptions not voluntary, though the vices that occasion them *are*, and are therefore the responsibility, like their actions, of the moral agent.

This is an enormously complex and difficult topic in Aristotle's thought, and an important one for Aristotle and for moral philosophy in general; the respect in which vicious acts are not willed but nevertheless our responsibility may be central to an understanding of the moral life (compare Kant). I introduce the question here only because it suggests that certain predicates that we might think of as features of actions and only derivatively of characteristics or dispositions relative to those actions may be applied independently to one or the other in a variety of ways. Most importantly we see here a sense in which predicates appropriate to dispositions (in this case the predicate of being voluntary) may apply to these dispositions not only with reference to their actualizations but also with reference to the mode of their acquisition.

It is a part of Aristotle's moral theory I have alluded to but not stressed that virtues are acquired. They are, as he says, not φύσει, but neither are they παρὰ φύσιν: neither natural nor contrary to our nature (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1, 1103a24). This is what makes them dispositions (ἔξεις) rather than simply potentialities (δυνάμεις). They must therefore be acquired, and their acquisition cannot be effected simply by an act of choice; we do not decide to be virtuous and straightaway become so. Virtues are cultivated and not chosen in any simple sense, for it is not as a direct result of calculation, deliberation, resolution, or any other relatively simple mode of human activity that we become courageous, temperate, or wise. We become these through a process of ἔθισμός, or habituation, through the habitual acting out and embodying of those actualizations that the dispositions are dispositions toward (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1, 1103a28–1103b7). This mode of acquisition is part of the logic of a virtue, because it is part of the logic of a ἔξεις, a disposition, and a virtue is a ἔξεις. It is therefore part of the logic of a moral theory that, as I have suggested, places the notion of virtue at its center. Perhaps this sense in which we would want to say that a virtue is not chosen—think how easy the moral life would then be—may have been what led us to say that a virtue's involving προαίρεσις must depend on the actualizations of that virtue being prohairetic. But there now emerges an alternative way of thinking about the issue: instead of

supposing that the quality of being prohairetic flows backward, as it were, from actualization to disposition, suppose we say a virtue is prohairetic that is acquired through acts that are themselves prohairetic. What happens when we try this model?

Note first that there is a sense in which a virtue might be said to be chosen, and on a specific occasion. A person might decide on such an occasion to act virtuously and see that act as the first in a series designed to effect a transformation in her life to being virtuous. So she chooses on this occasion to be virtuous and so acts, acting virtuously now this time, now another time, now another time, until the fixed disposition of virtue becomes a ἕξις that characterizes her moral self. Why shouldn't we say in such a case that the virtue has been chosen, from the beginning, and precisely because the acts that fix that virtue are chosen? This notion accords well with the view of Aristotle's we have just been looking at. On this view one becomes virtuous by impersonating a virtuous person, and in that impersonation, through the process of habituation, becomes the virtuous person whom one impersonates. The direction of self-constitution is seen as leading from actions to states of character as well as the other way around; indeed, we should perhaps say that the other way around is subsequent, is only a logical feature of the relationship between our character and the individual moments of our conduct once they have been established.

But how does this help us with the question of virtues and feelings? For our initial problem with feelings was that they are said by Aristotle not to be chosen; an account according to which virtues are prohairetic because the acts that fix them are prohairetic seems therefore to be of little help in understanding the relation among choice, virtues, and feelings. This question supposes that virtues whose actualizations are feelings may be acquired only through the direct and deliberate choice of feelings. But given our recognition that the actualization of a virtue is a complex and related set of actions and feelings, a different view is now open to us. A person may act in certain ways that are characteristically and naturally associated with a certain range of feelings, and through those actions acquire the virtue that is the disposition for having the feelings directly. Acts are chosen, virtues and feelings follow in their wake, though in logically different ways.

On this view the structure of becoming virtuous with respect to feelings reveals itself to be of the following sort: one recognizes through

moral education what would constitute appropriate and correct ways to feel in certain circumstances. One acts in ways that are naturally associated with and will “bring about” those very feelings, and eventually the feelings become, as Aristotle might have said, *second nature*; that is, one develops states of character that dispose one to have the right feelings at the right time. One does not have direct control over one’s feelings, and in this sense the feelings are not chosen; but one does have control over the actions that establish the dispositions, the virtues, that are the source of our feeling in appropriate ways at appropriate times and in appropriate circumstances. Although we may in some narrow sense not be responsible for our feelings, we are responsible for our character as the dispositional source of those feelings.

This picture has much to recommend it. In the first place, it seems correct. My anger or jealousy may not be an emotion I choose, and it may be true that I have become a person disposed to such anger or jealousy by a series of actions that would make it perfectly reasonable to describe my character as something I have chosen. In the second place it points to what seem important differences between feelings and actions that become clear only when we talk about the modes of acquisition of virtues. Much of the picture I have sketched depends upon the fact that one can simulate an action but can only pretend to have a feeling. Thus the mode of inculcation with regard to feelings must be by some other method than that of habituation. There is, in other words, no way to come to feel a certain way by practicing feeling that way, and this is precisely because in some sense our feelings are not in our control. But it is nonetheless possible to engage in a certain range of conduct deliberately designed to make one the kind of person who will characteristically feel in appropriate ways, at appropriate times, and so on. And in this sense, feelings are deliberate and chosen, since the ἔξεις from which these feelings emanate are deliberate and chosen, since (in turn) the actions that lead to ἔξεις are deliberate and chosen, and deliberately chosen to make one the kind of person who characteristically will have the appropriate feelings.

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This picture seems to me on the whole correct and, broadly speaking, faithful to Aristotle’s vision of the moral life, but it fails in important

respects as a solution to the problems that initially perplexed us. Note in the first place how far we have come from our initial characterization of a virtue as a disposition for deliberate and chosen conduct. That characterization interpreted Aristotle's description of a virtue as a ἔξις προαιρετική to mean that the virtue was the agent's ready capacity to act (in the broadest sense) prohairetically, not that the virtue had been acquired through some mode of prohairetic action. In the second place, the rather elaborate account into which we have been led seems curiously otiose; once we recognize that actions and feelings are linked together as the realizations of a virtue, why not simply say that a virtue is prohairetic because it is a disposition for those elements of its realizations that are actions? For there is no special problem, apart from the general problem of giving an account of what προαίρεσις is, about actions being prohairetic. Finally, the most important flaw in the account I have suggested is the following. The account depends upon actions that lead to the establishment of a virtue but are not the expressions of an already established virtue being prohairetic. But this is not a view Aristotle seems to hold. Such actions are voluntary, but it is by no means clear that they are for him in the fullest sense prohairetic. Just as acts are in a sense virtuous when they are acts of the kind that a virtuous person would perform, but are fully virtuous only when performed by a virtuous person (one who performs such acts in the way that a virtuous person would perform them—that is, out of the fixed character that is virtue), just so an act may be like a prohairetic act, but not be one because it is not properly embedded in the larger context of the character and disposition of a moral agent—because it is not a realization of that agent's virtue. There is, Aristotle says, “no προαίρεσις without intelligence and thought, nor without moral character” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.4, 1105a26ff., 6.2, 1139a33).⁷ We might say that προαίρεσις involves not simply deciding, but willing, where the notion of will is sufficiently rich to demand reference to the larger context of central and properly integrated goals and habits of an agent's moral life.

The recognition that choice for Aristotle is a concept governing not individual actions in a life divorced from this framework of goals and habits, but rather actions only as moments within a larger context of the character and intentions of the moral subject, reveals our picture to be inadequate as a solution to the problems I have raised. But it

should, I think, contribute to the dissolution of these problems. For it should suggest the necessity of rethinking our initial denial that feelings may be chosen. That denial arose, I think, from our attending to a description by Aristotle of passions without reference to the context of virtue and character in which they occur. But why should we not be prepared to say that a person of steadfast and cultivated virtue who exhibits appropriate feelings in circumstances that he understands correctly and in which those are precisely the feelings he would want to exhibit, taking into account the entire fabric of his desires, goals, plans, and hopes for himself—why should we not be prepared to say that such a person has chosen those feelings?

Nowhere, I believe, does Aristotle say this. What we would like, but do not find, is an extension of the theory of deliberation and practical reasoning to account for the ways in which virtuous persons might be said to have the proper feelings that they have by *προαίρεσις*. Such an account would need to provide a sense in which we might be freed to feel what would be appropriate to feel by something like deliberation and choice, by some mode of coming to understand properly the circumstances in which our feelings arise, the place of these feelings and circumstances in our experience, and the ways in which we hold these circumstances and feelings in the larger contexts of our lives. In a sense, the theories behind certain religious traditions, psychoanalysis, and disciplines that promise self-transformation and self-mastery might be thought to represent attempts at such an account.

But any such account, I think, would have to recognize the primacy of praxis in the shaping and execution of our moral lives. It is this primacy that finally dominates the concerns of the *Ethics*. To say then that there is a strict parallelism for Aristotle between actions and passions would not be quite correct. On the one hand, he is led by the *paschein/prattein* structure and by the understanding of emotion as *pathos* to view virtue as a disposition equally for action and feeling, and as a consequence to recognize correctly the important place our feelings occupy in the structure of our moral conduct. But on the other hand, the distinction between passion as something that happens to one and action as something that one does, coupled with the recognition that ethics must be concerned with *προαίρεσις*, leads him to turn his attention from feelings in the latter parts of the *Ethics*. It is not that he simply leaves the question of feelings out, but that their importance

fades in the context of a particular theory of deliberation and choice and their place in moral conduct.

Nor is it the case, however, as I have argued, that feelings are for Aristotle simply not chosen. The reason for this, I have suggested, is that choice for him is not a concept having to do with individual moments in an agent's life, nor with individual single actions, but with the practices of that life within the larger context of the character and intentions of a moral subject, ultimately within the context of what it has become fashionable to call one's life plan.

The question of moral choice in the deepest sense finally concerns questions of creating the conditions in which our actions and our feelings may be as we would wish them. These conditions include our states of character—the virtues—which we acquire through the complex practices of our moral life. So long as we consider moral questions in terms of individual moments in the agent's life, we will not be able to understand this fact. This is why it should be clear that questions of virtue and feeling as moral categories are importantly connected.

Necessity and Explanation in Aristotle's *Analytics*

I. Aristotle's Account of Mixed Modal Syllogisms

In this essay I propose to consider two questions about necessity. The first concerns a problem in the interpretation of Aristotle's modal logic. In book 1 of the *Prior Analytics*, in the course of discussing modal syllogisms, Aristotle makes claims that seem inconsistent with one another, or that seem based on inconsistent views about the nature of modal propositions. Is there any way to make Aristotle's modal logic coherent? The second is a question about the nature and role of modality in the task of scientific explanation. In book 1 of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle argues that ἐπιστήμη, the understanding that comes about by explanation and enables explanation, is *of* the necessary and proceeds *from* the necessary. What does he mean by this?

It is not obvious that these two questions are related to one another, but I hope to show that they are. I will suggest that it is fruitful to think of the second question as involving the interpretation of that concept of necessity whose purely formal consideration in the *Prior Analytics* generates the first question. The scope of this essay is thus a modest one; it is to suggest that well-known difficulties in Aristotle's modal logic may become clearer when we recognize the unity of the enterprises that shape the discussions of the two halves of Aristotle's *Analytics*.

First, then, about modal syllogistic. The story I am about to tell is by now a familiar one.¹ Partway through book 1 of the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle considers what we might call *hybrid modal syllogisms*, and in particular, in chapter 9, he considers syllogisms one of whose premises is necessary and the other of which is assertoric. The outcome of such

syllogism, he argues, differs depending upon which of the premises exhibits which of the modalities. For if, he claims, the *major* premise of a demonstrative syllogism is necessary, there follows a conclusion that is also necessary; but if it is the *minor* premise that is necessary, the conclusion that is generated is merely assertoric. “For example,” Aristotle writes,

assume that A belongs or does not belong to B of necessity, and that B belongs simply to C. If we make this assumption, then A will also belong or not belong to C of necessity. For since A belongs or does not belong of necessity to every B, and C is one of the Bs, it is clear that A will also of necessity either belong or not belong to C. But if the AB premise is not necessary whereas the BC premise is necessary, the conclusion will not be necessary. For if it were, it would follow that A belongs to some B of necessity, by the first and third figure. But this is not true. (*Prior Analytics* 1.9, 30a15ff.)

Consider, for the sake of simplicity, only cases of belonging; that is, consider syllogisms consisting of universal affirmative premises. Aristotle’s claim is that in the case of these two hybrid Barbaras, the inheritance of the trait of necessity follows the modality of the dominant major premise rather than that of the recessive minor premise. *Necessarily AaB* and *BaC* yields *necessarily AaC*, whereas *AaB* and *necessarily BaC* yields merely *AaC*.

This claim has constituted for many commentators a difficult crux in Aristotle’s modal logic. According to Alexander, the claim met with immediate disagreement on the part of Aristotle’s successors; in his commentary on the *Prior Analytics*, Alexander explains Aristotle’s remarks, and then adds:

But his followers who were in the circle of Theophrastus and Eudemus deny this; they say instead that in all cases in which a combination of a necessary and an assertoric premise constitute a syllogism, the conclusion that results is assertoric. They infer this from the principle that in all such combinations the conclusion is similar to the least and weaker premise.²

The “least and weaker” principle to which Aristotle’s critics appeal, and which was to become the Scholastic modal dictum *peiores semper*

sequitur conclusio partem—a conclusion always follows the premise that is weaker [in modality]—reveals a more Mendelian model of modal inheritance at work in the thinking of Theophrastus and Eudemus; on their understanding, it is the trait of necessity itself, rather than one or another of the parent premises, that is recessive, and the trait of non-necessity that is dominant.

2. What This Account Suggests about Aristotle's Theory of Modal Propositions

We might interpret the disagreement between Aristotle and Theophrastus by supposing that the two have different pictures of the deep structure of modal propositions. Suppose that Theophrastus (inspired perhaps by a reading of *On Interpretation*) thought of modality as a feature of the entire quantified proposition, and not as a feature either of the proposition prior to quantification or of one of its arguments. Thinking the modal operator thus located, as it were, outside the quantified premise and thinking of the syllogism on the model of a chain only as strong as its weakest link, he then disallowed the inference of modally “stronger” conclusions from “weaker” premises.

Aristotle's view, on the other hand, suggests an interpretation of the structure of necessary propositions that places the modal operator *within* the scope of the quantifier; universal necessary affirmative propositions, for example, have the form $(x)[Sx \rightarrow NecPx]$. Such a conception generates precisely the difference Aristotle notes. For it reveals one of the hybrid Barbaras to lead to a necessary conclusion: $(x)[Mx \rightarrow NecPx]$ and $(x)[Sx \rightarrow Mx]$ yield $(x)[Sx \rightarrow NecPx]$. But it reveals the conclusion of the other Barbara to be restricted, just as our text requires: $(x)[Mx \rightarrow Px]$ and $(x)[Sx \rightarrow NecMx]$ do not yield the necessary conclusion $(x)[Sx \rightarrow NecPx]$. We might be concerned that $(x)[Mx \rightarrow Px]$ and $(x)[Sx \rightarrow NecMx]$ do not immediately yield any conclusion; but on the assumption that $Necp \rightarrow p$ is a valid modal principle, we can easily generate a more fruitful minor: $(x)[Mx \rightarrow Px]$ and $(x)[NecMx \rightarrow Mx]$ yield $(x)[NecMx \rightarrow Px]$. And that minor, together with the original major, will yield just the assertoric conclusion that Aristotle claims follows from this syllogism.

In addition to such formal considerations, this reading may be attractive for other reasons. For it may suggest that Aristotle's doctrine

of the two hybrid Barbaras demands an interpretation of the modal proposition that is *de re* rather than *de dicto*, suggesting as it does that necessity holds of individuals independently of the description under which they are introduced. And this may agree with what we expect from Aristotle; necessity is a feature of the belonging of a predicate to a subject, and is not to be understood in terms of analyticity.³

3. A Difficulty in Aristotle's Theory

The story might end here, with what seems a plausible account of his understanding of the structure of modal propositions, were it not for Aristotle's repeated claims that modal propositions convert in the same way as do simple assertoric propositions. This is how Aristotle opens chapter 3 of *Prior Analytics* 1:

It works the same way with necessary premises. For a universal negative converts universally, while each of the affirmatives converts in part [κατὰ μέρος]. For if A necessarily belongs to no B, then B necessarily belongs to no A. For if it might belong to some, then A might belong to some B. (*Prior Analytics* 1.3, 25a28ff.)

This is not simply an isolated claim on Aristotle's part; the conversion of modal propositions is a critical—we might even say necessary—part of his general discussion of the modal syllogism. For it is the conversion of modal propositions that allows for the reduction of modal syllogisms in the second and third figure to the perfect syllogisms of the first, just as in the case of the standard assertoric syllogistic. The conversion is therefore no minor part of the modal syllogistic. But the account we have been considering, which locates the modal operator within the quantified proposition, will not allow such conversion to take place. No obvious rule of logic allows us to infer $(\exists x)[\text{NecSx} \& \text{Px}]$ from $(x)[\text{Sx} \rightarrow \text{NecPx}]$ or from $(\exists x)[\text{Sx} \& \text{NecPx}]$, nor to infer $(x)[\text{Px} \rightarrow \text{Nec}\sim\text{Sx}]$ from $(x)[\text{Sx} \rightarrow \text{Nec}\sim\text{Px}]$.

The conversions Aristotle allows could be understood if we were to imagine the modal operator as outside the entire quantified proposition, so that necessary A propositions, for example, have the form $\text{Nec}(x)[\text{Sx} \rightarrow \text{Px}]$. But such an understanding suggests a relationship between modality and the quantified proposition that we thought we should not expect from Aristotle. For it makes once again inexplicable

the syllogisms of mixed modality, for which we thought the location of the operator inside the quantified proposition was required.

4. A Possible Solution to the Difficulty in Aristotle's Theory

What should we do? We might follow the strategy of Aristotle's earliest followers and interpret the mixed Barbaras as a simple mistake on Aristotle's part. Albrecht Becker, in a monograph published in 1933, offers another suggestion.⁴ In Becker's view, there are two different Aristotelian interpretations of the deep structure of the modal proposition, one at work when Aristotle considers the two Barbaras, and the other at work when he considers the conversion of modal propositions.

Becker rests much on chapter 13 of *Prior Analytics* 1, when, in a parallel discussion of contingent propositions, Aristotle observes:

The expression *it is possible for this to belong to that* may be understood in two ways: [it is possible for this to belong] either to the thing to which that belongs or to the thing to which that can belong. (*Prior Analytics* 1.13, 32b15)

This observation seems to Becker to yield two different Aristotelian interpretations of what I have called the deep structure of modal propositions, in this case of propositions asserting possibility: a contingent A proposition may be thought of (I) as a proposition with the structure $(x)[Sx \rightarrow \text{Pos}Px]$ or (II) as a proposition with the structure $(x)[\text{Pos}Sx \rightarrow \text{Pos}Px]$.

If we understand these two structures as governing Aristotle's discussion of modal propositions in general, then the anomalies we have noted in the modal syllogistic are explicable. For as we have seen, construing necessary A propositions as having the form (I) $(x)[Sx \rightarrow \text{Nec}Px]$ makes understandable the distinction between the two forms of syllogism with premises of mixed modality. If, on the other hand, we think of such propositions as having the form (II) $(x)[\text{Nec}Sx \rightarrow \text{Nec}Px]$ and of the corresponding I propositions as having the form (Ex) $[\text{Nec}Sx \& \text{Nec}Px]$, Aristotle's remarks concerning conversion become understandable, and without the necessity of imagining the modal operator outside the entire quantified proposition.

Becker's interpretation, however, merely uncovers the source of the anomaly in Aristotle's thinking; on his interpretation, Aristotle's modal logic remains muddled, resting on two quite different understandings of the structure of modal propositions. But it is difficult to imagine, if Becker is right, that Aristotle was simply confused in his sense of this distinction or of its application to the modal proposition. This is due not merely to the strong hermeneutical principle *Aristoteles raro confusus est*; in this case that hermeneutical principle is bolstered by the very statement of Aristotle on which Becker rests his distinction, as well as by other evidence of Aristotle's understanding of the distinction.⁵ Becker in fact does not accuse Aristotle of confusion but merely of ambivalence. But the question we need to ask if this ambivalence is not to be read as a sign of confusion is this: Is there any way in which we can understand the ambivalence to be grounded in a coherent project of Aristotle's?

Nicholas Rescher has more recently offered an alternative understanding of the mixed modal syllogisms that is ingenious, but whose baroque complexity is difficult to discover in Aristotle's discussion.⁶ Rescher's interpretation, however, has the considerable virtue of interpreting the modal syllogistic in light of Aristotle's discussion in the *Posterior Analytics*. It thus reminds us that the discussions in the two parts of the *Analytics* are of a piece, and that the semantic interpretation of the *Prior Analytics*' formal notion of modality may most aptly be looked for in the necessity that the *Posterior Analytics* deems requisite for scientific understanding. It is for this reason that I turn to the first book of the *Posterior Analytics* and to the question of explanatory modality.

5. Understanding and Necessity

In the *Posterior Analytics* the recognition of necessity is said by Aristotle to be a mark of proper scientific understanding.

We think we understand something in an unqualified sense, and not in the sophistical or accidental sense, when we know both of the cause that is responsible for its being the case that it is the cause and that things could not be otherwise. (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b9ff.)

If we think of Aristotle's discussion of ἐπιστήμη on the model of modern discussions of *knowledge*, in a context governed by concepts of doubt, justification, and certainty, it may seem to us that the demand that the proper object of ἐπιστήμη be necessary is meant as a condition for the possibility of certainty, as a guard against the eventuality of error. But once we have come to recognize that the governing contexts of the *Posterior Analytics* are those of *understanding* and *explanation*, a somewhat different interpretation of Aristotle's remarks will seem appropriate.⁷

We say we have understood something when we think we know (and therefore can reveal) *why* it *must* be the case that it is so. There is not yet understanding of such a thing being the case as long as we have only shown that it *might* be the case; for we could still ask, why, given that it doesn't *have* to be the case, *is* it the case? That question, which is precisely the demand for explanation, will be answered only when we recognize that given these and these causes, it *must* result that such and such is the case. The explanatory demand, in other words, is fully satisfied and brought to rest only by the invocation of necessity.

Aristotle's requirement of necessity in scientific understanding does not therefore reflect a theory according to which, for the sake of *certainty*, only the necessary can be the object of proper knowledge, but a theory according to which necessity is a feature of *explanation*, since successfully to explain something is to show why it must be so. The necessity in question, therefore, is a necessity that comes to be *revealed* in the development of explanatory understanding; it is not a necessity of which we need be aware prior to and independently of scientific demonstration. Nor is it, therefore, the necessity of a *pragma simpliciter* but of a *conclusion* insofar as it has been explained, that is, revealed to be necessitated by the cause invoked in the ἀπόδειξις that explains it.

The nature of explanatory modality is made clear when Aristotle subsequently observes that the necessity of what is explained must be revealed by way of explanation from premises that are in turn necessary in just the same sense. In one sense, this further requirement is a consequence of the fact that, as the recursive nature of Aristotle's theory makes clear, there is not yet scientific understanding of something if the premises by virtue of which it is explained are not themselves

understood. But in addition, it makes clear that no necessity of the conclusion simpliciter is sufficient to satisfy Aristotle's theoretical demands. In the sixth chapter of *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle stresses that even when a conclusion is necessary, there will not be full explanatory understanding unless both of the premises as well exhibit the necessity in question; if either premise fails to reveal a necessary connection of the middle, there will not be an understanding of the reason why the conclusion must exhibit the connection it does, and there will therefore not be ἐπιστήμη properly understood (*Posterior Analytics* 1.6, 74b26ff., 75a1ff.).

Consider more generally what is demanded in an explanation. A certain pragma consists of one sort of thing being another; the office of explanation is one of revealing why this has to be so. An explanation, in other words, attempts to show why an entity that may be identified under one description may, just because it can be identified under that description, also be identified under another description. This possibility of redescription is revealed to be a feature of the necessity of connection among alternative descriptions; an explanation attempts to show, in other words, that it is not simply an accident that some entity which is F is also G, since the description by which the entity is specified as being F is connected by some sort of necessary connection to the description by which the entity is specified as being G. This explanatory office, as we know, is accomplished by the middle.

This means that the explanation we want is one in which both premises are necessary. For if we want to show the necessary connection of two descriptions by means of another description (the middle), then for each of the first two descriptions, the connection of that description to the middle must be *understood*, and must therefore exhibit the same kind of necessary connection that we are trying to achieve for the conclusion, that is, for the *explanandum* that is to be the immediate object of our understanding. Each extreme term (that is, each of the descriptions that determine the poles of predicative being of the *explanandum*) must therefore be connected to the middle by necessity if the middle is to serve as an *explanans*.

In the paradigm of scientific understanding, therefore, explanation is from necessary premises; for we have a phenomenon under a certain description that brings together two terms, and explanation is achieved through the middle, which, by specifying the phenomenon under a

more general mediating description, reveals the explanatory connection between the two terms. Each of the premises by which this explanatory mediation is accomplished is standardly itself a conclusion of some prior apodictic syllogism. And since the conclusion of a syllogism is simply the perfected form of the premises of which the syllogism consists,⁸ the necessary premises of a scientific explanation reveal a connection effected by prior necessary connections to a prior middle that has been sublimed in the subsequent act of inference. Conversely, this middle is invisibly present in our prescientific experience and is only brought out in those acts of *epagoge* and *apodeixis* by which the scientist reveals the middle that explains the connection. And this is for Aristotle precisely the essential project of science; science just is the act of revealing the ramified syllogistic of what in the first moment of scientific awareness appears to us as conclusion, without it yet being understood: conclusion of *what*.

6. Syllogistic Necessity and the Necessity of Scientific Understanding

We turned to the question of necessity in the *Posterior Analytics* following the suggestion that the so-called *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* form a single work, whose subject matter is, as Aristotle announces in its opening lines, explanation and explanatory understanding: ἀπόδειξις and ἐπιστήμη ἀποδεικτική (*Prior Analytics* 1.1, 24a10). If this suggestion is correct, then we should expect the issues of the first two books of this work to be preparatory to the discussion of ἐπιστήμη ἀποδεικτική in the latter two books; the structure of syllogism, for example, is investigated because ἀπόδειξις is accomplished by συλλογισμός, that is to say, because scientific explanation takes place by means of reasoned discourse.

This is not to say that the formal logic of the *Prior Analytics* is nothing but the handmaiden of the subsequent account of scientific explanation in the *Posterior Analytics*. Here, as standardly in Aristotle, the shape of discussion owes as much to Aristotle's natural curiosity, his passion for completeness, and his associative style of organization as to any clear agenda of premises in a large architectonically ordered argument. The formal structure of syllogistic clearly takes on a life of its

own in the *Prior Analytics*, and Aristotle's interest in the elaboration of a formal logic of deduction reaches well beyond his immediate needs for the argument concerning ἀπόδειξις in the *Posterior Analytics*.

Nor is it to say that the *Analytics* is a manual for carrying out the activities of explanatory science. The *Analytics* is an abstract and formal theoretical essay; it presents a model of scientific understanding by idealizing and formalizing the structures of normal explanatory activity, that is, of science. It is not, so to speak, a theory of a formally abstract and idealized scientific practice, but a formalized theory of actual scientific practice. Scientists do not construct syllogisms in one figure or another of the sort we encounter in the *Prior Analytics*; they construct complex bodies of explanatory discourse, such as we find, for example, in the *Parts of Animals*, and we are able to understand these bodies of discourse as instances of formal syllogistic only when the philosopher has performed his (characteristically posterior) analysis.⁹

But given these qualifications, we should expect to find that the choice and treatment of topics in the two works is in general governed by a single interest, the interest in the nature of explanatory science, and its most obvious activity, that of scientific explanation. And so we should expect to discover that the necessity of *Analytics* 1 that is, of the first book of the *Prior Analytics*, is the formal analogue of the necessity of scientific explanation demanded in *Analytics* 3, that is, in the first book of the *Posterior Analytics*.

Standardly, therefore, a modal logic that purports to exhibit the paradigmatic form of explanatory reasoning will be concerned with propositions that are of the form Necessarily PaS—P belongs necessarily to all S—and whose deep structure may be represented as $(x)[\text{NecS}x \rightarrow \text{NecP}x]$. For each of such propositions will represent a sublimed form of two necessary premises prior to it; each will represent a conclusion in which the prior necessary linking middle that mediates those premises has been suppressed. Propositions of this form, which clearly convert, constitute the standard type of proposition that Aristotle has in mind and exhibit the standard structure of modal necessity invoked throughout the *Analytics*. It is this structure that Becker properly recognizes in his *second* model of the modal propositions, a structure that explains Aristotle's standard modal syllogistic and his standard forms of modal conversion.

But is there anything in this account that might help us understand why Aristotle makes the distinction between the two forms of mixed modal syllogism with which we began, the distinction that struck us as recommending Becker's *first* model of modal structure, a model according to which one thing is said to belong necessarily to subjects to which another belongs simply? For this we need to think again about the question of explanatory necessity.

7. Necessity and Explanation Again

Our aim in the discursive activity of science is to understand why some S or other is some P or other. This understanding, we saw, is achieved by *apodeixis*, by an explanation that shows why it is the case that an entity under a certain description must also be specifiable under another description. Standardly, I have suggested, such explanation occurs in contexts in which the two descriptions are related necessarily through a third description that constitutes a middle, in turn related necessarily to each. S has to be P because S has to be M and M has to be P.

But if science has both its source and telos in the particularity of experience, we will wish to be able to countenance explanations of a different sort as well. For we will want to be able to account for instances of reasoning by which an entity under a certain description comes to be understood to exhibit another being, even though the first description may not play a critical role in effecting the understanding; that description may merely pick out the entity whose being is thus to be explained, but not be related necessarily to the middle that explains why it exhibits the being it does.

Consider for example these cases. We wish to understand why the moon is in eclipse. We are offered this explanation: the moon is (at the moment) a body with an opaque substance interposed between it and its light source, and beings of that sort (for these and these reasons) eclipse. Or imagine our wishing to understand why the interior angles of a certain figure are equal to two right angles. We are given this explanation: the figure in question is a triangle, and the interior angles of a triangle (for these and these reasons) are equal to two right angles. It seems that in each of these cases we have been given an ἀπόδειξις the formal representation of which is considered in the *Analytics*; for

haven't we been given in each case an explanation that is productive of scientific understanding?

But in each of these cases, the entity in question is initially specified by a description that is not necessarily connected to the explanatory middle. In order to realize that fact, contrast the minimal explanations given with the deeper explanations parenthetically figured in each case by the phrase "for these and these reasons." The preliminary middles—*body with an opaque substance interposed between it and its light source* and *triangle*—are related by necessity to these further and deeper explanatory middles, which relate them necessarily to the predicate in question; but it is only contingently true that the moon is a body of that sort or that the figure in question is a triangle. Each of the entities in question, therefore, exhibits the characteristic that is explained, but does not exhibit that characteristic necessarily insofar as it is specified by its initial description, but rather insofar as it can be specified by some *other* description to which the characteristic *is* related necessarily. It is therefore only in a qualified sense that one is able to explain why the figure before me has interior angles equal to two right angles, or why that shining globe above the horizon eclipses. What can really be explained, by means of the further and more revealing middles, is why *a triangle*, which the figure before me happens to be, has interior angles equal to two right angles, or why *a body with an opaque substance interposed between it and its light source*, which the moon happens to be, eclipses.¹⁰

In the case of these initial explanations, then, the connection to the explanatory middle expressed in the minor premise is not a necessary one, although that of the major is. When Aristotle considers the modal status of the premises of scientific demonstration in the sixth chapter of *Posterior Analytics* 1, he denies, as we have seen, that demonstrations whose premises are not necessary are capable of generating understanding in the full sense that the *Posterior Analytics* sets out to clarify. Among the arguments he sets out is the following: If, he says,

someone who doesn't have an account of the causal reason [διὰ τῆς], even when there's a demonstration, doesn't have scientific understanding, then if A belongs necessarily to C, but the middle term B, through which [the conclusion] is demonstrated, does not belong necessarily, he doesn't know the reason why [διότι]. For it's not so by virtue of the middle, since it's possible for the middle not to be

the case, whereas the conclusion is necessary. (*Posterior Analytics* 1.6, 74b26ff.)

For, Aristotle continues in an interesting and revealing aside,

when the conclusion is necessary, nothing prevents the middle through which it is demonstrated from not being necessary. (*Posterior Analytics* 1.6, 75a1ff.)

The preliminary modes of explanation we have been considering are, I suggest, instances of just these imperfect demonstrations to which Aristotle here denies the power to produce full scientific understanding. Note further that these demonstrations are formally represented by the very syllogisms of mixed modality with which we began. This possibility is entertained by Barnes in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, but dismissed because he finds it, in his words, “piquant . . . but perhaps too subtle.”¹¹ But it seems to me difficult to avoid the conclusion that the syllogistic forms to which Aristotle refers in this early chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* are precisely those forms of mixed modal reasoning he discusses earlier; here is the necessary major, the merely assertoric minor, and that troublesome necessity of conclusion that we encounter in *Prior Analytics* 1.9.

In these cases, scientific understanding in the full sense has indeed not yet been accomplished. For the deeper causal explanation that necessarily links, for example, the figure qua triangle to its having interior angles equal to two right angles has not yet been revealed. But what has been revealed is the very nature to which we must look if we are to find such a deeper explanation; what has been revealed is the fact that the figure's having interior angles equal to two right angles can only be understood insofar it is apprehended as this *triangle*, and not merely as this *figure*. The denial of unqualified understanding is thus a sign of Aristotle's commitment to the power and the necessity of proper and essential description in the enterprise of scientific explanation. The object of understanding is for Aristotle only qualifiedly the contingent and particular fact that is at first to be explained, for example, that a certain figure has interior angles equal to two right angles; properly it is that anything that falls under a certain description has such angles. It is thus as we have seen only contingently true that *this figure* has the equivalent of two right angles; necessity attaches only to our understanding that

a *triangle*, which this figure happens to be, has interior angles equal to two right angles.

But what follows from this is important; it is that the first essential task of scientific explanation will be the noetic task of correctly describing particulars, of finding the right universal to characterize those beings which have been picked out by the mere *thises* and *thats* of our initial discourse. It is important that this is a task of proper description, and that understanding in these cases is not absent, but hidden, obscured by the distracting overdetermination of the particular. Our ultimate objective in the enterprise of understanding—whether as scientists or as philosophers—is not to turn away from the particular but to make it manifest, to *demonstrate* it. The aim is not to leave it in darkness while we attend to and shed the light of *nous* upon the universal and abstract; it is to reveal the particular by casting it in that light that shows it for what it is and why it is what it is.

Our first task in that enterprise must therefore be one of discovering the particular in terms that do more than merely indicate it to us, but that disclose as well that nature which will be the subject of a more revealing ἀπόδειξις. The general form of such activity is ἐπαγωγή, which Aristotle describes as the activity that “reveals the universal by making clear the particular”—δεικνύντες τὸ καθόλου διὰ τοῦ δήλον εἶναι τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον (*Posterior Analytics* 1.1, 71a8). It is exactly this initial project of scientific understanding that is performed by the instances of preliminary explanation we have been considering, explanations I have suggested are represented formally by the syllogisms of mixed modality of *Prior Analytics*. It is as if Aristotle envisions at the outset of all scientific understanding hybrid syllogisms of the form: triangle belongs contingently to this figure; having interior angles equal to two right angles belongs necessarily to triangle; therefore having two right angles belongs necessarily to *this figure qua triangle*.

What this means is that in a limited but important sense we have in fact begun to explain why the angles of the figure before me are equal to two right angles, and why that light in the sky has gone out. We have done so just insofar as we have revealed the figure before me to be that sort of figure, or the light to be that sort of light and of that sort of body, for which we are then able to provide the true causal explanations by which necessity will be revealed: not until we have, but nevertheless insofar as we have. And this characteristically Greek “nevertheless”

must be true if *experience made intelligible* is to be the ultimate source and telos of science.

This last fact should finally help us realize why Aristotle introduces syllogisms of mixed modality with necessary conclusions. Consider for a moment Aristotle's parallel strategy in the *Metaphysics*. Like the Platonists, he wishes to restrict substantial being to per se being and to restrict per se being to the robust formality of an entity being what it is. But unlike the Platonist, he wants to resist the dissection of that being from the entity which exhibits it, and to deny an ontology whose central image is that of entities separate from and therefore in relation to their formal being; at the heart of his ontology is the vision of substantial entities that are themselves. So here, Aristotle wants to restrict the world of understanding to the world of per se and necessary being. But he wants to deny that the world of the necessary is anything other than the world of the contingent understood properly in terms of its necessary rational structure; he wants, in other words, to resist a Platonist separation of contingency from necessity. At the heart of all our reasoning about that intelligible structure of necessity by which the world is understood is the recognition of the incorporated unity of that structure with the dumb singularity of the particular.¹²

There is at the core of all explanation then, in the act the medievals called *compositio*, the synthesis of a particular with the necessary structure of its being, a recognition that some *this* is *such and such*. If we hope to account finally for this fact, we will have to introduce syllogisms of mixed modality. This is the insight that lies behind *Prior Analytics* 1.9, which introduces exactly such syllogisms and claims that their conclusions will be necessary, even though, as we learn in the *Posterior Analytics*, they do not represent unqualified *understanding*. The subsequent tradition that joins Theophrastus in denying validity to mixed Barbaras with assertoric minor and necessary conclusion courts the danger of the separation that Aristotle means to avoid; it risks precisely that dissociation of particularity and being that he saw as the chief difficulty of Platonism.

In one sense, this is all Aristotle's rabbit-out-of-the-hat trick, and mixed modal syllogisms with necessary conclusions, since they seem to pull apodictic rabbits out of assertoric hats, must seem to the Theophrastuses of the world like the most outrageous form of legerdemain. But it is in fact a rabbit that gets pulled out, and it was in fact in the

hat. The magic in other words is genuine, that is to say, depends upon very skillful sleight of hand. The sleight consists in knowing how to understand the world properly, that is, in knowing what are the appropriate descriptions in terms of which individual entities come to be understood. The magic, that is to say, is the magic of *nous*, the sleight of mind by which we are able to come to recognize particular things for *what they are*.

We began by suggesting that $(x)[Sx \rightarrow \text{NecPx}]$ represents the structure of some modal propositions. Perhaps, as we thought, that structure models the very mixture of particularity and necessity we have been looking at, as though the syllogism mirrored itself in the very structure of its proposition in ways we noted earlier. If so, the dual nature of modal propositions will seem not so egregiously an ad hoc hypothesis brought in to explain the difference in the validity of the two varieties of mixed modal syllogisms; the mixture of the modality of the syllogism will seem reflected in the mixture of the modality of the terms in the premises of the syllogism.

But perhaps this is fanciful, and the truth is simply that Aristotle envisions different structures in order to explain the different forms of reasoning that he wishes to come out right. Perhaps he is merely ambivalent. But if Aristotle is ambivalent in his reading of the logic of necessity, it is not because of any obvious muddle in his modal thinking. It signals rather his principled refusal to countenance any easy Academic separation between the world and its intelligibility, or between entities and their essential being, and his insistence upon grounding all explanation and all understanding in the intelligible world of particulars rightly revealed.

This does not contradict Aristotle's claims that the particular cannot be understood. The reading I have suggested acknowledges Aristotle's insistence that they cannot be understood *qua particular*, but reminds us that in the act of understanding, the particular is apprehended into a general description in terms of which its features can be understood. Explanation, I have meant to claim, is directed ultimately to the particular, but to the particular revealed in terms of those general natures that explain its being, revealed most fundamentally in terms of *what it is*. As a consequence, the hybrid modes of reasoning figured in the *Prior Analytics* do not in themselves generate scientific understanding, nor do they form any part of a finished discursive

science. Like the perishable particulars they serve to explain, they do not last, nor are they meant to last, since they serve to reveal the world for us and vanish after science teaches us to recognize the world for what it is.

On the other hand, the supposition that we might come to recognize the world for what it is is an ideal vision of the regulative telos of science; in actual practice we remain situated in the world of the particular and perishable, and therefore always in need of the intercession of the Barbaras of mixed nature. Unlike God, who dwells in the high and clean air of necessity, we continue to live in that peculiar mixture of necessity and contingency that is for Aristotle, as it was for the tradition he inherited, the distinctive climate of human being.

6

Acting

DRAMA AS THE *MIMESIS* OF *PRAXIS*

To the memory of Paul Desjardins, who loved both philosophy and poetry.

Like poetry in general, tragic poetry is a form of mimesis; so Aristotle tells his readers at the beginning of the *Poetics*. He then goes on to describe tragedy more particularly (in what seems to be more or less a definition of the genre) as the mimesis of an action: “ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας: tragedy is the imitation [μίμησις] of a serious action [πρᾶξις]” (*Poetics* 6, 1449b24). As part of the same account, Aristotle also describes *mythos* or plot (which he styles the “soul” of a drama, that is, the cause of its being what it is) as the mimesis of an action (*Poetics* 6, 1450b3). This characterization of tragedy as mimetic and specifically as mimetic with respect to an action—a πρᾶξις—is repeated several times in the course of the *Poetics*, and much of what Aristotle has to say about tragic poetry seems to depend upon it.¹ In this essay I offer some reflections on both parts of this characterization, on the view that tragedy is mimesis and on the view that it is the *mimesis* of *praxis*.

I

It would be hyperbole to attribute to Aristotle a *theory* of mimesis; there is no thematic discussion of the nature of imitation in the Aristotelian corpus such as we find, for example, in Plato. But it should be clear from the prominent place accorded mimesis in the *Poetics* (and should be expected given the prominent place that mimesis enjoys in Plato’s discussions) that the concept is an important one for our understanding

of Aristotle's account of tragic poetry. We may begin by noting the generality of Aristotle's claim: at the beginning of the *Poetics* mimesis is said to comprise *all* forms of poetry (*Poetics* 1, 1447a13–16). In thus characterizing all poetry as mimesis, Aristotle appears to diverge from the account of mimesis that we find early in Plato's *Republic*. Socrates, speaking with Adeimantus about what kind of poetry will and will not be allowed in their fantastic political utopia, there distinguishes between two modes of λέξις or styles of poetic discourse (*Republic* 3, 392D).

On the one hand, poets may accomplish their ends by what he calls ἀπλή διήγησις, straight narration or narration proper. This mode is one in which, as Socrates says,

the poet himself speaks, without attempting to turn our attention elsewhere as though someone else than he were the speaker. (*Republic* 3, 393A6f.)

On the other hand, poets may use what Socrates calls *mimesis*—μίμησις—using the word that Aristotle in our text applies to poetry in general. A poet is said to employ mimesis when he imitates or takes on the *persona* of someone else, speaking as though he were that person, creating a fictional voice through which his discourse is accomplished.

Socrates illustrates the difference between diegesis and mimesis by reminding Adeimantus of an early scene in the *Iliad*. The poet, having first described in narrative Chryses's approach to the Achaeans, then adopts the mimetic style; he

speaks as though he himself were Chryses, trying as hard as possible to make it seem to us that it is not Homer who is speaking, but the priest, an old man. (*Republic* 3, 393A8ff.)

Socrates proceeds to show Adeimantus (after first warning him that he is no poet) what it would be like if Homer had spoken *without* mimesis. He offers this narratized version of the Homeric episode:

When the priest came, he prayed that the gods should grant them the capture of Troy and their safety, but that they should release his daughter, accepting the ransom and honoring the god. (*Republic* 3, 393D8ff.)

The distinction that Plato has Socrates here draw reminds us of how particular the notion of mimesis is in these contexts; it refers quite specifically to the poet's creation of a fictional voice. Mimesis is not (at least in these first books of the *Republic*) a feature of art in relation to the real world represented in art, nor a feature of discourse in relation to reality represented in discourse; it is not, in other words, described by a theory of how art in general or literary language in particular mirrors the world by representation. It is rather a feature of literary discourse in terms of the relation between poet and fictional voice, between dramatist and dramatic character, between author and persona.²

In claiming that *all* poetry is mimesis, it appears that Aristotle undermines Socrates's distinction and enlarges considerably his notion of mimesis. This impression is strengthened by Aristotle's later classification of mimetic modes. Chapter 1 of the *Poetics* differentiates mimesis in three respects: instances of mimesis may differ from one another "either in medium, or in object, or in manner"—ἢ γὰρ τῶ ἐν ἑτέροις μιμεῖσθαι ἢ τῶ ἕτερον ἢ τῶ ἑτέρως καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον (*Poetics* 1, 1447a17f.). In chapter 3, the third respect is elaborated; it is possible, Aristotle writes, for the poet

to imitate by the same means the same objects either (1) by sometimes narrating, sometimes becoming someone other than himself, as Homer does, or (2) by remaining himself without changing, or (3) entirely by acting, that is, playing out the parts [ὡς πράττοντας καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας τοὺς μιμουμένους]. (*Poetics* 3, 1448a20ff.)

The distinction between (2) and (3), presented in the *Poetics* as a distinction in *kinds* of mimesis, is precisely Socrates's distinction between what is not and what is mimetic, between diegesis and mimesis, and (1), which is for Aristotle a composite form of mimetic poetry, is for Socrates a hybrid of nonmimetic and mimetic poetic discourse.

Socrates's distinction then, lives on in the *Poetics* only as a distinction of style within mimesis. But it does live on; and we may indeed discern a continuation of Plato's more restricted understanding of mimesis in Aristotle's praise of Homer as superior to other epic poets, although now the poles of valuation appear reversed. Homer, Aristotle writes,

deserves praise especially because he alone among the poets does not lose sight of what he must say in his own person; for in his own person, a poet ought to say as little as possible, since in doing that he is not imitating [οὐ γὰρ ἔστι κατὰ ταῦτα μιμητής—not, in other words, engaged in mimesis]. (*Poetics* 24, 1460a5ff.)

Insofar as Aristotle, despite his more general characterization of all poetic discourse as mimetic, thus perpetuates the narrower Platonic understanding of mimesis, his account of mimesis may be subject to some of the same criticisms that have been directed against Plato. Gérard Genette, for example, argues that in poetry the narrower concept of mimesis can account for nothing other than the occasional reported speech. For in language nothing can be *imitated* in the narrower sense other *than* language itself, and such imitation finally collapses into mere reproduction: not the *representation*, but the unadorned *presentation* of speech.³ The general point is made early in modern discussions of mimesis; consider this observation of an eighteenth-century English scholar:

There seems to be but *one* view in which Poetry can be considered as *Imitation*, in the strict and proper sense of the word. If we look for both *immediate* and *obvious* resemblance, we shall find it only in DRAMATIC—or to use a more general term—PERSONATIVE Poetry; that is, all Poetry in which, whether essentially or occasionally, the Poet personates; for here, *speech* is imitated by *speech*. The difference between this, and mere narration or description, is obvious. When, in common discourse, we *relate*, or *describe*, in our own persons, we *imitate* in no other sense than as we raise *ideas* which resemble the things related or described. But when we speak *as another person*, we become mimics, and not only the ideas we convey, but the words, the discourse itself, in which we convey them, are imitations; they resemble, or are supposed to resemble, those of the person we represent.⁴

In Genette this point becomes a critique of “personative” mimesis, and a critique that (ironically, given Socrates’s manifest intent) is an attempt to reclaim narrative at the expense of the dramatic; thus notice how Genette’s argument ends with a celebration of diegesis:

The truth is that mimesis in words can only be mimesis of words. Other than that, all we have and can have is degrees of diegesis.⁵

Such projects of reclamation are what we might expect from a critical tradition whose central concern has been with narrative, and which often sees itself as engaged in reversing the Jamesian Anglo-American valuing of the mimetic-dramatic over the narrative, of *showing* over *telling*.⁶ But the issue in fact is a deeper one; for questions of the relative place of stylistic strategies in fictional discourse (in the contemporary argument most notably in the novel) are here subsidiary to larger theoretical issues to which the question of mimesis is relevant.

To follow Aristotle in classifying diegesis as one of the modes of poetic mimesis rather than classifying it in opposition to mimesis, as Socrates appears to do in the Platonic dialogues, is not to argue that narrative is per se an act of mimesis. It is only to claim that narrative and mimesis are contingently related; narrative can be mimetic, but need not be. We will be prevented from seeing this contingency if we think of mimesis in the broader sense as an activity by which a mode of discourse is made to represent a nondiscursive reality; for then narrative will indeed become the privileged and indeed paradigmatic mode of poetic discourse. This is in fact how Genette views mimesis and what leads him to his critique of the Platonic understanding of mimesis as dramatic:

If we call poetic imitation the fact of representing by verbal means a non-verbal reality and, in exceptional circumstances, a verbal reality (as one calls pictorial imitation the fact of representing in pictorial means non-pictorial reality and, in exceptional circumstances, a pictorial reality), it must be admitted that imitation is to be found in the . . . narrative lines [of the early scene in the *Iliad* cited above] and not at all in the . . . dramatic lines, which consist simply in the interpolation, in the middle of a text representing events, of another text directly taken from those events.⁷

This understanding of the nature of mimesis naturally makes Plato's distinction between mimesis and diegesis problematic, while at the same time elevating narrative to a privileged place above the dramatic as the most obvious mode of poetic mimesis. The theoretical issues concerning mimesis that emerge on such an understanding will then concern questions of the power of discourse to represent the nondiscursive and questions concerning the modes of such representation:

issues of realism and verisimilitude, of referentiality and illusion, and most abstractly of the relative priority of word and world in the commerce of representation.⁸

But these are not the issues and this is not the understanding of mimesis that informs either Plato's discussion or Aristotle's more general characterization of poetry as mimetic. For Plato and Aristotle, mimesis is not primarily a feature of discourse in its relation to a non-discursive reality that it represents; it is not, in other words, a mode of radically symbolic, that is, *non-iconic*, representation. For Plato, it is, as we saw, initially a feature of literary discourse in terms of the relation between poet and fictional voice, or more generally between dramatist and dramatic character or between author and persona. In the mimetic mode of lexis, the poet, by an act of impersonation, submerges his being beneath that of a fictional persona. This sense of mimesis is clearly tied to a mode of what is more strictly speaking *imitation*. The larger sense of mimesis which derives from this stricter sense and which remains operative for Plato and Aristotle is that of mimesis as *iconic* representation.

In this sense, Genette's criticism may be viewed more revealingly as the expression of a theoretical concern above all with structures of non-iconic signification, with the role that the arbitrary sign plays in the economies of human cognition and creativity. Such a concern may be more faithful to the preoccupations of modern aesthetic theory, for which mimesis has come to figure the absolutely creative and not merely imitative powers of human thought and discourse. But for an understanding of ancient theories of mimesis, we may need to forsake that faithfulness in order to reclaim the iconic sense of mimesis common to Plato and Aristotle.

To reclaim that sense is not to disparage the creativity of non-iconic signification, nor therefore to disparage the importance of narrative in the economy of human poetic activity. Our instinct for mimesis, marked by Aristotle as "natural to humankind" (*Poetics* 4, 1448b5ff.), is not in competition with what is undoubtedly our more unique and fundamental capacity to manipulate arbitrary symbols and to invest them with meaning. But these are distinct capacities,⁹ and it may be that the capacity for iconic representation is as central to our specifically *artistic* and *fictionalizing* activities as are the capacities that make possible narrative and our more general symbolic activities.

2

It may be appropriate, however, to think of mimesis as a richer concept for our understanding of literary art than is apparent from the narrow stylistic context early in the *Republic*. We may discern in mimesis a characteristic feature of poetic or of literary or fictional discourse in general, a feature that may be thought to distinguish literary from more ordinary modes of discourse.

In a literary work, an author has created one or several fictional personae who perform speech acts within the fictional world of the work. The author, however, performs no such speech acts in her own person, although she performs creative acts involved in making the linguistic artifact that is the work. But it is only the personae, that is, the characters created by the author, who perform first-order locutionary acts and who speak within the work. From the point of view of the reader or author *outside* the literary work, these speech acts must therefore be thought of as mimetic or imitative.

The description of literary discourse as mimetic may indeed seem most appropriate to *drama*, where full-blown impersonation is encountered. This view is entertained in the *Republic* when Adeimantus, in the heart of his discussion with Socrates concerning mimesis, speaks as though mimesis were uniquely a feature of the dramatic genre (*Republic* 3, 394D5ff.). So it was often understood in antiquity; Proclus, for example, glosses *dramatic* as *mimetic*, referring to the *Republic*'s first category of lexis as “τὸ μὲν δραματικὸν καὶ μιμητικόν”—the dramatic or mimetic (Proclus, *In Platonis Rem publicam commentarii* 14.20).

One may understand what draws us to think of the mimetic as uniquely dramatic; but it is not because mimesis applies uniquely to the genre of dramatic literature. For a theory of literature as mimesis does not apply selectively to one genre and not to another, to drama, for instance, and not to lyric poetry; such a theory offers itself as a theory of literature in general, a theory that derives from the status of literary discourse itself.

Distinguishing among literary genres as mimetic and nonmimetic confuses specific stylistic and generic features of art with features of art in general. The fact that any object may become mimetic merely by being proclaimed or taken as mimetic by an artist or aesthetic subject has to do with the ontology of art; it can't be true of this or that artistic

genre and not another. Duchamps's bicycle wheel is no more or less mimetic than a Donatello or a Henry Moore, nor than a Brueghel or a Mondrian. In the same way, a theory of literature as mimesis has to do with the nature of literary discourse itself and therefore of literature in general, not with the nature of any *particular* genre of literature.

In some cases the mimetic nature of nondramatic literature will be obvious. Think of the poems of Browning; here the author characteristically creates a fictional voice distanced ironically both from himself and from the "meaning" of his poem. But although the *distance* between author and persona may be particularly striking in this case, the ontological *distinction* is not unique to it; it is equally true for any instance of poetic discourse.

Compare for example Wordsworth; the historical poet Wordsworth and the poetic voice that speaks in his poems are not the same person, even though their lives are strikingly similar. Wordsworth the poet lived in a historical place and time continuous with ours, but the poetic *I* that speaks in one of his poems lives in a place and time that is part of the fictional world invoked by that very poem Wordsworth has created; it is thus in a sense a world generated by words. What is created in these poems, and equally in the poems of a poet such as Anne Sexton or Robert Lowell, who might seem to us on first thought to be speaking directly in their poems, is a fictional *persona*, a person who greatly resembles the person of the author, but who is ontologically distinct from it. Such personae are the primary characters of fictive discourse; they live in fictional worlds to which we have access only through their fragmentary incursions into our world. A poetic voice—a fictive character—is thus part of a fictional world, elements of which correspond to the mimetic residue, so to speak, in our world that constitutes an artwork; but a character has no direct connections into our world, and we have no access into his save through the small fixed window art provides.¹⁰

These facts, I am claiming, follow from the nature of literary discourse itself rather than from a special feature of certain poetry. It follows therefore that every *narrative* voice in a work of literature is also part of a fictional world created by its author. The narrative voice in *War and Peace*, for example, is authored by Tolstoy, but it is not the voice *of* Tolstoy; it is a voice that lives within the fictional world created

by the novel and ultimately by the novel's author. An act of narrative, therefore, like any action (or indeed like any other entity) can be mimetic or not.

These reflections about narration and mimesis have been in the service of revealing a view of poetic activity that is founded on more than the concern with the arbitrarily signifying powers of language. The more, I have argued, is iconic imitation, mimesis. A poet in this sense is not primarily a creator of things that imitate; it is the poet himself who is an imitator in that she makes imitation things. It is not, in other words, that the poet is an imitator because she creates a piece of discourse that imitates a nondiscursive reality; she is an imitator because she imitates a speaker speaking about reality, though it is not her reality, but the reality of that fictional speaker's fictional world. It is this relation between the poet and the speaker that is the primary imitative relation. The poet creates an imitation speaker who makes real speeches in the imitative world, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," as Marianne Moore once put it, not imaginary toads in gardens that are real. The fact that poetry is imitation does not mean that poetry imitates, but that it, like all literary discourse, is the internal object of an act of imitating.

3

The generality of Aristotle's claim, therefore, is a fruitful one, not in that it depicts art as a mirror of the world, but in that it reminds us of the iconicity, the fictionalizing modality of artistic representation.

But the critique of mimesis with which we began may still interest us; for if even narrative is mimetic in an iconic sense, it follows a fortiori that drama is also iconic. Thus the observation that poetry as speech can be strongly mimetic only *of* speech has as its correlate the fact that tragedy can be iconic of action only if the mimesis is itself an action. So Twining, in his discussion of imitation cited above, observes that

in the poem itself nothing but *words* can be immediately copied. Gravina says well, Non è *imitazione poetica* quella, che non è fatta *dalle parole*.

But in the same context, he notes that

the drama, indeed, is said also to imitate *action* by *action*; but this is only in actual representation, where the players are the immediate imitators.¹¹

Drama, in other words, does not describe action, but re-presents it; a drama is a mimetic action.

So if tragedy is a mimesis of action, its medium in turn is itself action, but mimetic action. This fact is made clear in the further elaboration of Aristotle's definition of tragedy at the beginning of chapter 6. Tragedy, we recall, is there defined as the mimesis of an action; the action, Aristotle stipulates, must be serious (σπουδαίως), and it must be an action that is complete and that takes place over time: τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης.¹² The mimesis in turn is said to be accomplished in "sweetened" language, by which Aristotle explains he means language such as we might call *poetic* language, and it is to be

by means of acting and not by means of narration [δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας]. (*Poetics* 6, 1449b26–27)

The requirement that a drama be acted and not narrated is one that we recognize; it is the requirement that it be *dramatic*.¹³ But the word of interest here is the word that gives rise to its being called dramatic in the first place, the word δρώντων. This word is an inflected form of δράω, which Aristotle has earlier reminded his readers is the Doric for *to act*, equivalent to Attic πράττω (*Poetics* 3, 1448 b1).

To describe a tragedy thus as *acted* is to make clear that the medium of the mimesis of an action is itself an action. But in using a term that is equivalent to but distinct from the standard Attic term for action (and which moreover has the deep connections to the poetic and linguistic conventions of tragedy that δράω enjoys) Aristotle makes clear that it is an action of a special and peculiar character. It is an action that is an instance not of πράττειν or πράξις, but of δρᾶν or (though there is no such work) "δράσις," and its internal object is therefore not a πρᾶγμα; it is a δρᾶμα, that is, a drama. We may describe such action using a scholastic distinction *as formally* a δρᾶμα and *objectively* a πράξις, and this way of putting the difference reveals the logical tie that the subtitle of this essay is meant to invoke; it is a *drama* because it is the mimesis of a *praxis*.

That a drama is a mimetic representation of a praxis was earlier made clear by Aristotle when he contrasted different modes of poetry

with reference to the distinctions drawn in the first three chapters of the *Poetics*. Let's recall that contrast. On the one hand, Aristotle notes, Sophocles is an imitator of the same sort as Homer, for both imitate what is serious; but on the other hand he is an imitator of the same sort as Aristophanes, for "both imitate actors [πράττοντας] and actors [δρῶντας]"—πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας ἄμφω (*Poetics* 3, 1448a27).

The sense here surely demands that the second likeness, that between Sophocles and Aristophanes, should be in terms of the *mode* of mimesis (the τῷ ἑτέρως καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον μιμεῖσθαι of chapter 1, 1447a13) in contrast to the first likeness, that between Sophocles and Homer, which is clearly presented in terms of the *object* that the mimesis is a mimesis *of* (the τῷ ἕτερα μιμεῖσθαι of that chapter). But it may seem hard to find that contrast in the received text. Casaubon therefore suggests that we should read πράττοντες and δρῶντες, making them the subject and not the object of μιμοῦνται.¹⁴ The difficulty is equally clear a few lines later, where Casaubon also emends. The manuscripts give ὅθεν καὶ δράματα καλεῖσθαι τινες αὐτὰ φασιν, ὅτι μιμοῦνται δρῶντας; Casaubon again suggests that we read δρῶντες, so as to yield, as it were: it is for this reason that they are called *acts*, because it is *actors* who do the imitating.

Casaubon's concerns are understandable, and his emendations, although they demand a tortured construction of the Greek, produce a text consistent with our observation that the mimesis of an action is itself an action. But they may be seen as unnecessary, and their difficulties avoided, if we recall that the verb μιμέομαι carries with it the sense of acting a role, that is, playing a part.¹⁵ In such cases, the object of mimesis is the *internal* and not the *external* object imitated. It is this very doubleness of mimesis, the fact that dramas (or more properly dramatic authors and actors) imitate praxis-acting persons by imitating dramatic-acting characters, that is captured in Aristotle's requirement: πράττοντας μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας—they imitate agents acting, that is, you understand, *acting*.

We may express this fact in a Saussurian way: Casaubon wishes to prevent Aristotle's phrase from capturing the *external referent*. He therefore reads the phrase as referring to the *physical signifier* (that is, to the actual flesh and blood actors), whereas what we want is reference to the *signified* (that is, to the dramatic characters). These are subtle

distinctions and characteristically difficult to make; compare the difficulty I noted above with confessional poets. Sometimes the difficulty is expressed in our desire to say, for example, that John Wayne always plays John Wayne, or Marlon Brando Marlon Brando. The cinema in particular may lead to this temptation, or rather, as we should say, to this intriguing artistic possibility; it is what allows actors like Brando to play themselves in ways that lead to interesting intertextuality in the film medium.¹⁶

Perhaps we can become clearer about the relation between praxis and drama by considering a representative action. Here is one for example: a man is hiding behind a curtain in a room in which another man is speaking to a woman, and when the first man moves, the second, taking him for a much-hated adversary, stabs him through the curtain. Imagine this action being enacted onstage as part of a drama; imagine, in other words, that it is an *act* and not simply an action. On a September evening at Drury Lane Theater, we witness this acted action; we watch Mr. Garrick acting Hamlet stabbing Polonius, acted by Mr. Cibber.

How shall we describe what we see? Here are three descriptions: (A) Mr. Garrick runs a stage rapier through a curtain, carefully avoiding hitting Mr. Cibber, but so as to give the audience the illusion of one man stabbing another through a curtain. (B) A character named Hamlet (one of the *dramatis personae*) kills another character, named Polonius. (C) Hamlet kills Polonius.

I suggest that it is fruitful to think of these three formally distinct but materially intertwined actions in this way: (A) describes a real action in the real world. (B) describes a mimetic action in the real world. (C) describes a real action in the mimetic world, that is, in the world projected from the actions and speeches we witness. (A) concerns the art of acting, and is importantly though subtly distinct from (B); to confound the two is a common confusion, and may be at the heart of much misunderstanding of the structure of mimesis, as well perhaps as of our distrust of the mimetic and of those who enact it.¹⁷ But nevertheless (A) and (B) are in a sense aspects of the same ontological complex (as signifier and signified are aspects of a single sign).

The relations between (B) and (C) are even more subtle and more difficult to sort out. But the central point is the point above, that mimesis takes two different but logically related objects, one of which might be

thought to be an internal object, the other not. The relationship is thus perhaps an instance of the inveterately philosophically perplexing relationship between the internal and external objects of intentional states. I see a sight: for example, Philadelphia. In a sense it follows that Philadelphia is a sight (e.g., for sore eyes); but it certainly does not follow that I live in a sight, or that William Penn founded a sight. We may try to guard against the inanity of such inference by the careful use of expressions like “the sight of Philadelphia.” Matty Groves hears a sound; it must be Lord Arling and all his men. But again it does not follow that poor Matty was slain by a mere sound, and again we may try to guard reason with protective phrases like “the sound of Lord Arling and all his men.”

To trace the history of these and other moves, and of the attempts to deal with the larger issues behind them, is to trace the complex history of philosophy’s (necessary) concern with the nature of *appearance*. The masters of philosophical discourse on this topic include (among several others and with varying degrees of attention to its ontological and epistemological dimensions) Plato, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. A central curiosity about Aristotle is the fact that his name does not appear on this list; why is this question so relatively unaddressed in his writings? Why is Plato’s virtual obsession with *image* not matched in Aristotle’s thought?

One possible answer is that Plato’s concern with the imaged and its image (his concern with the complex modalities of Socrates’s divided line) is translated into Aristotle’s concern with the *latent* and the *manifest*, with power and its corresponding actualizing activity. The medium of such translation may be the duality of *inner* and *outer*; recall that in the *Republic* this duality figures precisely the relation between a virtue and its expression that comes to be understood by Aristotle in terms of *hexis* and *energeia*.

But it may be equally revealing that Aristotle does express this concern, but expresses it almost uniquely in the context of his discussion of *fictional mimesis*. It may be no accident, in other words, that the *Poetics* is not part of the *Metaphysics*, and that there is no Aristotelian work that weaves together the issues of *being* and *mimetic representation* as the *Republic*, for example, does.

4

It may be of interest to reflect further on this fact. Aristotle, we have seen, uses two different Greek words to refer to the mimetic and its object, but points to the affinity of these words to reveal the corresponding affinity of their referents, the reciprocal filiation of drama and praxis. We use one word—the word *act*—to do the job of Aristotle’s (that is, Greek’s) two words. This fact gives to a later master a wonderful device for the deep and significant wordplay on the complex senses of “act” that we find, for example, in *Hamlet*.¹⁸ When Polonius pairs “devotion’s visage” with “pious action” as means by which “we do sugar o’er / The devil himself,” we hear the complexities inherent in the concept of acting, as when the gravedigger points out that “an act hath three branches—it is to act, to do, to perform” (*Hamlet* 3.1.47, 5.1.11).

Shakespeare’s punning mirrors more than his concern with theatricality as a figure of life. It reveals a respect in which all moral action is in a sense mimetic. I don’t mean this simply in the sense that dramaturgical theories of action reveal to us. There is a further fact about the relation of action to virtue that is here invoked, the fact that in acting, we may merely be acting. When Hamlet counsels his mother to “assume a virtue, if you have it not,” this fact is registered (*Hamlet* 3.4.161). It is a fact about virtue and action for any moral theory which, like that of Plato and Aristotle, is founded on the *good*, that is, on the centrality of *virtue*; for such a theory, action in itself is morally thin. Recall Aristotle’s remark that although

actions [πράγματα] are said to be just or moderate when they are the sort of acts which a just or moderate person would perform [πράξειεν], a person is not just or moderate who performs these actions [ὁ ταῦτα πράττων], but who also acts as the just or moderate act. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.4, 1105b5–9)

On a moral theory of this sort, the moral status of any given action is thus by itself only contingently related to virtue. We may of course avoid this difficulty simply by abandoning a virtue ethic, and concerning ourselves only with *action*, since according to a moral theory founded on the *right*, that is, on the centrality of *action* alone, merely to act correctly in each given situation may be sufficient for moral success.

But it is a critical fact for a virtue-based theory of ethics that a virtuous person can thus be impersonated by someone who is merely, as we might say, *acting*.

Hamlet's advice to Gertrude has another more familiar Aristotelian ring to it. For the assumption of virtue, by itself a mere act, is, when repeated, the instrument by which virtue is produced; virtue "comes about from repeated just and moderate actions"—ἐκ τοῦ πολλάκις πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα περιγίνεται (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.4, 1105b4–5). Virtue, in other words, is itself shaped by the impersonation of the virtuous. We know from Plato's sensitivity to the dangers of mimesis how double-edged this fact is; for it is not only virtue but vice as well that is engendered by impersonation. These dangers were not overlooked in the Elizabethan fascination with acting; witness Ben Jonson:

*I have considered, our whole life is like a Play: wherein every man, forgetfull of himselfe, is in travaile with expression of another. Nay, wee so insist in imitating others, as wee cannot (when it is necessary) returne to our selves; like Children, that imitate the vices of Stammerers so long, till at last they become such; and make the habit to another nature, as it is never forgotten.*¹⁹

The complex modalities of acting that are revealed in these facts are mirrored in a corresponding complexity in the meaning of *mimesis*. For in the tradition to which Aristotle is heir, mimesis and its verbs can clearly bear the meaning of a nonfictional impersonation, as well as the more standard sense of artistic impersonation. So we find it, for example, in Democritus: "it is necessary either to be good or to impersonate the good"—ἀγαθὸν ἢ εἶναι χρεῶν ἢ μιμεῖσθαι,²⁰ or, "it is difficult to imitate bad people"—χαλεπὸν μιμεῖσθαι μὲν τοὺς κακοὺς—and not to wish to imitate good people.²¹

Similarly, Xenophon, discussing the charges brought against Socrates, asks

how could he, given his character, have made others either impious or lawbreaking or gluttonous or sexually intemperate or lazy? In fact, he kept them from these vices, making them desire virtue and leading them to expect that if they took care of themselves, they would become decent and respectable people. To be sure, he

never claimed to be a teacher of such excellence, but by being a model of it [φανερὸς εἶναι τοιοῦτος], he gave his followers the hope that by becoming imitators of him [μιμουμένους ἐκεῖνον], they could acquire it. (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2, 2–3)

In similar vein, the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* urges that children “imitate the actions of their fathers”—μιμεῖσθαι τὰς τῶν πατέρων πράξεις (*Rhetoric to Alexander*, 1422a30).²²

Above all, it is this power of imitation to mold character that creates the dangers to which Plato constantly alerts his readers, and which is the foundation of the Socratic critique of mimesis, the critique personified in the depiction of the sophist as a practitioner of the *doxomimetic* art (*Sophist*, 267E1).

But once again, no such discussion of this dimension of mimesis occurs in Aristotle. With few exceptions, the Aristotelian treatment of mimesis is uniquely in the context of poetry; it concerns itself almost exclusively with mimesis as a mode of fictional representation.²³ It is as though Aristotle has carefully pruned from his discussion all senses of mimesis that might involve direct preparation for or actual connection with the affective and practical aspects of an agent’s life. Mimesis with all its rich complexity has been channeled by Aristotle into the single context of artistic representation, condensed and intensified by being limited to the fictive contexts of poetry.

5

Recognizing the degree to which Aristotle’s use of the term *mimesis* is restricted to dramatic representation should remind us again of how important the notion of mimesis is to his account of tragedy. Nietzsche complained of the fact that

never since Aristotle has an explanation of the tragic effect been offered from which aesthetic states or an aesthetic activity of the listener could be inferred. Now the serious events are supposed to prompt pity and fear to discharge themselves in a way that relieves us; now we are supposed to feel elevated and inspired by the triumph of good and noble principles, at the sacrifice of the hero in the interest of a moral vision of the universe. I am sure that for countless men precisely this, and only this, is the effect

of tragedy, but it plainly follows that all these men, together with their interpreting aestheticians, have had no experience of tragedy as a supreme *art*.²⁴

Nietzsche's plea that tragedy be understood as an art accords with our recognition that Aristotle's account is elaborated in the context of his description of tragedy as mimetic poetry. This fact of course leaves open the critical and interesting question of the relationship between the peculiar pleasure appropriate to tragedy and the pleasure that, Aristotle tells us, we take in mimesis itself (*Poetics* 4, 1448b8–11). While these two pleasures may not be the same, it remains true that we can understand the tragic pleasure only if we keep in mind that tragedies are mimetic.

What is the force of the mimetic nature of drama for our understanding of tragedy? We may begin by reminding ourselves of this fact about mimetic representation: we do not experience emotions in a theatrical context in the same way that we might be expected to experience them in real life. Our emotional responses to tragic events witnessed onstage, that is, to events mimetically represented in tragic poetry, are not the same as the responses that would be appropriate if we were to encounter such events in a nonmimetic situation.

Nor for Aristotle can they be; for he holds that the effect of witnessing tragedy is at once pleasurable and associated with the experience of fear and pity. But the experiences of fear and of pity are not in themselves pleasurable; so how can the otherwise painful experience of fear and pity yield *pleasure*? It is the ability of tragic drama to cause this to happen that makes it such a miracle of rare device, its ability to raise a sunny dome of pleasure upon the icy caves of terror and commiseration.

One source of this ability lies precisely in the fact that the theater is an arena of *mimetic* representation. As such, it is a context in which emotions are *experienced*, but without their ordinary connection to the rest of our affective and practical lives. And not surprising; for the events that occasion these emotions are not happening to anyone who lives where we live. I do not mean that they are not happening to anyone in our *neighborhood*, but that they are not happening to anyone in our *world*; the deep ontological otherness of the fictional thus enables us to experience these emotions, as it were, *dispassionately*. Our aware-

ness that we are not to rush down the aisle to prevent Hamlet's stabbing of Polonius, an awareness that is an important element in our grasp of the mimetic, has its emotional counterpart in our ability to experience fear and pity in the context of the theater without the affective consequences and connections that accompany fear and pity in the contexts of, as we say, real life.

We may wish, on such a view, to think of the uses of tragic poetry, and indeed of art in general, as analogous to the uses of ritual, not simply to intensify and enforce structures of communal life, but in addition to provide contexts of sanctuary in which dangerous activities of such intensification and ordering can be carried out.²⁵ By virtue of its mimetic nature, tragedy marks off a sacred space in which we are allowed to experience emotions safely; it enables us to confront terrible possibilities and the fears they inspire, fears we cannot painlessly nor therefore easily admit in the ordinary contexts of our life. All of this is accomplished because dramatic action is *drama*, that is, because it is *mimetic* action.²⁶

6

We might think that Aristotle sees tragedy as enabling us, by providing a context of mimesis such as I have described, to experience safely and thus to allay a more general and abstract fear: the fear that we may be subject to the sorts of terrible events represented in tragic poetry.²⁷ In a sense this is true. But the more general fear that tragedy allows us to confront is not, on Aristotle's view, the fear that we may find ourselves in situations specifically identical to those of tragic protagonists; it is not, in other words, the fear that we might be led to slay our fathers or sacrifice our daughters. What we fear on Aristotle's view, I think, is far more general than the particular family troubles (if we may so under-describe them) of Agamemnon's or Oedipus's lives. It is rather the common feature of (tragically represented) action that derives from the universal possibility of *hamartia*: the general liability of action to mishap, and the consequent fragility of happiness and frailty of moral character and choice.

When we think of tragic action in this light, I shall now suggest, we may begin to have a different appreciation of the second aspect of Aristotle's theory with which we began, the centrality of praxis to his

understanding of tragedy and the force of his repeated emphasis that tragedy is a mimesis specifically of praxis. I do not mean to argue that the linked vulnerability of action and happiness is a unique focus of Aristotle's interest in the *Poetics*; that work is too ample in scope for there to be a single focus. Aristotle's interest in tragedy, like his interest in so many things, has many sources. At one level the *Poetics* is simply an expression of his seemingly indefatigable curiosity concerning whatever he finds about him, and particularly concerning the institutions of the *polis*. Perhaps at the most basic level, it is simply another theoretical treatise, this time about drama and the institutions of dramatic poetry that, Everest-like, were there to write a theoretical treatise about.

I mean to argue simply that in the *Poetics*, we may see Aristotle's fascination with how the plots of tragedy (particularly in his favorite example of *Oedipus the King*) reveal the complex problems involved in our understanding of praxis and, more importantly, the complexities in praxis itself that generate those problems. It is this fascination, I think, that is revealed in his repeated emphasis that tragedy is a mimesis, and a mimesis of praxis.

We have seen one aspect of this emphasis in remarking how the fragile relationship between action and virtue is registered in the mimetic status of tragic action; for mimesis, I have suggested, figures the unreliability of that *impersonation* by which virtue is acquired. But the more characteristic obsessions of Greek tragedy concern the nature of praxis itself rather than the relation of praxis to virtue. What is important here, I shall suggest, is the ambiguity of action.

Note first that actions are multiply individuated; a particular set of an agent's bodily motions, that is, may be thought of as any one of a number of actions. At one level, this multiplicity of action follows simply from a more general ontological multiplicity that Aristotle recognizes. In the *Metaphysics*, for example, he remarks on the unity of an individual *entity* that under different descriptions exhibits different *beings* (*Metaphysics* 7.6, 1031a10ff.). His argument there relies on a simple fact central to his ontology: the fact that any single individual entity may be introduced under a plurality of descriptions each of which determines one of a plurality of different *beings*. This inversion of the more conventional form of the one and the many, central to the thinking of both Plato and Aristotle, is equally applicable to actions. There

are, in other words, “alternative descriptions of the same action”;²⁸ witness Aristotle’s discussion concerning actions as voluntary and involuntary at the beginning of *Nicomachean Ethics* book 3.²⁹ It is this multiplicity of human action—what one scholar has called “the doubleness of the deed”—that results in the phenomenon of “tragic conflict,” a phenomenon that may be thought to characterize much of the central action of tragedy.³⁰

This view of the tragic dimensions of action, however, takes as its paradigm such tragedies as *Agamemnon* and *Antigone*, dramas in which the protagonist’s performing an action under one description entails choosing it as well under other equally applicable descriptions:

We [see] what an important part in Aeschylus’ dramas the ambiguity of human action plays. It can be the fulfillment of a duty, obedience to a divine order; and yet at the same time be a dreadful crime.³¹

But it is instructive that Aristotle takes as his paradigm *Oedipus the King*; for this fact suggests that it is a different ambiguity in actions that interests him.

This ambiguity is not lateral, between a series of coextensive and equally applicable descriptions, but categorical, between two fundamentally different modes of capturing and individuating actions. On the one hand, an action is the object of the intentional states of a deliberative and choosing agent: it is what we do in the sense that it is what we are about and what we take ourselves to be doing. On the other hand, however, an act is what we do in the sense of what emerges as the result of our activity.

What is revealed in tragedy is the ever-present possibility of a fracture between these two aspects of action. Tragic lives figure the chance of rift between actions understood as the expressions of the character and intentional choices of moral agents and actions as events in an objective world outside the control of such agents, actions with lives of their own which thus transcend the intentions and plans of their authors. But perhaps more central to Aristotle’s concern is what follows from this fact: the distinction between guilt and blameworthiness, and more critically, the power of an institution like tragic poetry to help us come to terms with the terrible weight of that distinction and of the fault line in our practical lives on which it rests.

In the background of the *Poetics*, we may thus witness Aristotle's interest in questions of moral action. But these questions concern, as it were, the pathology of such action; his attention here is on the ways in which our deliberations, choices, and moral plans may ultimately prove feckless or offer us no safe choice, and of the fear and pity that are occasioned by the recognition of this fact. At our best, acting out of good character and with good deliberation, we often will, at one crossroad or another in our life, act in ways that bring about our downfall, killing men whom we take to be brigands, but whom the gods, in their diffident cunning, know to be our fathers.

The fears occasioned by this recognition, as I have urged, are more general than the fear that we might kill our fathers; they are the fears that lie at the heart of our recognition that goodness of character and excellence of deliberation cannot guarantee our happiness, that actions good from the point of view of the agent may nonetheless, through no fault of the agent, be revealed as bad in that very world in which they are enacted.

These fears show the *Poetics* as the sequel to the *Ethics*, a sequel that reveals the terrifying frailty of virtue and the vulnerability of the happiness that we, correctly and for all the right reasons, aim at in the cultivation of such virtue. Behind these fears is thus the fact of human vulnerability, a fact that derives from the very structure and nature of human action and the tenuous relation between virtue and happiness that in turn results from that nature; tragic poetry, precisely because it is mimetic, provides a context in which these fears may be experienced in ways detached from the painful and paralyzingly frightful modes of experience in our daily life. But because they are not like the fear that I might slay my father—a fear which, however much it may reveal the deeply conflicted feelings that I harbor toward my father, is at once remote and neurotic—these fears are associated with the darker and more pervasive recognition of human limitation that is central to tragedy.

The nature of that limitation, on Aristotle's understanding of tragedy, is specific. For tragedies, on his view, mimetically represent the actions of human beings who are basically good, and who, moreover, have on the whole deliberated and chosen well, but who have ended up acting badly. The fear and pity that tragedy occasions are wed precisely to this recognition that goodness of character and goodness of deliberation can lead, not simply to disastrous *consequences*, but to di-

sastrous *actions* on the part of an agent. It is the recognition of a strain of insouciant refractoriness to human agency that is woven into the very fabric of action itself, a recognition of the inability of agents to guarantee their well-being and happiness even when they attempt, *correctly*, to found that well-being and happiness on the cultivation of moral virtue and deliberation.

7

These reflections should lead us to practice extreme care when we try to understand Aristotle's apparent and cryptic promise, at the end of the definition we cited above, that tragedy may effect a *katharsis*—κάθαρσις—from these very fears that it occasions (*Poetics* 6, 1449b27ff.). We ought not, for example, to read this promise to mean that tragedy may relieve us of these fears by revealing a deeper rationality and order of the world in which human agency operates, a perspective from which that world may be absolved and its fundamental goodness reaffirmed.³²

For such a reading, I think, would blunt Aristotle's view that tragedy reveals to us a critical fact (though perhaps not the most important fact) about human agency: the fact that happiness is subject to vicissitude in a manner that neither character nor virtue nor deliberation can ultimately guard against. Aristotle means neither to deny that fact nor to characterize tragic poetry as denying it. He rather thinks of tragedy as a human institution designed to help us accept it. We may think of such acceptance as ultimately restorative of our trust in the world, but it is not founded for Aristotle on a palliation of the tragic truth about the efficacy of human agency in that world.

Nor is it founded on a relief effected by simple emotional purgation. This fact may reveal one final respect in which it is helpful to remember that tragedy is a form of mimesis, the respect in which attention to the mimetic nature of tragic action might allow a new appreciation of *katharsis* both as lustrational rather than merely purgative and as objective rather than simply a feature of audience response.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the intense and voluminous discussion it has received, the exact sense of *katharsis* in its cameo appearance in the *Poetics* may well continue to elude us. But much of the controversy, and in particular the familiar opposition between lustrational and purgative interpretations, may be unnecessary; to stress the

lustrational sense of *katharsis* is not per se to deny its purgative sense, for lustration is a purging of the purified object from its impurities and pollutions.³³ It is certainly this lustrational sense that we find prominent in Plato³⁴ (a fact that may help to balance the anti-lustrational weight characteristically given the single discussion of *katharsis* in the *Politics*) (*Politics* 8.7, 1341b32ff.). But in any case, it seems to me that the opposition between these senses, as well as the vexed question of exactly where the *katharsis* takes place,³⁵ may seem less pressing when we attend to the mimetic character of tragic poetry.

We may see the *katharsis* that takes place in the theater as akin to those rituals of purification that effect atonement for agents who have acquired an objective guilt through no fault of their own or as the result of actions whose moral ambiguity is incommensurable with their guilt. Such purification is sometimes mimetically represented onstage. The witty abluion of Orestes and of a god that is at the heart of Iphigenia's ruse in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (1030ff.) is perhaps the most straightforward instance, although Aristotle's description of the plot of which it is a part reads uncannily like an allegory of tragedy itself, culminating in a "salvation by purification"—σωτηρία διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως (*Poetics* 17, 1455b15). But we may think of more subtle cases. Something happens in the course of Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus* that allows Oedipus to characterize himself as now being pure—καθαρός (548ff.); the *Oresteia* is in one sense a representation of the polis as the developed successor to simpler institutions of purification by which Orestes may be not only cleansed from bloodstain but also released from the wearying and repetitive violence based upon an economy of blood vengeance.

We may, however, think of the purification as taking place not in praxis, but in drama—not, that is to say, in action mimetically represented, but in the acting that mimetically represents that action.³⁶ It is here, I think, that the double emphasis of Aristotle's theory is important; tragedy is the mimesis of πρᾶξις δρώντων: action acted. It is here that we might imagine the hero of *Oedipus the King* receiving in the mimetic action of drama the forgiveness and cleansing of guilt denied him in the actions of his life, missing in his own (fictional) real-life role of *pharmakon*.

Such *katharsis* is achieved through the ἀπόδειξις in action of the events in all their complexity, and the resultant excitement in the com-

passionate audience of the fear and pity that are the occasion both of Oedipus's staged purification and of the audience's sympathetic purification. Through the ritualized and formalized action of tragic poetry, we as audience are thus enabled to participate in the restorative capacities of human society to forgive and thus to heal the guilty sufferers of tragic misaction. And insofar as we are able to identify with Oedipus, for example, and to do so by the very fear and pity that we experience at the witnessing of his fate and that is the occasion of his theatrical purification, we are at the same time relieved of the more painful (and potentially paralyzing) aspects of the general fear we feel at the possibility of that identification; we achieve, like Orestes, a salvation through purgatory, a σωτηρία διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως.

The power of mimesis to effect an almost magical salvation for those who share in and witness it is, it seems to me, part of the mysterious force of the dramatic. Its recognition is not limited to ancient theory; consider this description, by a thinker some seven hundred years later than Aristotle, of Christian mimetic rites:

O strange and wondrous thing; we did not really die, nor were we really buried, nor did we really rise again after being crucified; but although the mimesis was a representation, the salvation was a reality [ἐν εἰκόνι ἢ μίμησις, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ δὲ ἡ σωτηρία]. Christ actually was crucified and actually was buried and truly rose again, and all of this has been graciously given us in order that we might, by participating through mimesis in his sufferings, gain salvation in reality [ἵνα τῇ μιμήσει τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ κοινωνήσαντες ἀληθείᾳ τὴν σωτηρίαν κερδήσωμεν].³⁷

8

The *Poetics* may be seen as the sequel to the *Ethics* and the *Politics* in a deeper sense than that in which it continues philosophical interests central to the theory of human action in these works. For, more importantly, the *Poetics* continues the vision that is developed in these companion volumes: a vision of the polis, or more generally of organized social and communal activity, as the source of our capacity to live satisfying and fulfilling human lives.

Both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* see civic life as the matrix in which virtue may be formed and nurtured as means to the

achievement of human happiness and well-being. In tragedy our gaze is directed upon the vulnerability of that well-being, and we are invited to acknowledge the fears occasioned by that vulnerability. These are the realistic fears that politically nurtured virtue may not always be sufficient for the well-being at which it aims, and that our happiness is subject to the stern and seemingly irrational control of a destiny that may at any moment sunder the tenuous connection between virtue and well-being, a destiny that is the result neither of some inner flaw of character nor of some external δαίμων of ill-fortune, but of the very actions that we have thoughtfully and courageously chosen.³⁸

The *Poetics* offers us the hope that we may be able, by acknowledging these fears, to cleanse our affective lives of their pollution, and be restored to the fellowship of parlous human agency. And that cleansing, the *Poetics* suggests, may be accomplished through the agency of institutions that are themselves artifacts of human cultural life, institutions and artifacts rooted in the human capacity for mimesis.

What Does the Maker Mind Make?

I. The Question

The title of this essay is the first half of a question unattested in late antiquity and in the Greek commentators but easily imagined: τί ποιεῖ ὁ νοῦς ὁ ποιητικός, καὶ τί ποτ' ἐστίν?—what does the maker mind make, and what is it, anyway? The rendering of νοῦς ποιητικός as “maker mind” is meant to suggest the inadequacy of the more usual translation of this phrase as “active mind” or “active intellect.” Although it is true that νοῦς ποιητικός is active and that it is therefore proper to call it “active intellect,” it is odd to think of this as an Englishing of the Aristotelian idiom; surely we should expect Aristotle’s Greek for *active intellect* or *active mind* to use some form of his favorite word ἐνέργεια rather than of ποιέω.

Forms of ποιέω may carry a more general sense of *acting* or *doing*, almost equivalent to πράττω; a notable Aristotelian example of this use is in the categorical pair ποιέω/πάσχω, echoes of which are clearly felt in the opening discussion of νοῦς ποιητικός. But the sense that Aristotle wishes to give ποιέω in this discussion is clear when he explains that νοῦς ποιητικός is so called by virtue of making all things (τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν), “like some state [ἕξις τις] such as light; for in a sense light makes what are potentially colors actually colors” (*De Anima* 3.5, 430a15–17). The fact that the νοῦς elliptically discussed in *De Anima* 3.5, may properly be called active νοῦς since it may already have been introduced in 3.4, should therefore not make us forget that if it is also called ποιητικός, it is appropriate to ask this essay’s question: τί ποιεῖ—what does it make?¹

I will begin by sketching a series of moves leading to what I take to be a standard answer to this question; then I will raise some further questions concerning this view and finally suggest what I take to be an interesting alternative account.

2. Some Answers

So what *does* the maker mind make? Perhaps the most obvious answer is

- (1) the maker mind makes everything.

This suggestion has much to recommend it. It fits well with the description in our text, in which, as we saw, the νοῦς in question is said to be what it is τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν—by virtue of making all things (*De Anima* 3.5, 430a15). And it fits well with other views concerning νοῦς—for example, those we find in Plotinus and his followers. The notion of a mind that creates the world by thinking the ideas of all things has a rich history in Western philosophical thought, from the earliest of postclassical thinkers such as Albinus, through the Middle Ages, through Berkeley and Leibniz, and up to such modern philosophers as Fichte and Hegel.

But it does not follow that it is the notion that Aristotle has in view, nor that it is what he envisages in 3.5 specifically as the office of mind. And surely the attentive reader of Aristotle's text will balk at the generality of "everything." Of course πάντα in τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν does not mean *everything* simpliciter; the phrase is prefaced by the qualification ἐκάστῳ γένει (*De Anima* 3.5, 430a11), which makes clear that what we are talking about is what makes things be of a particular sort, and the sort is clearly specified in two respects: (i) The context of Aristotle's remarks makes clear that the discussion of νοῦς, like the discussion of ψυχή in general, is a discussion of faculties and their activities and is therefore governed by the distinction between potentiality and actuality; the νοῦς ποιητικός makes what is *potential* to be *actual*. (ii) In 3.5, Aristotle is concerned specifically with thought and what can think, or with what is thought and what is thinkable; the γένος in question is clearly that governed by the concept of νοῦς, the power and activity of *thought*. So we might say that

- (2) the maker mind makes everything that is potentially thought actually thought.

3. More Questions and Answers

This reply seems more adequate than our first attempt, but it leaves unresolved two questions, the answers to which are hidden by the am-

biguity of *actually thought* and of *potentially*. (i) The distinction Aristotle's doctrine articulates is between what is capable of becoming *thinking* and that which brings it into its being as thinking, or between what is capable of becoming *thought* and that which brings it into its being as thought. But which of these is operative in the case of the maker mind? What is it that is actualized by νοῦς ποιητικός—*thinking* or *being thought*? (ii) As Aristotle makes clear throughout *De Anima* and elsewhere, the structure of potentiality and actuality is a complex one; in his discussion of soul and its powers and activities, including mind, he thinks of potentiality and actuality specifically in terms of his well-known *Dreistufenlehre*: the distinction among (a) first potentiality, (b) second potentiality/first actuality, and (c) second actuality (*De Anima* 2.5, 417a22–417b28). We ought to expect to find, in the case of νοῦς, the features generally found in those modes of being that are characterized by Aristotle's scheme. Among these features is the fact that first actuality is actual relative to first potentiality, just as second actuality is in turn actual relative to first actuality. Something's "being made actual," therefore, may signal a development either from first potentiality to first actuality *or* from first actuality to second actuality. Which of these is referred to in (2) when we say that the maker mind makes actual what is potential?

Given these two questions, (2) is still not clear; we need to resolve the ambiguities they reveal: (i) According to (2), does the maker mind make the potential *thinkable* actual, or does it make potential *mind* actual? (ii) According to (2), does the maker mind make actual whatever it makes actual in the sense of actualization from first potentiality to first actuality, or in the sense of actualization from first actuality to second actuality? In other words, does the maker mind (a) make the potentially *thinkable actually* thinkable or does it (b) make the already actually thinkable actually *thought*? Or alternatively, depending on our answer to (i), does it (a) make our native faculty of thought, a faculty possessed by the most naïve neonate, into the developed ability to think, an ability that might characterize, for example, a sleeping scientist, or does it (b) realize that developed ability to think in actual acts of thinking?

It is easy to overlook the ambiguity revealed by question (i): Is it thinking or is it being thought that is actualized? Hicks, for example, in his extensive notes on the *De Anima*, begins his explanation of the office of νοῦς ποιητικός by remarking that

Aristotle has . . . to find an efficient cause by which the transition of νοῦς from potentiality to actuality, which is implied in the foregoing chapter, is effected.²

On the very next page, however, he tells a different story, one which suggests that νοῦς ποιητικός actualizes not mind but what mind thinks:

The word πάντα refers strictly to τὰ νοητά, as the simile from light shows. Light makes potential colors actual colors, νοῦς makes potential νοητά actual νοητά.³

There is, however, a simple explanation for what looks like interpretative fickleness on Hicks's part, an explanation that provides an interestingly simple answer to the question: Is it thinking or what is thought that is actualized? It is this: question (i) is a specious question, and results from disregarding a simple but important fact concerning Aristotle's views on thought. For Aristotle the activity of the subject of consciousness and the activity of the object of consciousness are, in the actuality of consciousness, one and the same entity. Compare the parallel case of perception. When the light shines on an object so that I see it, my seeing and the object's being seen are actualized together; indeed they are, as Aristotle says, one actuality, although their being is different (*De Anima* 3.2, 425b27–29). This is exactly what we learn in *De Anima* 3.4 about mind: in the case of actual thinking, the subject thinking and the object being thought are one and the same; the actuality of the one is the same entity as the actuality of the other, although what it is to be the one is different from what it is to be the other.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in his commentary Hicks should shift with such ease between understanding the maker mind as responsible for the actuality of thinking and understanding it as responsible for the actuality of what is thought. For there is in fact no such ambiguity as (i) invites us to think needs resolution; thinking and what is thought are one in the act of the mind's thinking what is thought.

Consider now the second question: Does the νοῦς ποιητικός actualize from first potentiality to first actuality, or from first actuality to second actuality? It is unlikely that this question will disappear in the same way, but it does seem to many commentators to have an equally clear answer. A dominant group of voices within the tradition speak for the former alternative; they hold that the office of the νοῦς

ποιητικός is the development of material νοῦς into νοῦς as ἔξις, the actualization, that is, of our native ability to think into the developed *skill* of intelligent thought. Alexander expresses this view as follows:

For as light is the cause of colors that are potentially visible becoming actually visible, so this third νοῦς makes potential, that is, material νοῦς, into actual νοῦς by producing within it the power to think [ἔξις νοητική].⁴

To see whether Alexander is correct, it may be useful to consider the analogy in terms of which Aristotle introduces νοῦς ποιητικός and which Alexander here invokes, the analogy with light. νοῦς ποιητικός, we remember, is said to be

a kind of ἔξις, like light; for in a sense light also makes what are potentially colors actually colors. (*De Anima* 3.5, 430a15f.)

It will help, therefore, to ask: In what sense may light be said to make potential color into actual color, and what sort of a transformation is this?

We might reason like this: since, as we read earlier in the *De Anima*, color is the visible, it follows that in making what is potentially a color actually a color, light is making what is potentially visible actually visible (*De Anima* 2.7, 418a26–28. Cf. *Physics* 201b4). And since visibility is itself a first actuality, that is, a realized structure of potentiality relative to the further actuality of being seen, light brings into being a first actuality: it makes things visible.

It is easy to see why Aristotle understands light as effecting a transition from first potentiality to first actuality. We distinguish entities such as the surface of a table or the hand of a judge, part of whose nature is to be able to be seen, from entities such as the square root of seven, or the hand of justice, which are invisible, and this distinction remains a real distinction even when there is no light present. They are not all alike in the dark, even though none of them can be seen. This is due to the fact that visibility, like so many of the structures of potentiality that Aristotle finds interesting, is subject to an iteration of the potentiality-actuality distinction: in the dark, the visible is only, as we might say, potentially visible. Light effects the actualization of *that* potentiality; it makes what it shines upon actually visible, and thus potentially seen.

Since, therefore, the νοῦς ποιητικός is said to be like light, it is inviting to suppose that Alexander is correct. Aristotle means that it makes actual in the same sense in which light makes actual and that it therefore brings into being a state of first actuality; it makes things thinkable, not actually thought, or it brings into being the (as yet still potential) acquired intellect, the *ability* to think.

Here's a bonus: this view might explain the sense in which νοῦς is said by Aristotle, in the *Posterior Analytics* as well as in his discussion of the intellectual powers in the *Ethics*, to be the ἀρχή of ἐπιστήμη (for example, *Posterior Analytics* 2.19, 100b16). For here νοῦς is being described as the active agency by which a person with the potentiality *for* understanding comes actually to have the power *of* understanding. The actualization achieved is that by which someone who has understanding only in the sense in which a human being is the sort of animal capable of understanding comes to have the actual ability to understand and to explain: comes, in other words, to have the ἔξις that is ἐπιστήμη.

Equipped then with these two responses, we may offer the following as an appropriate answer to our initial question:

- (3) The maker mind makes both potential intellect and what is potentially thinkable in the sense of first potentiality into actual intellect and what is actually thinkable in the sense of first actuality: that is, into what is actually *able* to think and what is actually *thinkable*.

I will call (3) the Standard View. I use capital letters in order to redirect the semantic force of the phrase and thus (cravenly) to evade the issue of whether it in fact is *the* standard view. It is, in any case, a commonly held understanding of the productive activity of νοῦς ποιητικός, although it is clear that not all who hold it have chosen it from the Talmudic matrix of possibilities I have offered. It is, furthermore, a limited view about νοῦς ποιητικός, which leaves unresolved the wide variety of important and ramified differences concerning the *nature* of νοῦς ποιητικός that has characterized the hermeneutical tradition.

4. Still More Questions

It is this view about which I will now raise more questions, and which I hope thereby to call back into question. I will not mean finally to

deny that νοῦς is the source and principle of concept formation, or to put it more traditionally, that the activity of νοῦς is instrumental in the formation and development of that faculty. My suggestion will be, however, that that is not what is being argued in our text, and that the office of νοῦς ποιητικός described in *De Anima* 3.5 is a different though importantly related one. Here then are some questions that I think should cause us uncertainty about the Standard View as expressed in (3).

(a) Consider first a problem about the consistency of the two answers that have led to the Standard View. If we say in reply to question (ii) that the actualization effected by the maker mind is from first potentiality to first actuality, then our answer to question (i), according to which the choice between νοῦς and νοητόν was seen to be an unnecessary choice, becomes problematic. That reply depends on the claim that the actualities of νοῦς and νοητόν are materially, although not formally, equivalent to one another. But such a claim requires that the actualizing at issue be not, as our answer to (ii) suggests, from first potentiality to first actuality, but from first actuality to second actuality; for it is only in complete second actuality that subject and object are identical. Consider again perception; it is not the two related powers of αἰσθητικόν and αἰσθητόν, the perceptual and the perceptible, that are identical, any more than are the sense organ and the sensible entity. It is only the full actuality of αἴσθησις, the perceiving-and-being-perceived, which, although distinguishable as two beings, is one identical actuality. Isn't the same true in the case of thinking with respect to νοητικόν and νοητόν? My mind is not identical to the world's intelligibility—until, that is, it thinks it.

This concern may make us wish to deny that the actual identity of the respective first actualities is required for their actualization to be linked in the way the view we have been looking at demands. We may want to argue that since those actualities are essentially potentialities toward one and the same second actuality, that fact alone may be sufficient to guarantee the desired parallel.

In order to see this, we will need to reconsider Aristotle's characterization of light. The description of light in a number of passages we looked at suggests, I proposed, that Aristotle thinks of light as creating the first actuality of visibility. But Aristotle does not always speak this way; sometimes he appears to claim not that light creates *visibility*, but

that it creates *vision*. In the short treatise *On Perception and the Perceived*, for example, he links a special feature of light to an analogous special feature of seeing with the explanation that “light makes vision”—τὸ γὰρ φῶς ποιεῖ τὸ ὁρᾶν (*De Sensu* 6, 447a11). He does *not* say, we may note, that light makes the *visible*—τὸ γὰρ φῶς ποιεῖ τὸ ὁρατόν. Light here seems to be thought of as bringing into existence the full actuality of being seen, and not merely the first actuality of visibility.

In *De Anima* 2.7, we find Aristotle speaking the same way in the course of explaining phosphorescent objects:

The reason why these things are seen [ὁρᾶται] is another story. This much at least is clear: that in the light we see color; that’s why it is not seen without light [οὐχ ὁρᾶται ἄνευ φωτός]. (*De Anima* 2.7, 419a7)

Again where Aristotle might have said that something is not *visible* without light—οὐχ ὁρατόν ἄνευ φωτός—we find him instead saying that it is not *seen*—οὐχ ὁρᾶται.⁵

In these passages, Aristotle’s view seems to conflict with the view we saw earlier. This conflict emerges, however, only if we assume that light cannot serve to effect *both* actualizations; we might be led to this assumption by presupposing that light is uniquely positioned within a linear and one-dimensional model of Aristotle’s doctrine. But suppose we relinquish that presupposition; suppose we say that there are three and not merely two necessary conditions for the joint activity of seeing and being seen to take place. What is needed is not simply the visibility of the object and the visual capacity of the eye, ὁρατόν and ὁρατικός, but light as well. On this view, light is a third ἕξις necessary to the activity of vision and on a par with the other two. No decision of the sort about which I have asked us to worry will then be required; for while light could be said to make the object of sight visible if the seeing eye is not yet at hand, it could be said *either* to make it visible *or* actually envisioned if it is.

But it is because light, when other conditions are fulfilled, causes things to be seen that we are also willing to say that it causes visibility. If I am looking at a judge in the dark, turning on the lights will make her seen and therefore visible; if I am in the next room, it will make her visible because only my looking at her will be required for her to be seen. (No amount of *light*, on the other hand, will succeed in making

visible the square root of seven or the hand of justice or, needless to say, justice itself.)

We may be able better to appreciate this model if we invite into our considerations a text whose absence should have been from the first noticeable: the discussion of light and the visible in the sixth book of the *Republic* (6, 507ff.). This discussion is interesting in a number of respects. In the first place, we may wish simply to note how like Aristotle's discussion it is; here (as in the *Theaetetus*) one can see how deeply Aristotle's theory of perception and cognition is grounded in Platonic discussions. Note in particular (as again in the *Theaetetus*) the symmetrical model of perception that attributes potentiality and actuality to both subject and object; in a critical exchange between Socrates and Glaucon, Plato has Socrates explain:

When sight is in the eye, and the person who has it tries to use it, and color is in the things he is trying to see, then if there is not present a third sort of thing which is specifically and naturally directed to just this purpose, you know that the sight will see nothing, and that the colors will be unseen.

What is this thing of which you speak? he said.

It is, I replied, that which you call light.

What you say is true, he said.

It is, therefore, in no small way true that the perceptual faculty of seeing and the power of being seen [ἡ τοῦ ὁρᾶν αἴσθησις καὶ ἡ τοῦ ὁρᾶσθαι δύναμις] are linked together by a link more honorable than that linking other pairs, if indeed light is not without honor. (*Republic* 6, 507D–508E)

At the end of this exchange, light is pictured as linking together entities that are Aristotelian first actualities. And so in the conceit that follows; there the fact that without the idea of the good we are unable to understand and the world is unintelligible is figured by the fact that without light we are blind and the world cannot be seen. Light thus creates *powers* of vision.

You know that eyes, . . . when one no longer turns them toward those things on whose colors is directed the light of day, but rather the gleams of night, are dimmed and seem almost blind, as if there were in them no clear sight. (*Republic* 6, 508C4ff.)

But we are able to talk that way about light only because the *primary* actualization it effects is from first to second actuality; it is by virtue of *that* actualization that the eye is then said to have sight, and things said to be visible. Since light is what makes possible *seeing*, and since *being able* to see is defined by reference to seeing, light is said to make visibility actual as well. We might thus save, with these hints from Plato, the consistency of what initially seemed two conflicting Aristotelian views of light by stressing the primacy of second actuality to first actuality, the consequent primacy of the actualization from first actuality to second actuality, and the logical dependency on that actualization of the secondary actualization from first potentiality to first actuality.

This fact should suggest to us, as we read out the light analogy, that the same analysis may be appropriate for νοῦς. And indeed, exactly the same structure is found in the ensuing discussion in the *Republic* as Socrates reads out the analogy of vision to mind.

The same is true of the eye by which the soul thinks. When it fixes upon that on which shines truth and being, it thinks and knows and seems to possess νοῦς. But when it is fixed on what is diluted with darkness, on coming to be and passing away, it opines and is dimmed, changing its opinions back and forth, and then seems not to possess νοῦς. (*Republic* 6, 508D4ff.)⁶

And so with Aristotle's mind. It is because νοῦς ποιητικός effects the actualization of νοῦς in the actual activity of thinking—that is, because it brings about the realization of second-actuality thought—that we are able to describe it with equal facility as actualizing νοῦς and νοητόν. Thus we can save the consistency of our two earlier answers by stressing the primacy of second actuality to first actuality, and the consequent primacy of the actualization from first actuality to second actuality. So perhaps Alexander's emphasis is mistaken; it is actual *thinking*, that is, second-actuality thinking, that the maker mind brings into being.

(ii) The second issue I want to raise concerns the characterization earlier alluded to of νοῦς as the ἀρχή of that important human faculty Aristotle calls ἐπιστήμη or understanding, the reasoned ability to explain phenomena and make actual their intelligibility by revealing them for what they are. Such ἐπιστήμη is, as Aristotle puts it, the ἕξις, or established capacity, for ἀπόδειξις, which is in turn described as “a

piece of reasoning that brings to light the causes and reasons for something being the case” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.3, 1139b31; *Posterior Analytics* 1.24, 85b23). It is well known that for a piece of reasoning to qualify as ἀπόδειξις, there must be understanding in turn of these causes and reasons, and thus eventually of first principles. It is equally well known that Aristotle assigns an important role to νοῦς in this understanding; but it is clear, as much recent scholarship has argued, that νοῦς is not a faculty for the *discovery* of the principles of scientific understanding, nor a method for the acquisition of scientific understanding.

It will therefore be misleading to claim that νοῦς ποιητικός effects the transition to the first stage of concept mastery. To do so will encourage us to continue to think of νοῦς as a virtually miraculous power that provides us with a magical intuitive grasp of scientific principles.⁷ Far the better teaching is that the first actuality of νοῦς is acquired by *learning*, by the various forms of ἐπαγωγή, which include above all the activities of science themselves. So it will be inaccurate to say in any *simple* sense that νοῦς ποιητικός is responsible for bringing about the first actuality of our ability to think and understand. I stress “simple” in part because those who have held this doctrine have never claimed that it was simple, but more because on the developing view according to which νοῦς ποιητικός effects the transition to *second* actuality, there will remain a sense in which it is as well responsible, though only mediately responsible, for the bringing into being of first actuality.

(iii) Finally, the Standard View should occasion in us a question about the rhetorical structure of the chapters of *De Anima* that Aristotle devotes to a discussion of νοῦς. For the Standard View suggests not only that Aristotle views the maker mind as the cause of the development of νοῦς as ἔξις, but also that he devotes to setting forth and explaining that fact a central chapter of his discussion. That fact follows, however, fairly straightforwardly from features quite general to Aristotle’s theory of faculties and their activity. Of course the perfected habitus of νοῦς is developed by the active agency of νοῦς. For in general a ἔξις is established by those very activities for which it is a dispositional capacity.⁸ We might, therefore, find it odd that Aristotle should have devoted a chapter at the heart of his discussion of νοῦς to spelling out a specific application of this general feature of acquired habits. If he had felt it necessary to give a specific account of the development of νοῦς as first actuality, wouldn’t the obvious point for him to do so have been in the

heart of *De Anima* 3.4 (429b5 and following), when first-actuality νοῦς is initially introduced?

5. Different Answers to Our Initial Question

Let us make, as Aristotle would say, a fresh start, and consider more generally where the discussion of mind stands at the beginning of *De Anima* 3.5. To do this, we need to be aware of another important earlier text, besides the *Republic*, that Aristotle has before him: the apparently short but influential book of Anaxagoras—or as he was affectionately called in antiquity, Mr. Mind (Diogenes Laertes, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.6). Aristotle, as we know, in spite of his unhappiness with Anaxagoras's occasional introduction of νοῦς as *intellectus ex machina* (*Metaphysics* 1.4, 985a18ff.), had great respect for his use of mind in cosmic explanation. A man who says that the presence of νοῦς in the cosmos as a whole as well as in living things is the cause of all order and arrangement, Aristotle tells us only a few pages before his criticism of Anaxagoras, must have appeared sober as a judge in relation to those wild talkers who went before him (*Metaphysics* 1.3, 985a18ff.). And it is clear that from the beginning of Aristotle's discussion of νοῦς, Anaxagoras is very much on his mind.

Chapter 4 begins with an account of mind explicitly patterned on that of Anaxagoras, and filled with quotations from and paraphrases of Anaxagoras's discussion. But Aristotle's purpose, as it generally is in his discussion of his philosophical precursors, is not a simple appropriation, but a hermeneutical restructuring and critique of Anaxagoras's position. Thus he quotes Anaxagoras, only to immediately give a gloss on how we are to understand his predecessor's view in the context of the present discussion:

Mind, since it thinks all things, must be unmixed, as Anaxagoras says “in order that it may rule,” that is, in order that it may know [ἵνα κρατῆ, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν ἵνα γνωρίζῃ]. (*De Anima* 3.4, 429a18–20)⁹

More importantly, Aristotle makes clear that however correct Anaxagoras was in thinking of mind as a cosmic principle, the present discussion must first come to terms with the nature of mind as determined by the functional psychic definition of Aristotle's treatise. So he continues:

That part of the soul that is called νοῦς—and by νοῦς I here mean that by which the soul reasons and conceives—is nothing at all in actuality before it thinks. (*De Anima* 3.4, 429a22ff.)

This is not simply a repetition of the functional definition of mind with which the chapter begins, but a strong statement of the fact that although Aristotle's discussion of mind means to take account of those features that were important to Anaxagoras, what he is talking about is mind as a particular faculty of the human soul—of our ψυχή.

Chapter 4 then gives an account of this faculty on the basis of those features that Aristotle agrees with Anaxagoras are important, but restricted to mind as a feature of the human soul. At the end of this chapter, it looks as though a number of problems in Anaxagoras's theory have been dealt with, but without any account of that aspect of mind central in Anaxagoras, its function as that by virtue of which the intelligible structure of the cosmos is both ordered and apprehended.

In a sense, chapter 5 may be thought of as turning to that function of mind, mind as the principle of cosmic ordering and apprehending, that is, of intelligibility and intelligizing ἐν ἀπάσῃ τῇ φύσει, to redirect the words Aristotle uses at the beginning of the chapter (*De Anima* 3.5, 430a10). In this sense, νοῦς ποιητικός is, as the intrepid half of the tradition has always understood, divine, a fact to which we should be alerted by its description, with clear echoes of *Metaphysics*, as a being whose “οὐσία is ἐνέργεια” (*De Anima* 3.5, 430a18; *Metaphysics* 12.6, 1071b20). For just as light is (though in a special sense) most visible, and thus the source of seeing and therefore of visibility, so is the divine most thinkable and thus the source of thinking and therefore of thinkability; light is never in the dark, and God is always, as we know, busy thinking.

6. Back to Chapter 4

This is not, however, the entire story; to see this, let us return to chapter 4. At the end of that chapter, Aristotle raises several *aporiai*:

If νοῦς is something simple and unaffected and has nothing in common with anything, as Anaxagoras says, how will it think, if thinking is πάσχειν τι—being affected in some way? (*De Anima* 3.4, 429b23)

A second question is whether νοῦς

can itself be thought? For then either νοῦς will belong to all other things, if it is not thought because of something else, and that which is thought is one in form, or it will have something mixed in it which makes it itself be thought as other things are. (*De Anima* 3.4, 429b27–30)

Two responses are then offered to these two problems:

- (1) Mind is in a sense potentially what is thought, although it is actually nothing until it thinks. (*De Anima* 3.4, 429b30–31)
- (2) Mind is itself thought exactly as what is thought is. For in the case of things which are without matter, the thinker and the thought are the same; for actual understanding [ἐπιστήμη θεωρητική] and the object of that understanding are the same. (*De Anima* 3.4, 430a2–8)¹⁰

This solution itself, however, poses another *aporia* in the form of a question that is raised but not resolved in chapter 4, and which therefore remains unanswered at the beginning of chapter 5. Given that mind thus knows itself, and therefore does not, as the perceptual faculty does, depend on the existence of an external object, why is it that thinking is not always actively taking place?

This question is raised by Aristotle in the next sentence: “The reason why [mind] does not always think needs to be considered” (*De Anima* 3.4, 430a7). Once we have acquired the ἔξις of νοῦς, in other words, how is it—given that mind is, as Philoponus points out, always present to itself¹¹—that sometimes we are actualizing that ἔξις in θεωρία and sometimes not? Hicks describes this remark as parenthetical, and Ross is of the opinion, shared by other commentators, that “Aristotle does not appear to discuss this question anywhere.”¹² Let me suggest rather that it is this question to which Aristotle turns in the opening lines of chapter 5, and which he elucidates by reference to the analogy of light.

For we have, in light and vision, an appropriate model in terms of which to elucidate it. The situation is like that of seeing, where, as we saw, the main characters in the drama can be in place—the power of vision and the power of visibility—but without light, there will be no appropriate second actuality; nothing will get visualized. So with the

maker mind; here is a principle like light that explains noetic *second* actuality—the intellect actually *intelligizing* and the intelligible actually *being intelligized*. And as we saw with light, we will also be able to describe this principle as the principle of the intelligible being *intelligible*.

On this account, our earlier suspicions will turn out to have been correct. It is not wrong to say that νοῦς ποιητικός brings into being first-actuality mind and the first-actuality thinkable, and is therefore the source of ἐπιστήμη, but it is misleading; for it masks the fact that this happens by virtue of νοῦς ποιητικός being the source of those acts of thinking by which νοῦς and νοητόν alike are brought to second actuality.

But our account is still not complete, as can be seen in the remarks with which Aristotle concludes this discussion at the end of chapter 4:

But in the case of those things that have matter, each of them is potentially thought. Therefore νοῦς will not belong to those things; for mind is a potentiality of such things only without matter. But being thought will belong to it. (*De Anima* 3.5, 430a7–9)¹³

What these remarks suggest, I think, is that there is a further *aporia* in this concluding discussion, first raised at 429b37, which concerns the question of the universal presence of νοῦς. This question should remind us of the similar *aporia* with respect to perception at the conclusion of book 2 of the *De Anima* (2.12, 424b3–18). There Aristotle asks this question: If to perceive is to be affected by a sensible form, why not say that the air, which is affected, for example, by the sensible form of the odorous, smells it? And what would then prevent us from saying (as some earlier thinker might) that air and many other such things are sensitive and therefore alive—ἔμψυχον? Aristotle's answer to this question, introduced at the end of book 2 and developed in a complex argument in the beginning of book 3, is that in being affected by the sensible form of the odorous, air becomes *sensible* but does not thereby become *sensitive*; what distinguishes smelling from merely being affected by odor as air is, and thus what in general distinguishes perception from the mere fact of being so affected as to become perceptible, is that the latter is, but the former is not, a mode of *consciousness*. Aristotle offers his readers little by way of further explanation of this fact; the beginning of book 3 argues only *against* a certain mode of

explanation, one that would locate the seat of awareness in some unique meta-sense whose operation upon the senses generates conscious perception.¹⁴

A similar problem here presents itself with respect to mind. If the activity of thought is affection by the intelligible, why should we not say that air thinks, given that its intelligible form is present to itself. And why should we not then say, as someone might think Anaxagoras said, that all that is intelligible is mind?

The question that is left unanswered at the end of chapter 4 and to which I earlier suggested that the introduction of νοῦς ποιητικός is in part an answer, is thus not simply the question, why are we not always thinking? but the more radical question, why is thinking not always taking place? Aristotle's move at the beginning of chapter 5 is then to offer an indication of the distinction between the merely intelligible and νοῦς, which we now understand to be at once intelligible and, more significantly, capable of *actual thinking*, that is, capable of θεωρία, the fully realized second actuality of νοῦς.¹⁵

I say *indication*, since Aristotle does not here offer, any more than he does in the case of perception in the early chapters of book 3, an elaborated explanation of the phenomenon of consciousness that distinguishes the merely intelligible from the intelligent. In particular, it is not his claim that νοῦς ποιητικός is a separate faculty that explains our capacity for active νοῦς; θεωρία indeed is not located in a separate faculty, any more than perceptual consciousness, as *De Anima* 3.2 argues, is located in a separate faculty. And νοῦς ποιητικός, therefore, does not, strictly speaking, make consciousness, by action for example upon a pathetic mind incapable of thinking by itself. It is simply νοῦς understood in its role of self-actualization in θεωρία; in this sense, it is correct, despite my earlier remarks, to call νοῦς ποιητικός active mind.

What emerges from these indications, however, is at least the following: (1) It is important to remember that νοῦς is not simply a principle of intelligibility, but a principle of active consciousness. (2) This active consciousness is (an admittedly intermittent) capacity of human ψυχή. (3) The paradigm of this *activity* of mind is that divine mind whose substance is ἐνέργεια, and specifically the ἐνέργεια of θεωρία: νόησις νοήσεως νόησις as it is called in the *Metaphysics*: thinking thinking thinking (*Metaphysics* 12.9, 1074b34). It is finally, I suggest, that active thinking, thinking as θεωρία, that the maker mind makes, a

thinking most fully exemplified in the unremittingly active thinking of the divine mind.

The maker mind is therefore not simply an element in Aristotle's psychological theory, but an element in his theology as well, and the question we might ask is not simply what does it mean that Aristotle describes mind in this perplexing and cryptic way, but what does it mean that Aristotle thinks that the divine source of the world's order is *mind*, and why does he here, as in the *Metaphysics*, link the divine to that capacity that human beings have to think and to understand?

I will not attempt to answer that question in this essay; I have made moves in that direction elsewhere.¹⁶ But let me say this much. Aristotle's god is not a scientist, nor a philosopher, and divine thought is not a form of cosmic ratiocination or brilliantly articulated scientific theory. For θεωρία is not theory; it is simply the principle of *awareness* (prior to its later thematization as interiority), the (divine) full self-manifesting and self-capturing activity of *consciousness*, of which scientific activity and philosophical speculation are to be sure particularly subtle forms, but of which the ruder and more incorporate activities of perception and nutrition are equally images, if meaner and less noble, and of which indeed—and this is after all simply the doctrine of *Metaphysics*, culminating in book 12—the essential being of all things, the formal principle of their being what they are, which constitutes their intelligible essence, is also a mode.

7. More on νοῦς

I will take this recognition of the fact that divine νοῦς in *Metaphysics* 12 is the principle of all being as license to end with some more general remarks on νοῦς. There is not, as should be clear, a single story to be told about νοῦς, or at least not a single story that will make sense of νοῦς apart from its deep connections to the entire philosophical-scientific picture Aristotle wants to draw. In one sense, νοῦς is the human capacity to think; in another it is the ἀρχή of that developed cognitive perceptual capacity we have to recognize things for what they are and to construct logically connected bodies of rational discourse that explain and make intelligible the world about us, the ἀρχή, in other words, of ἐπιστήμη. In yet another sense it is, as I have argued, the ἀρχή of consciousness in general; thus Aristotle's hint at the end of

the *Posterior Analytics* that animals have a rudimentary form of νοῦς in the general capacity of discrimination that is αἴσθησις (*Posterior Analytics* 2.19, 99b34–100a1). I think this must mean that νοῦς is only the purest form of that general power of cognitive awareness and discrimination that is increasingly revealed in *scala naturae*.

But in yet another and broader sense νοῦς is the ἀρχή of substance, and therefore of ψυχή, the form and principle of those living beings that are above all substances. For thinking, and consciousness in general, is the ideal mode of a defining feature of living substances, their capacity to be open to further determination by virtue of that determinacy of essential being that characterizes them in the first instance as substances. A basic ingredient of Aristotle's ontology is the relation between determinacy and openness to determination. It is because and only because substances are the determinate beings they are that they are capable of exhibiting that most characteristic feature of substance identified early in the *Categories* as the ability to take on further determination without being overwhelmed by it, the ability to remain one and the same individual while undergoing accidental affection (*Categories* 4, 4a10ff.). For human beings, this openness to further determination is centered in perception and thought, but it is a general feature of human psychic powers as set forth in *De Anima*. The nutritive capacity—the capacity to eat—is a capacity to take in other matter (the power of ingestion) and to transform it into oneself (the power of digestion); thus *De Anima* begins its discussion of psychic powers with an account of nutrition, and specifically of nutriment, that is, of food. In the same way, the capacity to perceive is a power to take in the sensible forms of the world and transform them into consciousness.

Such transformations are grounded in the bodily nature of the nutritive and perceptive powers. A significantly different story will therefore have to be told about knowing, and particularly about νοῦς, which is the ἀρχή of the perceptive and knowing powers in general, the highest form of consciousness. But the story will be similar in that the knower will become the object known without relinquishing its own determinate identity. The activity of knowing is precisely this act of becoming determined by the object of knowledge while remaining oneself, and νοῦς is the psychic power so to be determined without relinquishing determinate identity. This is what it means that for Aristotle, as for Anaxagoras, νοῦς is ἀπαθής—unaffected, we might say—

and why it is that God is the principle of both οὐσία and νοῦς, substance and mind, and finally of all the cognitive powers including the perceptive.

The activities of life are activities that depend upon the separability of form from matter. Thus the reproductive faculty is the ability to re-create the form of the animal in another individual, that is, in different matter, and the threptic the ability to take the nutritive power of food and make it one's own. Similarly, the activities of consciousness are activities of taking on form; thus the aesthetic faculty is said to be the power of receiving selectively form without substratum (*De Anima* 2.12, 424a17–19). Behind this general power of ψυχή to grasp, as it were, the *qua* of being, to separate, distinguish, and discriminate, is the power of νοῦς, the capacity to separate out being and, as it were, to dematerialize it; so it is that “ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή”—life is the activity of mind (*Metaphysics* 12.7, 1072b7). So νοῦς is therefore also divine being and therefore the ἀρχή of the principle that orders the world in its fundamental order, that of intelligibility. In this sense Anaxagoras was not so wrong, nor indeed was Plotinus.

Last but not least, νοῦς is the ἀρχή of our capacity to do that very act of reading we have here been doing. For reading the ἔνδοξα is merely a special instance of reading the φαινόμενα, and therefore takes place insofar as we are activated by νοῦς ποιητικός. This fact should remind us that the *unio mystica* of θεωρία, so important as a theme in earlier discussions of νοῦς ποιητικός, can take place in the most quotidian of our enterprises, whenever we are engaged in the activity of seeing how things are, as I hope has happened in this essay on νοῦς ποιητικός.

Saving the Phenomena

REALISM AND INSTRUMENTALISM IN ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF SCIENCE

I

According to Simplicius, Plato thought that a central question of astronomical science was this: "What hypotheses using uniform circular and regular motions can save the planetary phenomena?"¹ Could this be a description of Aristotle's view of the task of the astronomical scientist, or of the scientist in general? Some accounts of Aristotle might lead us to think so: G. E. L. Owen, for example, writes that

conventionally Aristotle has been [thought] the committed empiricist, anxious to "save the phenomena" by basing his theories on observation of the physical world.²

Owen offers this as an account of what he styles Aristotle's "Baconian Formula: first the phenomena, then the theory to explain them." He qualifies this account by exploring the complexity of the notion of phenomena; but it might surprise us to find attributed to Aristotle the aim of saving the phenomena. For the phrase *saving the phenomena* has long been emblematic of an understanding of astronomical theories as designed merely to reproduce mathematically the appearances observed, and this understanding has in turn been linked with the development in the West of an instrumentalist view of scientific theory in general. But we're accustomed to thinking of Aristotle as a scientific realist.

In fact, Aristotle never uses the phrase *saving the phenomena*, and the respects in which he might be thought to be a realist or instrumentalist

are subtler than attention to this phrase alone can reveal. In this essay, I want to think about these issues by considering some related questions about Aristotle's views on what it is to understand and to explain phenomena scientifically.

2

We think we understand a phenomenon, Aristotle tells us near the beginning of the *Posterior Analytics* (1.2, 71b9–24), when we know its αἰτία—that is, when we know the cause responsible for its being the case—knowing that that is what is responsible, such that given that cause, in other words, the phenomenon in question couldn't help but come about. This kind of understanding, he says, is made possible by explanatory demonstration—ἀπόδειξις—by which he tells us he means a piece of discursive reasoning—συλλογισμός—which is ἐπιστημονικός, that is, such that having it brings about understanding.³

A demonstration—ἀπόδειξις—is thus essentially an instrument of explanation; it reveals why an entity is what it is and thus explains it. It is the demonstration, that is, the showing forth—hence ἀπόδειξις—of the true causal nature of the phenomenon. Aristotle puts it clearly: “Explanatory demonstration [ἀπόδειξις] is a piece of reasoning that brings to light the causes and reasons for something's being the case [συλλογισμὸς δεικτικὸς αἰτίας καὶ τοῦ διὰ τί]” (*Posterior Analytics* 1.24, 85b23–24).

A demonstration as an explanation is productive of understanding; successfully to explain something is to bring about an understanding of why it is the case. But the relation goes in the other direction as well; understanding is productive of demonstration. For *understanding* in Aristotle's lexicon—ἐπιστήμη—has a clear dispositional sense. The core of its meaning is a knowing how to, a rational capacity to. Productive understanding—ἐπιστήμη ποιητική—is knowing how to make something, practical understanding—ἐπιστήμη πρακτική—knowing how to act (e.g., *Metaphysics* 6.1, 1025b21–24; 11.7, 1064a10–15). Demonstrative understanding—ἐπιστήμη ἀποδεικτική—exhibits the same characteristic; it is similarly a dispositional capacity for activity, and the specific activity is that of explanatory demonstration—ἀπόδειξις. The definition of understanding in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (6.3, 1139b31) makes this clear: ἐπιστήμη is defined as a ἔχως ἀποδεικτική—a

dispositional capacity for explanatory demonstration. Science, we might say, is explanatory know-how.

So a person who has understanding—a scientist—is a person who knows how to explain something correctly, just as a person who has practical wisdom is a person who knows how to act properly. Science is the art of discursive explanatory disclosure; it is at once brought about by and is the capacity to engage in reasoned explanation. We come to understand something by having it explained to us, and to understand is in turn to be able to explain.

Not every piece of discursive reasoning qualifies as an instance of explanatory demonstration; to be termed an ἀπόδειξις, Aristotle continues, the reasoning must proceed from what is, among other things, “true . . . and better known than and prior to and the cause of the conclusion” (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b21–23). It must proceed from what is true, Aristotle goes on to explain, because one can’t be said to understand what is not true. The premises must be the conclusion’s causes, he continues, “since we understand something only when we know its cause, prior, insofar as they are causes, and known before it, not only in the other sense of being aware [of what they are] but knowing as well that they are the case” (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b31–34).

So explanatory understanding occurs when we are able to show by a piece of reasoning that a fact is the effect of some *true and prior and better-known* fact that is its cause.

3

This is an inviting story about science as a source of understanding effected by and productive of explanation, and of the role that the notion of cause plays in that story. We understand something only if we are able to explain it, and one thing may be thought to explain a second only if in some sense it is actually responsible for that second—is, in other words, the cause of its being and of its being as it is.

Now two reflections upon Aristotle’s account of explanatory understanding, and then a question. Note first what is implicit in Aristotle’s explanation of why the premises of a conclusion that is to be understood must be true; they must be true, he asserts, because one couldn’t be said to understand what’s not true. We might take this requirement

to be obvious. It could hardly be thought to be a successful explanation of something that explains it in terms of what is not the case. But from Aristotle's account it follows that here as later (*Posterior Analytics* 1.3, 72b14–16) Aristotle takes it to be a further condition of our coming to understand something by means of an explanatory demonstration that we understand the cause by means of which it is demonstrated. You haven't successfully explained to me why something is so if I don't understand the reason you give for its being so.

Note secondly that Aristotle speaks of a premise as the cause of its conclusion, and links the causal relation between premise and conclusion with that between the facts that these propositions express; indeed, the one relation is explained in terms of the other. But *cause* appears to be used equivocally in the two cases, and the two relations differ from one another significantly. For the first is a relation between two facts, one of which is explained in terms of the other, while the second is a relation between two statements that are the premise and conclusion of a piece of reasoning that constitutes such an explanation.

The planets are near may be said to be the cause, given a proper major premise, of *the planets do not twinkle*, but in a different sense from that in which the nearness of the planets may be said to be the cause of their not twinkling. The *truth* of the one premise might be said to be the cause of the *truth* of the other in the same sense that the one fact is the cause of the other (*Categories* 12, 14b13ff.); but this seems different from whatever causal relation may be thought to hold between the propositions themselves. If we are to give any sense to that relation, it must be in terms of some form of *logical* causation; we might say that the one is the logical cause of the other, meaning that given the obvious major, the second follows logically from the first. And this seems different from the sense in which one fact is the cause of another, or one entity the cause of another. But Aristotle moves comfortably from the one sense to the other, as though here logic and ontology were easy bedfellows.

And now a question: What does Aristotle mean when he says of premises that they must be “prior and better known”? We are told that

prior and *better known* may be understood in two senses, for what is prior by nature [πρότερον τῆ φύσει] is not the same as what is prior to us [πρότερον πρὸς ἡμᾶς], nor what is better known without

qualification [ἀπλῶς] the same as what is better known to us [ἤμῖν γνωριμώτερον]. (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b33–72a1)

But what is it to be prior and better known by nature or in nature—τῆ φύσει? In this context we are told only that

things prior and better known without qualification are furthest from sense. Now things most universal are furthest from sense, and particulars nearest to sense, and they are thus exactly opposed to one another. (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 72a1–6)

How should we understand what Aristotle means by prior and better-known τῆ φύσει? Someone might say: the sense in which the universal is prior is epistemological or logical. Understanding the universal and knowing the individual to be an instance of that universal, one can understand what is true of the individual insofar as it's an instance of that universal. Another way of saying this is that one can proceed syllogistically, that is, by way of reasoned explanation, from the universal to the individual, from *human beings are mortal* to *this human being, Abromowitz, is mortal*.

Looked at this way, the priority is like that of propositions to one another, namely, as we initially noted, of premises to conclusion, and such priority, in contrast to the priority of facts or events or substances to one another, is logical. So we might understand Aristotle's πρότερον τῆ φύσει as meaning *better suited by virtue of being more general to be prior in some reasoned system of explanatory scientific understanding*.

The demand that premises be prior τῆ φύσει is thus a demand for logical priority, that is, for the priority in a system of reasoned explanation by virtue of which premises are premises and the reasoning in question valid. The reason that Aristotle terms such priority *priority τῆ φύσει* is that the premise is naturally qualified to serve as a premise, independent, that is, of the order of our learning; that is why he is content to substitute ἀπλῶς—without qualification, that is, simpliciter—for τῆ φύσει.

But contrast this interpretation with another; perhaps priority is to be understood in an ontological sense. The prior is that which exists without the posterior, but without which the posterior does not exist. A paradigm case of such priority is the relation of generative cause to effect, and it is this very relation of cause to effect to which Aristotle

refers in the *Posterior Analytics*, for he there clearly states that scientific understanding of a fact is the knowledge that it is the effect of a certain cause. The demand, therefore, that premises of scientific understanding be prior τῆ φύσει may be understood to be a demand that the facts expressed by them be prior in the order of natural causation to the fact expressed by the conclusion. It refers, therefore, not to logical priority, that is, not to the premises' ability to generate in a reasoned system of knowledge a desired conclusion, but to an ontological, physically causal priority of the being specified in the premises.

Note that the issue between these two interpretations taxes the ease with which Aristotle speaks indifferently about relations of statements or of facts. For the logical interpretation fits easily Aristotle's talk of the relation of priority between premises and conclusion, but fails to do justice to his insistence that scientific understanding concerns the relation of fact to its cause. Conversely, the ontological interpretation accounts in a far better manner for this latter insistence, but must be at a loss to explain why Aristotle speaks specifically of the premises as prior in nature to the conclusion, rather than of the fact expressed by the premise as prior to the fact expressed by the conclusion.

The logical interpretation seems to have Aristotle demand of premises only that they be able deductively to generate some desired conclusion. Someone might object: too easy. Statements having nothing to do with the cause of a fact can generate conclusions expressing it, and could thus serve as scientific explanations of that fact. Here's an explanation of the fact that the planets do not twinkle:

The planets are carried in their motions by crystalline spheres, and celestial bodies carried in their motions by crystalline spheres do not twinkle; and therefore (and thus that is why) the planets do not twinkle.

The premises of this syllogism may seem to be the causes of its conclusion and prior in nature to it on the logical interpretation. But the reasoning is not the kind of demonstrative explanation that generates scientific understanding. For the fact that the planets are carried by crystalline spheres is not responsible for their twinkling, and therefore cannot explain it. The fundamental condition of scientific understanding given in the opening lines of the second chapter of the *Posterior*

Analytically, knowing the fact's cause as its cause, is not fulfilled. So such an interpretation can't be right.

There's a simple response to this argument: in the reasoning offered as an explanatory demonstration, the major premise is false, and it is precisely for this reason that the reasoning does not yield the cause of the planets' not twinkling. That's just why Aristotle requires that premises be true and known prior to the conclusion, where such knowledge, as he states specifically, means not mere understanding of the premise, but knowledge that it expresses what is indeed the case (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b33).

But then consider the following reasoning:

The apparent motion of the planets in the heavens is not uniformly circular, but exhibits retrograde and station, and celestial bodies whose apparent motions are not uniformly circular do not twinkle; therefore, that is why the planets do not twinkle.

Here both premises are true, but again the minor does not state the real cause of the planets' not twinkling, and therefore Aristotle would not have regarded such a syllogism as productive of scientific understanding of the sort afforded by his own explanation of the phenomenon (*On the Heavens* 2.8, 290a18–24).

In spite of all this, if we are stubborn and wedded to it, we can hold the logical interpretation of priority if we understand Aristotle to mean the condition that premises be prior in nature to their conclusion to be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for understanding. But then if he means this, why doesn't he say it? He does say that the premises must not only be prior to and better known than the conclusion, but its causes as well. But that's not much help. For if we understand the causal relation of premises to conclusion to be *logical*, then the very objections that the argument initially raised still hold. But if we take Aristotle to have meant that the premises must express the fact that is the real cause of what is in the conclusion, the logical interpretation will be in greater difficulty. For while Aristotle demands both that the premises be the causes of the conclusion and prior to it, he gave the following reasons for these demands: "its causes, since we understand something only when we know its cause, prior, insofar as they are causes" (*Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 71b31).

So there's trouble for the logical interpretation. It doesn't account for the primary feature that characterizes ἀποδείξις; that is, it doesn't

yield explanation. But is the ontological interpretation any better off? Aristotle indeed argues that scientific understanding occurs when we know the cause on which a fact depends as the cause of that fact. But in the *Posterior Analytics* he's not concerned with an explication of that causal relation. He is concerned with telling a story about the logic of our knowing that such a relation obtains, not about the relation itself.

So having said that scientific understanding is knowledge of the cause of an effect as its cause, he proceeds to discuss the reasoning productive of such knowledge, which must exhibit certain characteristics. If we understand those characteristics to be that the premises express facts ontologically prior to and the real causes of those expressed in the conclusion, we will have Aristotle saying: what is productive of understanding concerning B is our grasp of some reasoning which shows that A is the cause of B. Now this is just what Aristotle does say in the *Posterior Analytics*, but he could have said that merely by observing that scientific understanding occurs when we know A to be the cause of B by some sort of valid reasoning. And that is what he does say, before the requirements. So if the ontological interpretation is correct, it is unclear what all these additional arguments are doing. The very text we mean to interpret turns out on this reading to be otiose.

Which, in a sense, it may be anyway. For what, in the final analysis, does the distinction urged by the ontological interpretation amount to? How are we to know that the nearness of the planets, and not their stations and retrograde motions, is the cause of their not twinkling other than by discovering the place of these phenomena in a larger explanatory scheme? This is a question to which we will have to return.

4

But in the meanwhile, perhaps it will help to look elsewhere. In the eleventh chapter of the philosophical lexicon given in book 5 of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle deals with the meaning of the correlative terms *prior* and *posterior*—*πρότερον* and *ὑστερον*. There he notes that there is a sense in which

what is prior in knowledge may be treated as prior without qualification [*ἀπλῶς*]. Of these, things that are prior in the order of

rational discourse [κατὰ τὸν λόγον] are different from those prior in relation to perception [κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν]. For in the order of rational discourse universals are prior, whereas in relation to perception individuals are. (*Metaphysics* 5.11, 1018b30–33)

This distinction between our rude perceptive apprehension of the world, and our refined ability to talk rationally about it, that is, to order it according to (its or our) λόγος, is central to Aristotle's thought. It should remind us that, as we began by noting, Aristotle thought of science as the power of rational discourse about nature, and that such rational discourse was distinct both from perceptual awareness of phenomena, and from the ability simply to describe a phenomenon in isolation.

The elaboration of a science is the elaboration of a body of explanatory discourse in terms of which we can talk about, and thus understand, nature. Such a body of discourse is (1) connected demonstratively in the form of a system of reasoned explanation, and (2) unified in terms of the particular subject matter of the specific science in question. This unity derives finally from the principles peculiar to the specific science.

To be prior κατὰ τὸν λόγον—in the order of rational discourse—in such a body of knowledge is to be so constituted as to provide the ground of intelligibility for other elements of the system, that is, to provide the possibility of reasoned discourse concerning these elements. Thus to be prior κατὰ τὸν λόγον is congruent to being naturally better known (or more properly, better knowable), and this suggests that by γνωριμώτερον τῇ φύσει Aristotle means to designate that through which less-well-known things are naturally understandable in such a system of rational discourse. Priority τῇ φύσει and priority κατὰ τὸν λόγον are thus both connected with being γνωριμώτερον—better known; Aristotle not only consistently speaks of these qualities in conjunction with each other, but also draws the same distinctions with regard to them. Thus, for example, we read in the *Physics* that “the universal is more knowable κατὰ τὸν λόγον, the individual κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν” (*Physics* 1.1, 189a5–6, 188b32; *De Anima* 2.2, 413a12). We may feel equally comfortable saying of a cause that it is in this sense better known than its effect, or saying of the proposition expressing the cause that it is better known than that expressing the effect. If we then

understand priority τῆ φύσει in terms of this type of natural intelligibility, our worries begin to vanish.

Priority κατὰ τὸν λόγον, which I am suggesting is intimately connected to priority τῆ φύσει, may be dependent upon the simpler notion of priority κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν—in the order of nature and being—that Aristotle invokes between cause and effect, but it is not equivalent to it (*Metaphysics* 5.1, 1019a11–14). Consider two propositions that express phenomena, one of which is causally prior to the other. It would be odd to think that one of the propositions could exist without the other, but not vice versa, in the sense in which we might think that the prior phenomenon could exist without the posterior but not vice versa. But we might reasonably think that understanding of the prior can exist without understanding of the posterior, although not vice versa, just in the way, as we saw earlier, that the truth of one proposition might be said to be dependent in this ontological sense upon the truth of another. But this is what we have seen to be the meaning of *better knowable*; one thing is intelligible in terms of another, but not vice versa, or not to the same degree.

So for Aristotle the possibility of an ordered body of rational discourse constituting a science is dependent upon the natural order itself that this science attempts to make intelligible. But the epistemological or logical priority and posteriority exhibited by elements in this body are not equivalent to that order of nature, although connected with it in the most intimate fashion. These considerations may call into question any simple ontological interpretation of Aristotle's notion of priority in the *Posterior Analytics*. But the central concern we had with the logical interpretation is still unanswered. For that interpretation leaves unaccounted for the critical distinction between a valid demonstration that reveals the explanatory reason for a fact, and sound reasoning that is dialectical or somehow fails to reveal the cause. It is the former type of reasoning we wish to capture: reasoning that determines, as Aristotle puts it, the *why* (διότι) and not merely the *that* (ὅτι). We know how to characterize such reasoning; it is reasoning in which the premises state the cause of the fact expressed in the conclusion. But that is not an answer to the epistemological thrust of our concern. So how then are we to account for this distinction on an understanding of priority τῆ φύσει in terms of priority in a body of intelligible rational discourse? By recalling again that Aristotle is speaking about scientific

understanding not as an isolated piece of explanatory demonstration, but as an element within a larger body of rational discourse, that is, within the whole of a specific science. For we understand something scientifically not when we know merely its proximate cause, but, as he says, only when “we are acquainted with its primary conditions or first principles” (*Physics* I.1, 184a13).

We know we have demonstratively explained something in terms of its cause not when we have simply constructed a valid syllogism, but when we have constructed one that fits into the entire explanatory body of a science, that is, that finds its place within the global theoretical and explanatory structure of the science, and therefore connects to the fundamental principles of that science.

So we know, as I earlier suggested, that the station and retrograde of the planets is not the cause of their not twinkling because we cannot exhibit a further demonstrative explanation of the connection asserted in the major premise, an explanation of the very sort Aristotle offers in his account of the stars in *On the Heavens*. Logical entailment is the ground and condition of scientific understanding through the cause. But we must not understand that entailment in terms of an individual, isolated piece of explanatory reasoning, but rather in terms of the context of a unified system of rational discourse, which relates a phenomenon to all other phenomena of a particular scientific field, and finally to the principles of that or some more general explanatory science.

In a sense, then, we have answered the question that earlier perplexed us and cut with a double edge into both interpretations: How do we know when we have a real causal demonstration? The answer is: in terms of how the demonstration relates to the web of phenomena, other demonstrations, and above all principles of some science.

Such principles, as we know, Aristotle held to be finally apprehensible by *voūc*—the power of intellect. But *voūc*, as we know, is not for Aristotle a faculty invoked to explain our apprehension of a specific body of propositions cognizable in no other way, but the ground of our ability to perform science, that is, to construct logically connected bodies of rational discourse. For scientific understanding consists not in our apprehension of such principles, but in our employment of them in understanding, that is, giving a rational account of, that is, discoursing intelligibly about, the facts with which the scientist is concerned. Science is an enterprise of explanation. The explanatory activities of

science involve at once learning the principles of explanation and coming to understand the phenomena that are explained: as Aristotle puts it, “revealing the general by making clear the particular”—δεικνύντες τὸ καθόλου διὰ τοῦ δήλου εἶναι τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον” (*Posterior Analytics* I.1, 71a8). This is the single activity that may be thought of alternatively as ἀπόδειξις or as ἐπαγωγή, as proceeding from or to the principles: grasping the phenomena clearly by explaining them, and in the process, grasping the principles of explanation.

5

Could this activity be thought of as *saving the phenomena*? Aristotle, as I noted, nowhere speaks of saving the phenomena. The expression has a rich history, but it is one that begins only after Aristotle and is tied to a particular view of astronomical theory, the view according to which astronomy’s sole purpose is to provide a mathematical scheme capable of generating the heavenly phenomena. It is perhaps most famously embodied in modern science in Osiander’s extraordinary introduction to Copernicus’s *De Revolutionibus*.⁴

But this question about astronomy easily becomes emblematic of a larger and more global issue in the philosophy of science, the much exercised question concerning *realism* and *instrumentalism* in scientific theory. This question, which lies behind the title of this essay, is the question of whether scientific understanding characteristically reveals some order of reality ontologically prior to the phenomena, or whether its characteristic function is the correlation of observed phenomena in an ordered rational scheme. In the one case, explanatory statements are descriptive in essentially the same way as are statements of observed phenomena; in the other they are to be viewed not primarily as descriptions of states of affairs causally underlying the phenomena, but as logical and conceptual tools allowing the scientist to account deductively for these phenomena in ways prescribed by an ordered scientific system, ways that allow us to correlate, predict, and place within a conceptual scheme observed data. This question was never dealt with in antiquity or the Middle Ages in the explicit and thematized form that has characterized its treatment in some modern philosophy of science, particularly early in this century. But its presence was felt in ancient and medieval scientific thought, as I indicated, in

the question of whether astronomy has as its task more than merely *saving the phenomena*.

At the beginning of this essay, I suggested that the larger question may be related to the issue to which I've been attending, the question of what Aristotle means by *natural priority*. It should be clear why. If *prior by nature* is understood in a logical or epistemological sense, the theoretical cause revealed in explanatory demonstration will be understood primarily as a means by which we may intelligibly account for the phenomena in a simple and consistent manner. Conversely, to read the notion of priority in a more *ontological* sense is to see explanation as proceeding from principles that report a real structure ontologically prior to the phenomena being explained.

I have suggested that this latter is in subtle but important ways a misreading of Aristotle's intentions in the *Posterior Analytics*, as well as in the *Physics*. Seeing scientific understanding as essentially a system that connects in a body of rational discourse propositions about natural phenomena, Aristotle conceives of the principles that are prior in a deductive system (but that must be sought in the natural sciences) as prior not in the way that physical cause is prior to effect, but in the way that what is better known (that is, better understood as an element in a body of rational discourse) is prior to what is known through it. They are prior, that is, not *in being* (κατὰ οὐσίαν), nor prior simply *to sense* or in *our order of learning about the world* (κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν or πρὸς ἡμᾶς), nor prior in the simple logical way in which the premises of any valid piece of reasoning are prior to its conclusion. They are prior in a developed system of ordered scientific knowledge (κατὰ τὸν λόγον), or, considered in the context of such knowledge, prior without qualification (ἀπλῶς) given Aristotle's dictum that what is prior for knowledge may be considered as prior without qualification (*Metaphysics* 5.11, 1018b30). Some of Aristotle's early commentators understood that he is speaking of a different priority than that which he describes as priority κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν.⁵ Others, however, read him to be speaking of the priority of physical cause to effect. One of the most important of these, and certainly the most influential, was Averroes. Here is Averroes in his commentary on the *Physics*:

When Aristotle has declared that in natural science it is necessary to gain a knowledge of causes and principles, he begins to declare the way leading to knowledge of the causes of natural

things, and the nature of demonstration providing them, and he says that this way . . . is from propositions concerning things posterior in being which are better known and more manifest to us, to conclusions prior in being which are better known and more manifest to nature, but more hidden to us . . . ; the reason that the way we must proceed in this science must be from things posterior in being to things prior in being, is that what is known to us among natural things is not what is known without qualification, that is by nature, which is contrary to mathematics.⁶

Averroes here speaks not of the priority of propositions to one another, but of causes to effects, which he understood as a priority “in being.” It is in terms of this priority that he understands Aristotle’s concern with the role of the prior in scientific understanding. He thus reads Aristotle to be speaking not of propositions in some way prior to other propositions, but of propositions concerning things prior to those which other propositions concern. And it is just this emphasis that leads him to translate *prior* τῇ φύσει as *prior in being*.

Averroes’s understanding is particularly interesting in light of the fact that the passage from the *Physics* that he is discussing makes no mention of priority, but speaks only of moving from what is to us better known and clearer—γνωριμώτερον καὶ σαφέστερον—to what is by nature so (*Physics* 1.1, 184a17). His assimilation of the naturally better known to the ontologically prior occurs even where Aristotle gives no hint of that sort of priority, but speaks solely in epistemological terms. Averroes goes on to explain why what is prior in the ontological order of nature is said to be better known *to* nature.

The causes of [the composite things that are known to us first] are better known to nature. For nature produces the composites out of the causes, from which it is seen that the causes are better known to her. It is like the relation of an artisan to his artifacts, for the causes of these objects are better known to him. If therefore we produced natural objects, their causes would be better known to us. But because we do not produce them, our situation with regard to them is just the opposite of our situation with regard to artifacts.⁷

The phrase by which Averroes here chooses to translate Aristotle’s τῇ φύσει is itself indicative; misreading the syntax of Aristotle’s dative,

he speaks of the prior as better known *to* nature. In this way, he avoids the difficulties to his interpretation generated by the fact that Aristotle always spoke of the naturally prior and naturally better known together.

This reading of *naturally better known* may derive from an earlier commentary of Themistius. Themistius, in explaining the distinction between what is prior and better known to nature and to us, writes that the prior in nature (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν) is what is simpler in its very being (κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν) and adds that these are called prior to nature and to us because

we must proceed from composites to simpler things prior to nature, whereas nature produces the composites out of these simples.⁸

Averroes, elaborating upon this text, comes to see *naturally better known* as signifying *better known to nature by virtue of being prior in its ontological productive order*. His notion of what is better known to nature, which in its Latin form, *nota naturae*, became the standard rendering of Aristotle's words in the Middle Ages, reveals Averroes's assimilation of priority in the order of understanding to priority in the ontological order of nature itself.

Averroes was not to have the last word on this question; the history of commentary on the *Analytics*, particularly in such late Scholastic writers as Agostino Nifo and Giacomo Zabarella, witnessed significant modifications of Averroes's reading of Aristotle, modifications connected with their understanding of the nature and status of scientific theory. These are matters beyond the scope of this essay. But it may be a matter of interest, or at least a matter of some irony, to recall the Renaissance figure most notably a disciple of Averroes; it was that great scientific realist, Francis Bacon. Bacon remained Aristotelian in his basic understanding of the structure of scientific explanation and in the centrality to his thinking of the notion that principles are better known to (*sic*) nature. But he pictured himself as resolutely anti-Aristotelian in envisioning science that would make possible a realistic body of theory, not one that merely saved the appearances. The proper method of "searching into and discovering truth," Bacon wrote,

rises by gradual steps to those things which are in reality better known to nature [*ad ea quae revera naturae sunt notiora*]. (*Novum Organum* 1, 22)

It would allow the scientist to

deduce a given Nature from some source of being which is inherent in more Natures, and which is better known to nature [*naturae notior*]. (*Novum Organum* 2, 4)

What this means is made clear when Bacon describes his plan for inquiry in the sciences as one that

is to proceed regularly and gradually from one axiom to another, so that the most general are not reached until last; but then these are not empty notions, but well defined, and such as nature would in reality acknowledge as better known to itself [*talia quae natura ut revera sibi notiora agnoscat*]. (*Novum Organum*, Distributio operis)

Bacon's dream of a realistic science was founded on his belief that the corpuscular philosophy allowed the scientist for the first time to place himself in that position which in the view of Averroes was available only to nature: the position of the world's artisan. Bacon's insistence on works was thus not primarily a plea for the pragmatic usefulness of science, but a plea that the method of demonstration, Aristotle's ἀπόδειξις, actually reenact nature's production of effects. Bacon's dream of a corpuscular based realism, though it may have been a part of his spiritual fathering of modern science, was abandoned within a generation of philosophical thought, first by Boyle, then more powerfully by Locke, and finally decisively by Berkeley and Hume.

Averroes's view that we truly understand only what we produce did not die; it merely gave rise to an understanding of the social sciences. Hobbes held that civil philosophy alone is capable of demonstration, because the commonwealth is something made by us; Locke that morality is capable of demonstration because moral ideas are our construction; Vico that true demonstrative knowledge occurs only in the study of society, which human beings make, and not of nature, which God makes. There are, of course, many ways of creating, and the most significant step in the wake of Bacon was taken before Vico; it was taken by Kant, who concurred in holding that "we have complete insight only into what we can make and accomplish according to our conceptions" (*Critique of Teleological Judgment*, 384) but also held that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own (*Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxiii).

6

It is the creative power of reason that is for Aristotle, as I have urged, the source of our ability to produce the structures of explanatory discourse we know as science. The office of reason is misunderstood if we think of it merely in terms of grasping first principles; reason must be seen as the faculty that grasps principles in the activity of using them to explain the phenomena. The fact that our grasp of first principles is rooted in our ability to understand the phenomena may account for the ease with which we might—to return to Owen—speak of Aristotle as committed to “saving the phenomena” and “basing theories on observation of the physical world.” But this way of speaking masks the centrality for Aristotle of the *explanatory* function of scientific theory; it threatens to make us think of the knowledge of theory solely as the end rather than as the instrument of scientific understanding. And it figures explanation in terms other than Aristotle’s.

For nowhere, as I have twice noted, does Aristotle employ the expression *saving the phenomena* to describe the aims of scientific explanation. Is this because Aristotle is a realist? Many would urge upon us the view that he is, and I think they would be right. But doesn’t the interpretation I have been urging suggest that Aristotle was an instrumentalist? I think it does, and I think it is right. For most importantly I think that what we can learn from Aristotle is how to embrace both views, how to realize that, to paraphrase Hume on the subject of necessity and liberty, all mankind has ever been in agreement that the best explanations are true and about how things really are, and that these explanations are explanations, that is, instruments of human artifice.

To embrace both realism and instrumentalism is in a sense to turn one’s back on the issues of realism and antirealism. Of course there is (or was) a genuine scientific question about the relation of astronomy to physics, and that is the question that exercised Osiander, Bellarmine, and Galileo. But it is only in the context of such specific scientific questions that the issue arises. It may be important when it does to be on the right side of the issue; it is true that it was Galileo’s realism on just this issue that led him to develop the dynamics which proved to be the real treasure of the Copernican revolution. But it may be salutary to look in contrast at the strident realism of Bacon, fruitless on the vine. At any rate, such issues are distinct from philosophical questions

about the nature of science. The views of Osiander or Galileo or Bacon are ultimately not helpful to our grasp of the more general nature of scientific explanation, and they lack the subtlety with which Aristotle's deeper naturalism resists the split between cognition and the real in any of its forms.

Of course science, when it is right, is about the real, and of course scientific theory is a *fiction*. This is to say no more than that it is an artifact of the human activity of science; it is, in other words, one of the intermediate products of that mode of human discourse designed to effect, as a final product, the understanding that is a result of explanation. This is merely a roundabout way of saying that science sets out to explain, but its wordiness is meant to remind us that the discourse of science is artificial: made by human minds, and therefore, made up by humans. We might think of this fact simply as the zero degree of the pragmatics of explanation. It is another question whether scientific theory is a fiction in the sense in which the story of Pinocchio is a fiction, *merely* made up, as we might say. But that is a question, I submit, that can be asked only of specific scientific theories within the context of specific research projects and specific explanatory strategies, not of scientific theory in general.

7

It is, I am suggesting, the creative power of reason that is important for understanding the role that $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ plays in Aristotle's theory of scientific understanding. Aristotle sees $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ as that which enables us at once to grasp the primary conditions and first principles of natural phenomena and thus to understand and make intelligible those phenomena by relating them, ultimately in terms of these principles, in a body of demonstrative science. And insofar as it is these principles that are, as the term implies, ultimately prior, we should not be wrong to understand priority $\tau\eta\ \phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota$ as a priority $\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu$, that is, priority in the order of rational explanatory discourse that stands over and against, and yet makes intelligible, our confused perceptual awareness of the world.

We are now in a position to see why, of the many senses in which Aristotle recognizes that one thing may be said to be prior to another (*Metaphysics* 5.11, 1018b9–22), he takes the sense crucial to the nature of scientific demonstration to be equally well expressed by

γνωριμώτερον—better known or naturally more intelligible. He is therefore able to speak of types of demonstration themselves as prior in this way, better able to make facts intelligible in the order of rational discourse; so

syllogism through the middle term is naturally prior and better known [φύσει . . . πρότερος καί γνωριμώτερος] although syllogism through induction is clearer to us. (*Prior Analytics* 2.23, 68b36–38)

And it is for this reason that the ease and comfort with which Aristotle shifts his discussion from a relation of causality and priority between facts to one between propositions should not surprise us. On the most obvious level it is merely a sign of the fact that he is speaking of priority κατὰ τὸν λόγον, a priority which, for reasons that should now be clear, he invokes with equal comfort to being and discourse. On a deeper level, it is indicative of Aristotle's conviction that the intelligible structure of the world is not accidentally congruent with the structure of our rational discourse about the world, is, as his predecessors might have said, its (our) logos. We do not, of course—and this is another way of stating the distinction between priority κατὰ οὐσίαν and that κατὰ τὸν λόγον or τῇ φύσει—impart that order to the world. The world is what it is and how it is no matter what we say about it; but the epistemological concerns of our understanding of what and how it is are grounded in the nature of what we say about it, not in the accidental and piecemeal way of the sophist, but scientifically, in an ordered and rational body of discourse.

Aristotle on the Desirability of Friends

I

Near the end of his discussion of friendship in both of the ethical treatises, Aristotle asks why a person whose life is happy should need to have friends. He notes that the self-sufficiency thought to characterize a happy life might lead us to view friends as an unnecessary addition to such a life. The happy have what they need, living their lives of virtue; what do they want with friends? But such a view, Aristotle goes on to assert, is decidedly odd. It is peculiar to think of a happy person living in isolation, and more than just peculiar to think that such a person might choose to live his life apart from the company of others like himself, other persons whom he might love and be loved by. That's not a life, Aristotle thinks, that the reasonable among us would choose. Even when we're happy we want friends. Why?

Some readers have taken Aristotle to be asking whether having friends is a necessary condition of a happy life.¹ But the fact that he introduces the question of why the happy need friends as a perplexity relating to the self-sufficiency of happiness should incline us away from this view. The question Aristotle poses is why we require friends even when we are happy, rather than the similar but distinct question of whether we require friends in order to be happy.

A clear sense of how Aristotle answers this question might help us through these issues of understanding the question's nature. But although some of the explanations offered in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* are reasonably clear, the central elements of Aristotle's discussions in these works are opaque. It is difficult to identify his views, much less the arguments by which he attempts to explain and justify those views.

In this essay I want to look at a particular moment in the discussion of the *Eudemian Ethics* (7.12) concerning the relation between friendship and happiness. My immediate aim is to try to understand what Aristotle is about at that moment and to see what light such understanding might shed upon Aristotle's thought in general. But I also have in mind to call into question a certain view concerning Aristotle's strategy on this issue. According to that view, the principal explanation Aristotle offers for the desirability of friends is the following: Self-consciousness, the awareness of oneself and of one's activities, is highly desirable but difficult to attain. A friend, however, is another self, in that he is importantly like oneself although separate. Consciousness of one's friends is therefore consciousness of oneself and consequently self-consciousness insofar as this is possible. That's why we like to be among them.²

It is clear that the author of the *Magna Moralia* took such an explanation to be central to Aristotle's reasoning (*Magna Moralia* 2.15, 1213a12–26), and something similar is also at work in at least one of the preliminary arguments in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (9.9, 1169b28–1170a4).³ But it is not the explanation, I will argue, that is at work in the *Eudemian Ethics*. There a different argument is offered, and understanding that argument, I hope to show, will help us both to read the corresponding discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and to understand more general features of Aristotle's views on friendship.

Aristotle opens chapter 12 of book 7 of the *Eudemian Ethics* (1244b1–20) by elaborating the perplexity that governs his discussion there as well as in the corresponding passages of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: Why do the happy desire friends? He there articulates one pole of the perplexity by a comparison of the happy with the divine. A person whose life is happy is most self-sufficient, and his life is thus most like a god's. But a god surely requires no friends, so why should a happy person? The common understanding, however, and the understanding presupposed by our view of friendship as a virtue, hold friends to be a good and desirable thing even for, and perhaps especially for, those whose lives are happy. He continues (1244b20–36) with an argument that we may, if we are not careful, read as a solution to this aporia, but which I think must be read as its elaboration; this elaboration culminates in a restatement of the issue (1245a26), preparatory to a solution later in the discussion.

Aristotle first reminds us that these arguments present a genuine aporia, a perplexity, and that concerning this aporia,

we need to consider whether although something has been correctly argued, something has been lost sight of. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b21–23)

In order to get clear about this, he then argues, we need to consider the question: What is a human life in the fullest sense of actively living, that is, as the end toward which the structures and powers of a human being are directed?—τί τὸ ζῆν τὸ κατ' ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ὡς τέλος? (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b23–24). It is clear, he continues, that it consists in the active exercise of perceiving and knowing—τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ γνωρίζειν. And therefore life in common with others must also consist of perceiving and knowing in common with them. Aristotle puts it more succinctly:

co-living is co-perceiving and co-knowing [τὸ συζῆν τὸ συναἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ συγνωρίζειν ἐστίν]. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b24–26)

The next moment of the argument, unfortunately, is uncertain because the text is corrupt. The manuscripts agree in reading:

but what is most desirable for each person is τὸ αὐτὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι and τὸ αὐτὸ γνωρίζειν, and it is because of this that the desire for living is natural to everyone, since living must be considered a kind of knowing. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b27–29)

The argument then continues:

so if we were to cut off and consider knowing or not knowing just by itself. . . there would be no difference between oneself knowing and someone else knowing instead of oneself. But that would be the same as someone else living instead of oneself. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b29–34)

Bekker chooses to print the manuscript, reading: “What is most desirable for each person is τὸ αὐτὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι and τὸ αὐτὸ γνωρίζειν.” But it is difficult to know what sense to make of this reading, either as Greek or as part of Aristotle’s argument; how are we to understand the thought that what is most desirable for each person is *the same perceiving*

and *the same knowing*? In his notes to the Oxford English translation, Solomon recommends moving the pronoun to predicate position and reading αὐτὸ τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι and αὐτὸ τὸ γνωρίζειν, a reading that Rackham adopts in the Loeb edition. This emendation gives us better Greek, allowing αὐτός to function as an intensifier: perceiving *itself* and knowing *itself* are what is most desirable to each person. But it still makes little sense of Aristotle's argument; why does he say that here, and how does it lead to what follows?

Bonitz, Fritzsche, and Susemihl (following the example of a second hand in one of the later manuscripts) keep the pronoun in its original position but make it reflexive; they print τὸ αὐτοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι and τὸ αὐτὸν γνωρίζειν: "to perceive and to know oneself are what is most desirable for each person." This conjecture is attractive if we think of the discussion, in light of the interpretation I mentioned earlier, as a response to Aristotle's *aporia*. According to that interpretation, you will recall, friends are desirable because they provide an avenue, imperfect but all we have, to the pleasure and moral betterment that derive from self-awareness. This awareness is highly desirable but difficult to achieve; since a friend, however, is, as the saying goes, another self, like oneself but separate, consciousness of one's friend is therefore consciousness of oneself insofar as possible. The mention here of reflective self-awareness may be seen as foreshadowing an explanation of the desirability of friends that emerges if we read Aristotle's later claim, "the perceiving of one's friend is in a sense necessarily the perceiving of oneself"—τὸ οὖν τοῦ φίλου αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτοῦ πως ἀνάγκη αἰσθάνεσθαι εἶναι (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a35–37) as containing an objective genitive. To be aware of a friend is to be aware of oneself.

I will later question whether this is a happy reading and a happy interpretation. But even if the conjecture were attractive for these reasons, it would be difficult to see what sense it allows us to make of the text immediately before us, as is clear when we read on. Recall that in the next lines, Aristotle worries about what would happen if we were to abstract knowledge, cutting it off, as he puts it, and considering it just by itself, that is, without the qualification that the sentence in question registers. There would then, he says, be no difference between such knowing and another knowing instead of oneself. Why should the lack of reflective perception generate any such difficulty?

What the subsequent direction of the argument suggests instead is that the qualification concerns the distinction between the subject of awareness and some other person. Aristotle's concern, it seems, is not with losing the *reflexivity* of consciousness, but with losing its *subjectivity*. What we therefore should expect the sentence in question to assert is that the desire for consciousness is always a desire on the part of each of us *for his or her own consciousness*. We can indeed read the sentence this way with an even slighter emendation than those I have cited (an emendation, remember, in what is already a corrupt text) if we read τὸ αὐτὸν αἰσθάνεσθαι and τὸ αὐτὸν γνωρίζειν, understanding the pronoun, in other words, as *subject* rather than as either *qualifier* or *object* of each of the infinitives:

What is most desirable for each person is τὸ αὐτὸν αἰσθάνεσθαι and τὸ αὐτὸν γνωρίζειν: that he himself perceive and that he himself know, and it is because of this that the desire for living is natural to everyone.

Compare a parallel construction in a passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that we will later look at:

It is desirable for each person that he himself exist [τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι].
(*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170b7)

Read this way, Aristotle's argument falls easily into place. The central activity of a human life is perceiving and knowing, and it is because of this that life is naturally desirable to each of us; my desire for life is a desire for consciousness. Now recall the argument quoted above: if

we were to cut off and consider knowing or not knowing just by itself . . . there would be no difference between oneself knowing and someone else knowing instead of oneself. But that would be the same as someone else living instead of oneself. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b29–34)

If, in other words, we abstract consciousness in the sense of considering it without reference to the particular *subject* of consciousness, then there would be no difference between my desiring that I be conscious and my desiring that some other person be conscious. But that would be, Aristotle continues, like supposing that my desire to live might be

satisfied by some other person *living* instead of me. Clearly the structure of this desire is not susceptible to such a mode of consideration; my desire for life is a desire that I live. Therefore, Aristotle concludes,

what's reasonable in fact is that it's one's own perceiving and knowing that is the desirable thing [τὸ ἑαυτοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ γνωρίζειν αἰρετώτερον] (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b34)

I have rendered τὸ ἑαυτοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ γνωρίζειν as “one's own perceiving and knowing” recognizing that it is not the most obvious way to read what might look instead like an objective genitive—“perceiving oneself”—but hoping that the context makes the reading a convincing one; I will return to this reading subsequently.

We may already see where Aristotle's argument is headed. For if it is true that what I desire is simply my own life and my own consciousness, then to desire living in association with the living of others—to desire συζῆν—must seem inexplicable. For nothing in my desire for life could be satisfied by the life, that is to say the consciousness, of *others*. Aristotle turns to this conclusion only after arguing, in the next section, that the desire to live as the desire to know is in fact the desire to be that which is known. But before we turn to that strange thought and to the conclusion Aristotle draws, I want to pause for a moment to consider the claim that the desire for life as a desire for consciousness is the desire for one's own consciousness.

3

It will be instructive to compare a similar thought in chapter 4 of book 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the context of a discussion of the relation between self-love and the love of others, Aristotle observes that each person

wishes for himself to live and to be kept well [ζῆν δὲ βούλεται ἑαυτὸν καὶ σώζεσθαι], and especially for that part of him by which he is conscious [φρονεῖ]; for existence is a good thing for someone who takes life seriously, and everyone wishes the good for himself [ἑαυτῷ]. But no one would want to become someone else in order that the being one becomes should have everything

good (for God already has the good) but only wants the good being exactly who he is. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.4, 1166a18–22)

Imagine that you fall in love with Maxine and wish above all other things to be loved by her in return. Dr. Lester comes to you promising the fulfillment of your wishes. He tells you that Maxine is in love with John and that he has a magical potion (or as he calls it a metaphysical solution) that will, for a nominal fee of \$200, turn you into John. You ought to have no interest in such a proposal, even though you wish to be loved by Maxine above all other things. For being you is not one among other things that you might love Maxine above, and not being you is not one among the things that you might choose as part of a strategy of acquiring Maxine's love.

There may of course be things, such as his library or his apartment in Paris, that you would be interested in acquiring by being *disguised* as John, though there is a special (if not unfamiliar) poignancy in imagining that being loved might be among them. But no matter what good John has, you should not be interested in acquiring that good if a condition is that you *become* John. It's not that the price is too high, but that finally it is not *you* who would receive possession of the goods. John would. So what is it that you would be wishing were different if, willing to accept the condition that you become John, you were to want Maxine's love or John's apartment? The person who is John already has the apartment and is already loved by Maxine. Aristotle's parenthetical phrase in the paragraph I have just quoted, "for God already has the good," which might otherwise strike us as problematic or pointless, means just this. If you are allowed to make a condition of your acquiring the good that you become someone else, that condition is always already fulfilled and your wish therefore always already satisfied; for *God* has the good. And similarly, John already has Maxine's love.

Suppose Dr. Lester objects that we have misunderstood his proposal. For, he points out, you have not yet become John (nor are you God). And his proposal is designed to deal with that very fact by implanting your identity in John. But what could the nature of this more sophisticated plan be such that it would be *you* who is John rather than *John*? The claim that it would be possible to implant your identity in John's life is more radical than the claim that it would be possible to implant your mind in John's body. For it would mean that you take

over not only John's physical characteristics (his deep resonant voice and slow gait) and his psychic characteristics (his witty perceptiveness and winning ways with women like Maxine); it would mean that you take over everything that constitutes John with a single exception.

But what is that single exception? What might you retain to ensure that it will be you who is John, and not simply John? What might Dr. Lester do to effect a transformation so complete that nothing constituting a characteristic of *yours* is present, and yet the person is in fact you—that is, *you* being *someone else*? Aristotle's argument rests upon the view that there is nothing that can effect this transformation.

Note that this question is not about distinguishing, from a third-person standpoint, John Malkovich and Craig Schwartz. It is about distinguishing John and *you from your point of view*, that is, from the standpoint that, for you, is a first-person standpoint (as mine is for me). It is thus a question not about the nature of personal identity, but about the nature of the self; not about being one particular person rather than another, but about being a first-person subject. The difference we are interested in is not the difference, from our point of view, between John and Craig or John and any other person. It is the difference, from any person's point of view, between that person as an I, as a center of subjectivity, and every other you, she, he, and it that make up the objects and companions of that I's world. The question is about subjectivity, which is for Aristotle not a transferable commodity that can be passed from one person to another.

Aristotle's discussion of the desire for awareness invokes this distinction. For me to wish *to be* is for me to wish for *my* being, which is, for Aristotle, to wish for awareness in the form of subjectivity; and this subjectivity is not another characteristic of mine. That the desire for life and thus for consciousness is for each person a desire for his or her own consciousness does not then specify an additional element in the original desire, but a necessary part of the structure of that desire. One may desire that there be life or that there be consciousness without desiring that that life or consciousness be one's own. I might, for instance, work for nuclear disarmament out of a desire that there be life in the late twenty-first century without harboring fantasies that I might be among those alive. But if I desire to live, or to be conscious, then it is a necessary feature of that desire that it be a desire that I live and that I be conscious. Compare the important ethical fact that my

deliberation and choice about how I am to act is a deliberation and choice about how I should act, and not merely about what action should be taken.

4

Since the desire for subjectivity is thus contained in the very desire for consciousness itself, the desire for *my* being is nothing more than *my* desire for being, which is my desire for consciousness. This transparency of subjectivity is paralleled for Aristotle in the transparency of consciousness itself. Aristotle's description in the *De Anima* (3.2, 425b11ff.) of perception as the *perceiving of itself* and his account in the *Metaphysics* (12.9, 1074b34) of thought as the *thinking of itself* employ forms of faux reflexivity to express this feature of consciousness. Here the description of consciousness as self-consciousness expresses the fact that the awareness implicit in all perception and cognition must be understood as a kind of transparency, intentionality whose being is determined objectively, that is, by what it is the consciousness of.⁴ This transparency is revealed to us in the fact, about which I will say more in a moment, that *nous*, thought that is for Aristotle the sheerest mode of consciousness, is not in and of itself anything. The desire for life, which is the desire for consciousness, is thus the desire for nothing other than the self-consciousness that is consciousness. It is for this reason that the parallel argument in book 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* takes the shape it does (9.9, 1170a31). Here Aristotle argues, just as he does in the *Eudemian* text, that life is the capacity for perception and cognition and that capacities must be understood in terms of their exercise, so that in the full sense, life is perceiving and thinking. But since it is the awareness of life that is the source of its desirability, the desire for life is a desire for the awareness of active consciousness, which he describes as "perceiving that we perceive and thinking that we think" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170a29–30).⁵ This, I suggest, means simply the active exercise of transparent consciousness.

But what then is it that Aristotle thinks we desire to *be* when we desire to be conscious? To answer this question, we need to return to the argument in the *Eudemian Ethics*. This return will also enable us to answer another question. At the beginning of the argument we have been examining (and at greater length in his arguments in the *Nicomachean*

Ethics (9.9, 1169b29–32), Aristotle distinguishes between the active *exercise* of consciousness and the mere possession of the *powers* of consciousness. It is, he makes clear, the former that we desire—not simply possessing powers of perceiving and knowing, but actively exercising those powers. How are we to understand that distinction as a part of Aristotle’s argument?

So let’s go back to that section of the argument beginning at 1244b35, whose discussion we earlier postponed. “It is necessary,” Aristotle writes,

to consider together two facts in this argument: both that to live is desirable and that the good is, and, from this, that it is desirable to be characterized by a nature of this sort. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b35–1245a1)

Here Aristotle makes explicit the question I have just raised. What features of consciousness account for its desirability and thus the desirability of life? He thus turns to consider the sources of that desirability:

Now if one of the corresponding pairs of this series is always in the class of the desirable, and the known and the perceived are such, generally speaking, by virtue of participation in a determinate nature, one’s desire that one should perceive is thus the desire that one should be of a determinate nature. But since we are not each of these things by virtue of ourselves alone, but only by participating in such natures in the acts of perceiving and knowing—for one who perceives becomes what is perceived in respect of and to the degree that he perceives, and according to the way and the object he perceives, and so the knower the known—it is therefore because of this that one desires always to live, because one desires always to know, and this is because one desires to be oneself that which is known. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a1–a11)

In this passage Aristotle offers an explanation of why the activity of perceiving and knowing, that is, the activity of consciousness, is desirable. The desire to live, which we have seen to be the desire for the exercise of consciousness, is founded on our desire as conscious subjects to become determinate. This determination does not come to consciousness in and of itself, but only by virtue of its active exercise with respect to some object. The desire to live, which has been revealed

to be the desire for awareness, is thus the desire to become—*objectively* in the Scholastic and Cartesian sense—that of which one is aware. It will help in understanding Aristotle’s argument to recall things he says about consciousness elsewhere, particularly in the *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*, for in these works Aristotle speaks of the complex relationship between *subjects* and *objects* of awareness. In consciousness, most notably in acts of perceiving and knowing, the conscious subject is said in some sense to become the object perceived or known. This sense needs to be articulated with delicacy, with respect both to subject and object. For it is only qua conscious that the subject becomes the object of consciousness, and it becomes it only insofar as the object is an object of consciousness. Consider an ordinary example. When I see a stone, on Aristotle’s view in some sense I “become a stone”; but this sense is clearly not an ordinary one. In the first place, it is only under the description “seeing subject” that I become the stone in the act of seeing; it is my “visionary eye” that takes on the form of stone when I see the stone. Secondly, it is only the *form* that it takes on (*De Anima* 3.8, 431b30); and, what is more important, it is not the form of the stone qua *stone* that the eye receives, but only the form of the stone qua *sensible object* (*De Anima* 2.12, 424a19). This is merely to say that the seer is determined by the visible image of the stone in seeing it. Aristotle’s theory in other words is a theory of perceptual awareness in which the capacity for vision is understood as an organism’s passive power to be determined in consciousness by the active power of visibility that characterizes the world qua visible. Vision, on this view, is the joint realization in a single being of these two powers. This is what it means for a subject to be objectively determined.

Consciousness as a capacity for objective determination characterizes living substances specifically by virtue of their being substances. For it is the capacity for further determination—a capacity belonging to substances by reason of their determinate nature—that characterizes them in the first instance as substance. It is because substances are what they are that they are capable of exhibiting the feature identified early in the *Categories* as most characteristic of substance: they are able to take on further determination without being overwhelmed by it and so are able to remain one and the same individual while undergoing a variety of accidental affections (*Categories* 5, 4a10–21). This fact about substance is the source of a central tenet of Aristotle’s ontology: the

codependency of determinacy and openness to determination. Determinacy, as we learn in the *Metaphysics*, is a condition of the possibility for further determinability; the essential being of substances is thus a condition of their ability to constitute ultimate subjects of predication.

For humans this openness to further determination is centered in perception and thought, but it is a feature of psychic powers in general. The nutritive capacity, for example—my capacity to *eat*—is my capacity to take in nutriment (the power of ingestion) and to transform it into myself (the power of digestion). This is why the *De Anima* begins its discussion of specific psychic powers with an account of nutrition, and specifically of nutriment, that is, *food*. In the same way, my capacity to perceive is a power to take in the sensible forms of the world and translate them into the immediate objects of my perceptual awareness. In these acts I become what I eat and what I perceive not in the sense that I eat myself or perceive myself. It is rather that I become one with the object of my eating and perceiving—food and the sensible forms of external entities—insofar as these objects are transformed through digestion and perception, and thus come formally, that is objectively, to determine my being.

The transformations I have just mentioned, though interestingly different from one another, are both grounded in the somatic nature of the nutritional and perceptive powers. We will need to tell a somewhat different story about cognitive and noetic powers, but the story is similar in that the knower becomes the object known without relinquishing its own determinate identity. The activity of knowing is precisely this act of becoming determined by the object of knowledge.

It is this determination of which Aristotle speaks in the passage before us. The desire to live is a desire for consciousness, for the activities of perceiving and knowing, which is in turn a desire for determination; this desire is now revealed as the desire to be determined by the object of consciousness. This desire to be the known object is not a desire for reflective self-knowing. It is the desire that in the act of knowing the knower become the object known. Our desire to live thus involves the desire to know and to become what we know.

Think of mind, depicted in *De Anima* 3 as having no determinate nature of its own—we might almost say being nothing in particular—apart from its powerful capacity to become, without relinquishing its identity, whatever it takes as object:

so that it has no nature other than the fact that it has a certain capacity. (*De Anima* 3.4, 429a21–22)

Consciousness as such is thus the power of *receptivity*. It is a power of openness to determination by the other, a power that is given at once active being and determinacy only insofar as it receives that determination from its object. This pure potentiality of consciousness is for Aristotle an essential feature of the determinate nature of human being. We are, as it were, beings of determinate indeterminacy, our essential nature involving the openness to a determination received only through participation in the objective other. The desire for the exercise of consciousness is thus the desire for a determinacy that human being relinquishes insofar as it is consciousness and then acquires through the active exercise of consciousness.

The fact that we are determined objectively in thought and perception—that is, in relation to thought or perception’s object—is only one instance of the general fact that in a range of distinctively human activities that are intentional and thus logically wed to their object, determination of the agent is through that object. Elsewhere in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for example, Aristotle asks why it is that benefactors love their beneficiaries more than beneficiaries their benefactors. “The situation,” he says,

is like that of artisans who love what they make. The reason for this is that being is for everyone desirable and lovable, but we are what we are actively—for our being is in living and in acting—and the activity of the agent is in some sense the object of his activity; so he loves that object because he loves being. And that is just in the nature of things: what a thing has the power for is revealed as activity in the activity’s object. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.7, 1168a5–10)

Here the structure of objective determination that we have seen in pure consciousness is replicated in the case of intentional making (ποίησις). More central to Aristotle’s vision in the *Ethics* is intentional action (πρᾶξις), and here the situation is the same. We achieve determination through the active exercise of our being in those modes of action that form and are formed by human culture, activities that Aristotle therefore recognizes to be at once modes of our conscious lives and connected to our nature as political animals.

That we are by nature political means for Aristotle not simply that we live in groups, but that our nature is activated and determined in and by the *praxis* of political life, and by our participation in the institutions that result from such *praxis*. It is therefore the indeterminacy and openness of human nature, the fact that we are (to appropriate Nietzsche's words) "unfinished animals," that makes us essentially political animals. For it is in the context of the communal life made possible by political action, and above all in the midst of the society of friends, that human being achieves the richest mode of its determination. It is this determination that transforms the power of thought into the activity of thought, that gives being to the subjective power of consciousness and that therefore constitutes the end of human life.

The divine for Aristotle, on the other hand, is determinate in its own right. Divine being achieves its determinacy in the simple act of consciousness independent of any object. Aristotle figures that fact by describing the divine, in *Metaphysics* Lambda, in terms that might sound as though they describe a consciousness that takes itself as object.⁶ Human being, however, does not achieve its full activity by itself alone, but only through the determination it receives, as consciousness, from some other. It is this difference between the nature of the end and good of our being and that of divine being to which Aristotle, as he indicates he will at the beginning of his discussion, now appeals in dissolving the *aporia* with which we began. That *aporia*, which leads us to think that we will need no friends because God needs no friends, arises in the first place from an illicit comparison between us and God that overlooks just this difference. Aristotle puts it this way:

our well being is with reference to something other; the divine is its own well being. (ἡμῖν μὲν τὸ εὖ καθ' ἕτερον ἐκείνω δὲ αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ τὸ εὖ ἐστίν.) (*Eudemian Ethics*, 7.12, 1245b18)

5

In the course of Aristotle's argument, two facts have emerged about the desirability of conscious life, which is for us the desirability of a human life. (1) The desire for consciousness is manifest as a desire for subjectivity, that is, for subjective awareness. (2) The desire for consciousness is explained by the fact that consciousness makes us determinate by

constituting our being in the objective mode, making us become, in a sense, that of which we are aware.

These two facts are not independent of one another. The suggestion I have been developing is that for Aristotle consciousness as subjectivity is, so to speak, not anything, but then again not quite nothing. The desire for life as a desire for consciousness might then be thought not to be a desire for anything; but that overlooks, I have suggested, that the description applies only to consciousness as it is understood as a power or capacity: to mind as *dunamis*. The desire to live, however, as Aristotle repeatedly says and as is central to his arguments about friendship, must finally be directed toward the full exercise of the powers and capacities of life—to the *energeia* of awareness—and must therefore be a desire to be actively conscious. Although *nous*, which I have understood to be paradigmatic in a Cartesian manner for consciousness in general, is in itself actually nothing, this is only true until it thinks, at which point it becomes in activity what it has the power to be as capacity: its objects (*De Anima* 3.4, 429b31).⁷ Our wish when we wish for subjective awareness and for determinacy are thus not two things incidentally connected, but a single thing: desiring consciousness. I mean this phrase to do double service; the desire *for* consciousness, that is, the desire to *be* conscious, is the desire *of* consciousness to be determinate, that is, our desire to be determined in the mode of awareness. Thus the bald juxtaposition Aristotle presents in his companion argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There he again notes that living is in the strictest sense perceiving or thinking and is one of the things good and pleasant in themselves, for it is determinate, and the determinate is of the nature of the good (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170a19–21). This determinacy of the human life, as we have seen, derives from the fact that when active, consciousness becomes its objects. So the soul, which in its highest form is in a sense nothing, can be said by Aristotle also “to be in a sense all being” (*De Anima* 3.8, 431b20). I am the world I become in the determining activity of consciousness, as I am the power of becoming that world.

6

Aristotle’s argument in this section of the *Eudemean Ethics* is, as I remarked earlier, meant to provide not a *solution* to the problem with

which he begins, but an explanation and thus an *elaboration* of it.⁸ We are now able to see more clearly the force of the aporia concerning the desirability of friends. If the point of life is consciousness, then the point of life in the company of friends (συζῆν) must be consciousness in company with those friends (συναίσθησις). But the features of the desirability of consciousness that we have revealed suggest no reason why anyone should value anything other than his own consciousness, and therefore no reason why anyone should value communal consciousness that involves friends. Since what I want in desiring consciousness is that I myself be conscious, and that I myself become determinate in that act of consciousness, why should I be concerned with the life—the thought or the perception or the experience—of *others*?

Aristotle's argument therefore reveals the attractiveness of the reasoning that led us into the aporia. It is for this reason that to choose to live in the company of others (συζῆν) may thus seem to someone considering it in a certain way silly (1245a11). It is this "way of considering it" that Aristotle has been developing. But surely, he continues, this cannot be right; for

surely on the contrary it is clear that all of us find it sweet to share what is good with our friends. (*Eudemian Ethics*, 7.12, 1245a19–20)

The fact that the silliness of choosing communal life, a silliness that appears to emerge from these considerations, goes against the clear evidence of our desire for friends is precisely the source of the aporia with which Aristotle began.

The argument says one thing leading us into perplexity, but the facts clearly lead in another direction, so it's obvious that in some way the argument generating the perplexity misleads us. We have to figure out where the truth lies. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a26–28)

The explanation that Aristotle does offer in the *Eudemian Ethics* begins immediately after this restatement of the aporia. It opens with a proverbial characterization of a friend as "another self," but its main trajectory invokes, at first implicitly but eventually explicitly, the very feature of communal life that has seemed problematic. This is the fact that the good of such life must be, in the uncommon phrase Aristotle employs, συναίσθησις: shared consciousness. Aristotle begins with the

proverb: To be a friend means to be, as the saying goes, another Heracles, that is, another self. Friends are of course separated

from one another, and it's difficult for them to become one [χαλεπὸν τὸ ἐφ' ἑνὸς γενέσθαι];⁹ but friends are by nature one another's nearest kin [κατὰ μὲν τὴν φύσιν τὸ συγγενέστατον], though some resemble one another in body, some in soul, and of these some in one respect and some in another. But none the less, being a friend means being as it were a separate self. Therefore the perceiving of one's friend is in a sense the perceiving of one-self, and his knowing one's own knowing. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a30–35)

The description of a friend as another self—an alter ego—is also found in Aristotle's discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (9.3, 1166a31; 9.9, 1170b6). It is inviting to see such a characterization as lending support to the view I have been questioning, the view according to which Aristotle thinks friends are important above all because, resembling us, they afford us something analogous to self-consciousness. But attend to the characterization of a friend as another *Heracles*. Plutarch remembers that the phrase “another Heracles” was said of Theseus with reference to the legendary acts of Herculean proportion he performed, sometimes as a helping friend to others, sometimes by himself.

Of the many deeds performed by the greatest men of that time, Herodias thinks that Theseus played a part in none of them except in helping the Lapiths in their battle against the Centaurs. But others say that he was with Jason at Colchis and with Meleager in jointly getting rid of [συνεξελεῖν] the [Calydonian] boar and that from this arose the saying “not without Theseus” while he accomplished many fine deeds needing no ally. And [they say] that it was with reference to him that the expression “here's another Heracles” [ἄλλος οὗτος Ἡρακλῆς]¹⁰ took hold. (Plutarch, *Parallel Lives* 29.3)

Plutarch's understanding of this saying in reference to Theseus is a simple one: Theseus is virtually as good as Heracles if you need a certain task done or if you need someone by your side to help you with a certain task. He is, to put the saying in a more modern vernacular, “a regular Heracles.” And although one indication of this fact is his ability to

accomplish great deeds “needing no ally,” it is instructive that Plutarch begins by recounting the heroic acts that Theseus (well known in antiquity as Heracles’s comrade) performs in his capacity as the comrade of Jason and Meleager, as their friend.

The friendship between Theseus and Meleager is not marked by their mutual contemplation, nor by Meleager’s seeing himself in Theseus, nor by their modes of resemblance, whatever they might be. Their friendship is marked by their shared contemplation of the boar; they are friends in their shared praxis—their cooperation—in co-slaying (συνεξελεῖν) the boar. For Theseus is not another Meleager, but another Heracles. He is the friend of Meleager—and thus “another Heracles” for him—when he stands by Meleager, as Heracles might have, in the performance of a great deed.

It is that very view of friendship as the power of collaboration that Aristotle here as elsewhere has in mind. The kinship of friends is invoked not because my friend must be like me in the thick fact of my accidental individuality so that I may observe, in him, myself for what I am. The fact that my friend enjoys a kinship of similarity with me is true and of interest insofar as he enables the enlargement of my being, not insofar as he replicates and objectifies it. Since my friend is like me but separate, we are able to constitute a community of shared activity that goes beyond and amplifies the experience of each of us separately. It is solidarity and not reflexivity with which sodality is linked.

Thus if the defining activity and pleasure of my life lies in the consciousness that for me means being a self, so does the activity and pleasure of my friend, who is another self. Our actively living together, therefore, involves being conscious together. There is nothing new in this realization; it is the recognition with which Aristotle began the discussion:

Co-living is co-perceiving and co-knowing [τὸ συζῆν τὸ συναίσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ συγγνωρίζειν ἐστίν]. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1244b24–26)

But now it is understood in a new way, such that being conscious together does not indicate being conscious, as it were, side by side, but forming together a partnership of consciousness, a community characterized by the common perception that is συναίσθησις.

Thus when Aristotle goes on to note that although even the most ordinary delights are pleasant when enjoyed together (συνήδεσθαι) (*Eudemian Ethics* 1245a30) in the company of a friend, it is the refined activities that above all give pleasure, he does so with the following observation:

If [it is pleasant] for oneself to live well [αὐτὸν εὖ ζῆν] and similarly for one's friend as well, and in their living together to act together, their partnership [κοινωνία] will above all be in things that are part of the end [of human life]. So they think together and feast together [συνθεωρεῖν καὶ συνευωχεῖσθαι]; and these associations do not seem to be for the sake of food or other necessities, but to be pleasures. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245b3–7)

The ability to form such a partnership, a partnership expressed in associations like “thinking together”(συνθεωρεῖν), is not dependent simply upon the fact that my friend is like me in this or that attribute or interest or feature of character. It is dependent upon the fact that he is like me as well in being for himself a center of subjectivity, another *self*. He is, in other words, another instance of an I, and not simply another version of *me*: a self separate from me, as Aristotle puts it—αὐτὸς διαίρετός (1245a35). It is this fact that led us in the first place into *aporia*; it is because each subject is an I to himself that the desirability of friends seems to us perplexing. But the common subjectivity of human consciousness is at the same time the beginning of a solution to our *aporia*. For my friend is not just any other I, but one with whom I form, by virtue of our similarities, a *partnership* (κοινωνία). And insofar as we thus form a partnership of shared plans and projects, communal hopes and memories, cooperative theories and strategies, common ways of looking at and experiencing our common world, we form a partnership characterized by what Aristotle calls at the beginning of this chapter συναίσθησις, common consciousness. It is this shared consciousness that enables the transformation of otherness into communal subjectivity, the refiguring of separate I's as a common we.

That the partnership and associations Aristotle intends when speaking of the activities of friends are those of shared consciousness is made clear a few sentences later. Here, considering the question of just how many friends it is appropriate to have, Aristotle observes, by way

of showing in characteristic fashion that both sides of a dialectical dispute are correct, that

if it is possible to live together with and share perception [συναίσθησθαι] with many, then it's highly desirable that they be as numerous as possible; but since it's extremely difficult, it's necessary that the activity of shared perception [ἐνέργειαν τῆς συναίσθησεως] take place among few. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245b21–24)

It is this “activity of shared perception” that reveals the intent of Aristotle’s argument. Since we are engaged in shared perception, what my friend perceives is in a sense what I perceive, since it is what we perceive, and his consciousness is mine, since it is ours. The force of Aristotle’s earlier conclusion that “the perceiving of one’s friend is in a sense necessarily the perceiving of oneself, and [his knowing] the knowing of oneself” (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a35–37) now needs to be understood in light of this. I take Aristotle here to mean, as an important step in his argument, that one’s friend’s perception and cognitive awareness is in a sense one’s own, and in a moment I will say more about why this is the proper way to read Aristotle’s conclusion. But first we need to reflect further on the meaning of συναίσθησις.

I have been urging throughout this discussion that we need to understand the term συναίσθησις literally, as meaning co-perception, common awareness. A subsequent tradition used συναίσθησις to mean not co-perception, but apperception: either the inward awareness that accompanies perception (what we often call simply *consciousness*) or the self-awareness or self-consciousness of ourselves as conscious.¹¹ But Aristotle here intends a more literal sense of συναίσθησις, a sense that can be heard in the etymology of the term: the shared or common perception that friends enjoy.

The capacity of the Greek συναίσθησις to signify both *shared* consciousness and *self*-consciousness is encountered in other languages as well. Latin can use *consciūs* to indicate someone being aware of something with someone (*alicui consciūs*) as well as my being aware of something with myself (*sibi consciūs*) and thus self-aware in my awareness. Compare for example Plautus’s “nor does anyone share this knowledge with me”—*nec mihi consciūs est ullus homo* (*Rudens* 926) with Virgil’s “a

mind conscious of the right”—*mens sibi conscia recti* (*Aeneid* 1.604). A parallel breadth of meaning, though now lost, once existed in English. Thus Hobbes defines “conscious” in these words:

When two or more men know of one and the same fact, they are said to be conscious of it one to another, which is as much as to know it together. (*Leviathan* 1.7.31)

And here is Robert South, in a sermon on friendship preached at Oxford in 1664, admonishing his congregation that in friendship

nothing is to be concealed from the other self. To be a friend, and to be conscious, are terms equivalent.¹²

But this notion of consciousness as *shared* awareness exists side by side with the notion of consciousness as *self*-awareness. Thus Locke opens the second book of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* with the words “every man being conscious to himself that he thinks,” where *conscious to himself* is English for the Latin *sibi conscius*, and an instance of Hobbes’s “conscious of it one to another.” Here the notion of self-consciousness is simply a special case of the collective consciousness that characterizes friendship, the self being merely, to stand the cliché on its head, another friend.

In understanding συναίσθησις as common perception, we must understand common perception as *shared* and not simply *collateral* perception. Co-perception involves in all these cases the sharing of a communal consciousness, and not simply the concomitant propinquity of two instances of consciousness; friendship transforms I’s into a *we*. This fact is merely an instance of the general fact that for animals like us, animals that are in Marx’s nice turn of phrase “not merely gregarious”—*nicht nur ein geselliges Tier* (*Critique of Political Economy*, introduction)—living together is not mere propinquity. It involves, as Aristotle puts it in his parallel discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,

sharing language and thought. For this is clearly what living together means for human beings, and not simply, as in the case of cattle, eating in the same pasture. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170b10–13)

Living together thus involves a corporate life properly called political, the life of comrades engaged in shared projects of language, thought,

action, and culture. It involves, as he puts it in our text, acting together (συνεργεῖν), and therefore the partnership of good friends will above all, he adds, be concerned with the goods of our lives, and will thus involve thinking together and feasting together (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245b3–5).

Reading συναίσθησις this way will enable us to parse correctly the passage I earlier cited as important to Aristotle’s argument:

the perceiving of one’s friend is in a sense necessarily the perceiving of oneself and the knowing oneself [τὸ οὖν τοῦ φίλου αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτοῦ πως ἀνάγκη αἰσθάνεσθαι εἶναι καὶ τὸ αὐτόν πως γνωρίζειν]. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a35–37)

The role that I have argued is played by the shared awareness of friends in the positive moment of Aristotle’s discussion suggests that we read the noun and pronoun here as subjective rather than objective. What we want, as I suggested, is not “to perceive one’s friend is to perceive oneself,” but rather “one’s friend’s perception is in a sense one’s own perception.”

It is not impossible to find this meaning in the standard version of the text; I have offered a similar translation of Aristotle’s τὸ ἑαυτοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ γνωρίζειν at 1244b34 as “one’s own perceiving and knowing.” But such a reading involves an unusual construal of the Greek for several reasons.¹³ The standard version, however, already represents the result of editorial choice in the face of a confused set of manuscripts, manuscripts that give us such unsatisfactory readings as “to perceive one’s friend is necessarily to perceive him and to know him.” In the face of such a troubled text, emendation once again becomes an inviting alternative; why not construe the passage in the same way I have suggested construing the earlier passage? We then should read at *Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a35–37: τὸ οὖν τὸν φίλον αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτόν πως ἀνάγκη αἰσθάνεσθαι εἶναι καὶ τὸ αὐτόν πως γνωρίζειν—for one’s friend to perceive is necessarily in some sense for oneself to perceive and in some sense for oneself to know. It is not that I see myself in my friend and therefore see myself in seeing my friend. It is rather that he and I, joining together in the partnership that friends constitute, become a conscious community, a single soul, as Diogenes recalls Aristotle to have said, dwelling in two bodies—μία ψυχὴ δύο σώμασιν ἐνοικοῦσα (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 5.20).

The community of consciousness allows friends not merely a more extensive subjectivity, as though the question of friendship might be solved by asking: What does a friend, considered as someone in my objective world, contribute to the subjective being that I desire? Through my friends, I acquire a wider, deeper, and more powerful range of *objective* conscious life. Think here of conversation (dialectic) as a paradigm of how such enrichment occurs. Conversation is not simply the additive co-presence of two independent trains of thought. In conversation there emerges between interlocutors a richer *object* of discourse; what they are talking about is enlarged and enriched by the synergy—the cooperative activity—of conversation, and the meaning of each moment of the discourse is correspondingly amplified. I mean more by virtue of what we together mean; for my correspondent's meaning is in a sense my meaning. In the same way, it is in general true that the enhancement of my being not simply as subject but as objectively determined consciousness is accomplished by the richer field of objective being made possible by political life, that is, by the life of friendship.

7

Thus it is clear that we ought to live together, that everyone wishes this above all else, and that the happiest and best among us especially do. (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245b9–11)

The argument I have attributed to Aristotle in support of this conclusion may be viewed as an extension of his early remarks in *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9 that picture the solitary life as one in which it is difficult to sustain the activities that good people care most deeply about. Social life, in contrast, by enabling shared activities, makes possible a continuity of activity that otherwise would be virtually impossible.¹⁴ I have suggested here that in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle intends the notion of shared activity upon which this view depends to apply to the cognitive and general psychic elements of our lives as well.

I have offered this as a reading of Aristotle's thought that proposes shared consciousness rather than self-consciousness as the fruit of friendship. But some form of self-awareness does play a role in the parallel discussion of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (9.9, 1170a13–1170b20). In the final moment of the complex and recondite argument of that chapter, Aristotle

traces the pleasure we take in the life and activity of our friends to the pleasure we take in our own life, a pleasure that depends upon the awareness we have of our own lives. We may wish to call such awareness self-consciousness, but it is important to be clear that we mean by this the consciousness we have of our lives as lived. Here “self-consciousness” refers not to the reflexive self-awareness that we know from shame, pride, embarrassment, or surprised delight at our present experience, but to the self-awareness that characterizes simple first-order consciousness—my knowing what I am thinking or seeing or saying or doing or that I am alive. And the pleasure I take in such consciousness is the pleasure I take in these acts when they are good.

Even here the thrust of Aristotle’s argument is toward the shared quality of the experience of friends. For, he argues,

to perceive that one lives is among those things pleasant in themselves, since life is naturally good, and to perceive the good as belonging to oneself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ] is pleasant. And life is particularly desirable for good people [τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς] because existence is good and sweet to them, for they are pleased by their common perception [συναισθανόμενοι] of what is good. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170b1–5)

Aristotle’s shift to the plural and his reference to co-perceiving reveal that he understands the individual satisfaction we take in the awareness of our active lives to be enhanced by the collective awareness of friends. It is this understanding that enables him to conclude that

as a person who takes life seriously is to himself, so he will be to his friend, for his friend is another self. So just as it is desirable for each person that he himself exist, so, or nearly so, is it desirable for him that his friend should. His existence is desirable because he perceives his existence as good, such perception being inherently pleasant. So there must be common consciousness [συναισθάνεσθαι ἄρα δεῖ] of the friend as well that he exists, and this will be accomplished by living together, that is, by sharing discourse and thought. For this is clearly what living together means for human beings, and not simply, as in the case of cattle, eating in the same pasture. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170b5–14)

Here the awareness to which Aristotle refers must be understood as shared. It clearly cannot mean simply that my friend be aware of his

life. But neither can it simply be a matter of my being aware of my friend's life; I could achieve that by reading his biography or talking to his mother. Aristotle's insistence that συναίσθησις be realized by common discourse and thought makes clear that the argument here concerns the shared consciousness that I have argued plays a central role in the *Eudemian Ethics*.

What is notable about the argument of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as opposed to that of the *Eudemian Ethics* is the disappearance of the topos contrasting divine and human well-being. It is as though the force of the aporia has so effectively been relieved that we are left primarily with the question: What is it about our friends that we value, and how does that valuing take place? So after a few short moves to show the desirability of friends in our lives by simpler considerations, Aristotle turns (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170a12–b19) to an argument that he describes as founded more centrally in the actual nature of things (φυσικώτερος).

It is in the context of such an argument that the appeal is made to the importance of συναίσθησις, but now, as we have just seen, συναίσθησις is not primarily what friendship provides, but part of an explanation of what is required if it is to be desirable. Here συναίσθησις, originally part of a solution to the aporia of the desirability of friends, becomes an explanation of how, given such a solution, radical subjectivity may continue to cherish and desire the consciousness of others. I have not meant to argue that on Aristotle's view subjectivity has been exposed as illusory, to be replaced by a mysterious mode of collective awareness. On the contrary, I have meant to suggest the respects in which Aristotle sees subjectivity as enhanced by the possibility of a we-subject in friendship. Understanding 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. But it need not require that we surrender the distinction between a view of the world from here and a view from there, or the distinction between a view of the world from here or there and a view from nowhere.

The fact that the subjectivity of consciousness is no argument against friendship is thus not a rejection of that subjectivity. The self is not abrogated in social life, but amplified in the formation of communal consciousness: the community of shared intention, plan, thought, regard, discourse, the whirl of co-activity that is friendship, polity, and

culture. One flowering of this theory of the self's capacity to enlarge itself is the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiosis*, the thought that the sage may come to see more and more of the world as identical to himself. A more centrally Aristotelian development is in the Alexandrian tradition, kept alive in Arabic and Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages and articulated in Renaissance Averroism, of the sage's union with the active intellect, mind as it forms the single essential unity of human consciousness partaking in the divine.

In none of these teachings does the individual subject disappear; whether in friendship, polity, or contemplation, the self is enhanced by incorporation, not diminished. Perhaps these facts may lay to rest the myth that the subject is a unique invention of the modern world, conceived in the strife and confusion of Augustine and Descartes and in our age sublimed into the ether of signifiers. For Aristotle human life is life of the conscious subject, a subject whose self-sufficiency, as it now emerges, is only apparently threatened by the social being involved in friendship.

Justice and Virtue

THE *REPUBLIC*'S INQUIRY INTO PROPER DIFFERENCE

I

The *Republic* is traditionally subtitled “On Justice,” and when we begin reading the dialogue, it seems clear that justice is to be its central topic. Book 1 in fact could be read as an independent dialogue specifically about justice, on the model of those Platonic dialogues devoted to the discussion of a single topic, topics such as piety in the *Euthyphro*, the highly elusive *σωφροσύνη* in the *Charmides*, or understanding in the *Theaetetus*. So we might imagine book 1 as an aporetic dialogue with a central eponymous character and dedicated to an investigation of justice, a dialogue entitled perhaps “Thrasymachus,” with the subtitle “On Justice,” the subtitle that Thrasylus in fact gave to the entire *Republic*.¹

But as we read further into the dialogue, and particularly as the argument begins to develop in book 2, the focus of the discussion appears to shift to a larger concern, a concern with the general topic of virtue, and specifically virtue in relation to individual happiness. When I was first introduced to the *Republic* as a student, I was told that it is about the question of the relation of virtue to happiness, either in the form of the question of the rewards of virtue, or in the form of the cognate question of whether there is a conflict between duty and interest. It is in terms of this larger question of virtue and its relation to happiness that the dialogue is often presented; the surface question remains one concerning the nature of justice, but the larger question that is seen to emerge is some version of the question of whether virtue is sufficient for happiness.

In this respect the *Republic* may be thought to reflect a more general feature of Platonic dialogues: the complexity of their subject matter. Often a dialogue's topic is unclear, and in dialogues that appear to have an overt topic, that appearance often vanishes on a deeper reading of the conversation. Is the *Phaedrus* about love or about rhetoric? Is the *Gorgias* about rhetoric or about (in the words of one ancient critic) "the ethical principles we require for political happiness"?²

This is a fact that seems hardly worth mentioning in the case of the *Republic*, whose scope is so broad as to include virtually every important issue Plato discusses anywhere, and which yet, miraculously, weaves them together in a work of seamless artistic genius. It is that seamlessness that makes debates about the dialogue's central focus seem at once endless and pointless: Is the *Republic* a work about social philosophy or a work about individual virtue? Is the picture of *kallipolis* merely an allegory for the soul, or a self-standing political program? Are the long discussions about ontology and epistemology merely excursions in the service of the political and ethical force of the dialogue, or are they subjects for which the earlier discussions are preparatory? These questions seem to fade in the face of the integrity and coherence of Plato's artistry, and may divert us from seeing the connections and analogies that Plato invites us to see.

But in spite of all this, justice remains the thematic thread that weaves its way through the course of the dialogue's long discussion, and which seems to stand as the paradigm of virtue insofar as that discussion is devoted to the question of virtue's rewards. In this essay I propose to look at these two concepts together, at justice and virtue, to see how they might reveal some aspects of Plato's thought in this rich and complex dialogue. Specifically I want to show how attending to the question of the relationship in the dialogue between justice and virtue will reveal a central feature of Plato's theory of justice in the *Republic*, the respect in which justice is a principle of *appropriate difference*, a virtue that governs the articulation of right and proper division.

2

What, then, is the relationship between justice and virtue? Here's a simple place to begin: justice *is* virtue. An easy read of the dialogue

might lead us to identify justice and virtue, or at least to see justice as a paradigmatic form of virtue. On such a view, the question that begins in book 2 may be read simply as a continuation of the discussion of book 1. The initial concern with the nature of justice is revealed on reflection to be a general concern with the nature of virtue and specifically with the reasons for pursuing it, that is, with the question of the rewards of a good life.

It is not difficult to see the attractiveness of such an identification, and to see why it is that we often tend to think of justice as a pivotally necessary aspect of virtue in general, not merely a condition of a virtuous life, but a condition central to our very concept of a virtuous life. Two reasons might be thought to lead us in this direction. First, we tend to think of justice as a primary mode of *social* morality, conceiving of it as the central condition of social or political virtue, and we then, in turn, take social or political virtue as primary or even essential to our notion of morality. Secondly, we are impressed with the fact that justice concerns our relations to others; if we think that our moral, in contrast to our prudential concerns, are essentially about such relations to others, this fact might lend credence to the centrality of justice in our moral repertory. On both of these views, justice, precisely because it is seen to organize the moral habits and modes of actions and institutions in which as individuals we are able to flourish in our dealings in the political and social realm, comes to be viewed as the cardinal social virtue. It is surely some such reasoning that leads to John Rawls's claim at the beginning of his *Theory of Justice*; "Justice," he there writes, "is the first notion of social institutions, as truth is of the system of thought."³

When we think of justice and virtue this way, we can perhaps understand why justice was such a key concept in Greek moral thought, and why the Greek δίκαιον was a standard word for doing right and ἄδικον for wrongdoing. To feel comfortable with this connection, that is, to recognize the respect in which justice might name a larger sense of moral or political lawfulness, recall Aristotle's discussion at the beginning of book 5 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Justice and injustice appear to be said in several senses: A person who breaks the law and a person who takes more than his share, that is, an unfair person, are both said to be "unjust." So "just"

means both lawful and fair and “unjust” both unlawful and unfair. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 5.1, 1129a27–35)⁴

Compare, in a contemporary setting, the fact that the United States Department of Justice is concerned not merely with those aspects of criminal activity and judicial response that have to do with fairness and equity or with people getting a proper share of the goods and services of society. The aim of the judicial system itself is often thought of as achieving justice. We are then led to reconcile the larger and the more specific senses of justice by thinking of the judicial as charged with seeing to it that criminals and sometimes victims receive “what they deserve.”

3

The view that I have sketched, as well as depending on a broad understanding of *justice*, depends on a very broad understanding of *virtue*, an understanding in which “virtue” refers to a general state or condition of morality. But as we read the *Republic*, we very soon come to realize the infelicity of such a view as an interpretation of Plato. Recall the first introduction of the concept of virtue in our dialogue. Early in book 1 of the *Republic* Socrates and Thrasymachus are discussing what happens when a horse is injured, and Socrates asks whether a horse, when injured, “becomes worse with respect to the virtue of dogs, or that of horses?” and answers: “the virtue of horses” (*Republic* 1, 335B).

The context here makes clear that when Socrates speaks of the virtue of horses and the virtue of dogs what he has in mind are the characteristics that make horses good horses and that make dogs good dogs. Somewhat later, in a discussion with Thrasymachus, the notion of virtue is connected with that of function (ἔργον); Socrates asks Thrasymachus,

Does there seem to you to be a virtue for each thing that has some function assigned to it? (*Republic* 1, 353B)

A function (as is made clear in Aristotle’s subsequent account of the concept) is an activity that is characteristic of a being; it is what something is engaged in doing when it is most being itself. It is (as we hear in English cognates of the Greek ἔργον) the *work* specific to an entity under some particular description.

A *virtue*, as we come to see in the development of the arguments, is in turn a quality an entity has that enables it to perform its function well, that is, to be itself characteristically in a good fashion. It is for this reason that Socrates is able to discuss in the first place the virtue of a horse or of a dog. Understood in this way, a virtue is simply a good quality. We ought therefore to be less inclined, when speaking morally, to think of a general condition of virtue than to think of particular virtues, for a virtue, as is perhaps most obviously true in Aristotle's subsequent use of the concept, is a good state of character. It is, as becomes clear in Aristotle's treatment, the dispositional capacity of a moral subject for appropriate action, a disposition for agency that is at the same time brought about by action.

We might pause here for a moment to note the importance of this notion of virtue to questions of moral philosophy. For when virtue is central to the enterprise of moral theory, as it was in much of ancient and medieval theory and as it has become in recent so-called virtue ethics, the effects on moral philosophy are deep. The central question of moral philosophy, rather than being the question of what I should or shouldn't do, becomes instead the question of what kind of person I should or shouldn't become. Emphasis accordingly is less upon issues of licit and illicit actions or the rules governing such action than upon virtues and vices understood as states of character or their lack.

States of character as virtues may be thought of on a model of the descriptions of desirable qualities that either are composite and determined in relation to the subject in question, as when we speak of the *virtue of a knife*, or are single and qualitatively determined, as when we speak of the *virtue of sharpness*. We may thus find ourselves speaking, on the one hand, of *human virtue* or, on the other, of *the virtue of temperance*, or of any of the specific states of character in terms of which we praise one another as trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, or reverent.

In all these cases, of course, the disposition, as I mentioned, is a disposition for appropriate action. A virtue is to be understood (to use John McDowell's felicitous phrase) as a reliable sensitivity to the requirements that situations impose upon behavior.⁵ It is therefore important to stress, lest we lose sight of this fact in our enthusiasm for virtue ethics, that the answer to the question, what kind of person should I become? is, on Plato's and Aristotle's view alike: a person properly disposed to

act in certain appropriate ways. How we are to negotiate the differing roles of character and action in the economy of our moral theories is a central issue with which moral philosophy is asked to deal, and one that often lies at the center of Plato's thinking on moral issues.

In the argument of the *Republic*, that issue might seem particularly problematic. For Socrates proposes in the heart of the early books of the dialogue to convince Glaucon and Adeimantus that the just life is valuable in its own right, and the argument at the end of book 4 is meant to register the success of that project. But as a number of readers have pointed out, the problem that Socrates addresses is set in terms of a conception of justice understood as just action and just behavior, whereas the account of justice that Socrates offers as an answer to that problem concerns justice as a state of character, as a certain harmony of the soul. But if the project is to justify doing just acts and refraining from unjust ones, and the justification instead offers a properly ordered soul, then the argument has missed the point unless we can show that the former behavior entails the latter condition. Where does Socrates show such entailment?⁶

But if we bracket this question, we should recognize that our discussion has led us to entertain a more sophisticated view of the relation between justice and virtue, for we can now say that justice is *a* virtue. This means simply that it is one among the states or qualities of an entity that in some sense enable that entity to do well what it characteristically does. And this recognition in turn should lead us to the question, what virtue specifically *is* justice? Notice that this is the very question that the *Republic* asks in book 1 and again in books 2 to 4. To what such state do we refer when we term an entity such as an individual or a city just? Early in book 2, Socrates proposes that (a) the answer to this question, because justice is a general attribute, will be constant over several different kinds of entity to which we might ascribe it, and that (b) we would do well to look at justice in a political organization, where it might be easier to discern.

4

So: whatever it is to which we ascribe the virtue of justice (say of it, in other words, that it is just), justice is something (or one of the several things) that enables it to do well what its function is. What sort of

thing? Following Socrates's proposal, let us talk first about the city, where this means a society or commonwealth: a "republic"—any kind of organization of individuals who come together with a common weal. To know what justice is in a commonwealth, we will need to know what the characteristic activity of such an entity is, that is, we will need to know what is the nature of a commonwealth. Socrates suggests that we address this question by imagining the origin of social collectivity. He finds this origin in the division of labor, the simple fact that none of us is self-sufficient. Thus Socrates at 369B: "I think that a city comes to be because none of us is self-sufficient, but we all need many things."

The argument with which he immediately follows this observation is simple but critical. Different folks being different, they are therefore able to do different things, and there will therefore be better and worse divisions of labor depending on who does what. Put this observation together with the claim that someone will do work best if she devotes the large part of her energies to that work, and there emerges the central argument of the early parts of the *Republic*: a society will work best if different people do different jobs, and if they do the jobs for which they are best suited.

It should be clear that this argument depends on several assumptions that we might find questionable. One is the notion that the differences among people are sufficiently determinate to make possible clear answers to the question, who is best qualified to do what? The other is that it will be clear how to determine who does what, or at least how to determine who decides who does what. These are interesting questions and questions that may justifiably trouble us about the political organization that is imagined in the course of the dialogue. But they are questions that it may be fruitful to bracket when we are trying to understand the nature of Platonic justice. For we need first to understand the formal principle underlying that organization for the questions even to arise; that principle, I suggest, is one of the desirability of people doing work for which they are suited.

We have then, according to Socrates, the originating principle of a political organization, together with the recognition that anything will count as a virtue of such a commonwealth if it makes that system of organization work well. Note that this archaeology and determination of virtue will apply to any kind of social organization that is

devised for a common purpose. Consider, to use a perverse example, those ensembles in numerous heist movies that set out to rob colorful financial institutions; imagine a group setting out to rob the Cassa di Risparmio in Florence. There are a number of characteristics that such a group will need to cultivate or hope that it antecedently possesses if it wishes its venture to be successful. It will need intelligent planning, and it will need both as a group and individually not to be easily frightened. If it is to perform the robbery well, it will need furthermore to be able to practice a kind of self-restraint; our thieves must not seize the first piece of money they see nor become so greedy as to endanger the operation by overextending its duration.

It should be obvious that I have just mentioned three of the four cardinal virtues that Socrates invokes in the early books of the *Republic*, the virtues of wisdom, courage, and σωφροσύνη; temperance or self-mastery. In addition, our band of thieves will need to be able to carry out a number of particular functions. Someone will need to be a driver, for example, and someone will need to deactivate the alarm systems; with the proper imagination, and assuming that we have watched the right movies, we can easily extend this list. Note furthermore that for each of these specific *functions* there will be an appropriate specific *virtue*. A group planning a heist will wish to have as a driver someone who knows how to drive—indeed, someone who is a *good* driver. Similarly, the person who is to deal with alarm systems must understand such systems, and the person who is to stand guard should be someone who is alert. In general, the several functions of a complexly organized project like a heist will be best carried out by people who have the skills to carry them out. It is this fact that is often behind the wit and verve of heist movies, which are in a sense the descendants of such fairy tales as Grimm’s “The Six Servants,” tales in which grotesqueries are fantastically transformed into virtues. And it is, as I shall suggest in a moment, a version of this fact (though less fantastical) that informs Plato’s theory of justice.

I remarked that we have already mentioned wisdom, courage, and temperance as virtues integral to our project, and now we have noticed in addition specific virtues desirable to best carry out particular functions necessary to the project. What about the virtue of justice? Is it similarly a characteristic that will appear in the list of qualities we will look for in a good band of thieves? If we think of the project of rob-

bery itself as illicit and of justice simply on the model of a general principle of social morality, it would appear that justice is precisely something lacking from the enterprise we have imagined. But in fact, the justice of the *Republic* is indeed required for our project; indeed it is precisely what we have been talking about in the previous paragraph. For it is the assignment of tasks according to the principle, give to each person the job he is best able to do, that results in the condition of justice. So our project will be just insofar as good drivers drive, skilled technicians handle the computer systems, and masterminding is carried out by master minds.

This is essentially how justice is defined by Socrates in the conversation at 433A and B of the *Republic*:

Justice, I think, is exactly what we said must be established throughout the city when we were founding it. . . . We stated, if you remember, that everyone must practice one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited. Moreover, we've heard many people say and have often said ourselves that justice is doing one's own work and not meddling with what isn't one's own. . . . Then it turns out that this doing one's own work in a certain way may be presumed to be justice. (*Republic* 4, 433A–B)

Here “one's own work” must be understood—this is the force of Socrates's addition “in a certain way”—to mean the work appropriate to one, that is, the work, as he has just pointed out, for which one is “naturally best suited.” Justice is precisely this principle that functions are to be carried out by the citizens best suited to carry them out.

Recall that this account applies not simply to justice in the commonwealth, but to justice in the individual as well. Here is how Socrates puts it:

A person is just in the same way as a city. . . . And the city was just because each of the three classes in it was doing its own work. . . . Then each one of us in whom each part is doing its own work will himself be just. (*Republic* 4, 441D)

Several things important for the understanding of our dialogue and for the understanding of other aspects of Plato's thinking follow from this account of justice. In the first place, note that an individual is just by analogy with the global justice that characterizes the city, and not

by virtue of contributing to that justice. It is tempting to suppose that because political justice is each person doing what she is best suited to do, justice for the individual is any given person so doing what she is best able to do. But that's wrong; individual justice is an analogue to political justice, and not a shadow of it. It is the principle according to which each functionally differentiated element within the individual does what it is best able to do.

In one sense, this fact is simply an expression of the original strategy of book 2, the strategy that leads Socrates to urge that their investigation begin with justice in the city, where things are larger and easier to see, and only then turn to the individual, attending to how the form is similar in the two (369A). In this recommendation, and in the subsequent playing out of Socrates's strategy, there is a constant intimation that justice in the individual, though perhaps more difficult to discern, is the true goal of their inquiry. This intimation might tempt us to read the entire political thrust of the dialogue as merely in the service of an individual moral psychology. Succumbing to this temptation, as I suggested earlier, would be a mistake, although it would be an equal mistake to read the dialogue as merely an essay in political imagination. But recalling this strategy reinforces our recognition that justice in the city and justice in the individual are said by Socrates to be formally equivalent, and thus structurally analogous in the sense I have just outlined.

But if this is true, we can't help but wonder what the relationship is between the justice that characterizes an individual citizen's soul and that citizen's contribution to social and political justice. Moreover, we may wonder how the isomorphism of justice in city and soul is connected to the claim of the later books that cities of a certain sort engender citizens that are like them.⁷

A related, though parenthetical point, is this: it does not require a great feat of literary imagination to read the definition we are given in book 4 as a variant of what was rejected in book 1, when Polemarchus offers as an account of justice the saying of Simonides that it is just to render to each that which is his due (331E). Reflecting on the similarity of these accounts of justice should serve to remind us of the manner in which Plato's dialectic in its search for definition looks to the discovery not of some privileged formula but of the proper understanding of the several formulas that tradition supplies to the learned. In a sense, what has happened by book 4 is only that the discourse has pro-

vided to its participants the proper sense of “render” and “his due,” and therefore made possible the appropriation of a truth that otherwise could not be properly understood. At the same time, the similarity reinforces the necessity of recalling the conversation of book 1 in the midst of our reading of the later books of the *Republic*, a recollection that must pose for any thoughtful reader one of the central interpretive questions for this dialogue. What is the relation between the ordinary accounts of justice that inform the discussion of book 1 and the more technical and developed account of justice that governs the dialogue’s subsequent discussion?

More central to our narrative is the following point: it is not sufficient to say, as we sometimes do, that justice according to Plato is a matter of balance or harmony among the parts of the city or of the individual, not even if we add, *proper* balance or harmony. It is of course important to realize that justice as a form of harmony is, like temperance, a different sort of virtue from wisdom and courage. Wisdom and courage belong to the whole by virtue of belonging to some part of the whole; justice and temperance, however, do not properly belong to any part at all, but only to the whole and only by virtue of some global fact about the parts in their relation to one another or to the whole.

This distinction is not difficult to understand. A variously colored group of animals need not be a group of piebald animals; for the group to be variously colored does not require that each of the members of the group be variously colored. But a hungry group of animals is probably a group of hungry animals; in the former case but not in the latter, the global feature is the result of a relation among the features of the group’s constituents rather than an additive enlargement of those features. But when we have pointed this fact out, we have not yet specified the nature of justice in a subject until we specify *what kind* of harmony or balance it is. I have suggested that the kind of harmony is that achieved when the differentiation of function is determined by what differentiated parts of the subject are best able to carry out the subject’s several specific functions.

Finally, it is not sufficient to characterize justice as a mere division of labor. If we are to recognize justice as a *virtue*, it is essential that we characterize the division of labor as carried out according to some normative principle. Socrates’s archaeology of the city posits the division of labor, or more technically the division of function, as the origin of

the polis, that is, the origin of political or social structure. But a good polis is one in which that structure is articulated according to a normative principle, and it is that normative principle that introduces the virtue of justice into the city. The principle I have pointed to is the principle that articulates differentiation of function by appealing to what different elements in the city are best suited to do.

5

So we can now put simply the notion of justice that is developed in those sections of books 2 to 4 that concern the city. A city is constructed on the principle of a division of function. That is because such a division is the fundamental feature of social life. Justice is the principle of a differentiation of function that is based on *natural ability*. If the question is, what should different groups of folks do? the answer is, what they are good at, that is to say, what they are best suited to do. That is, as we might say, only just.

Two points about virtue now follow, one that is clear in what we have said, and one that remains to be made explicit. The first is simply that, as I have stressed, justice in this sense is said to be a *virtue*, and the reason this is understood to be a virtue is quite simple: it is good for people to do what they are good at. We need however to parse this fact quite carefully: for people to do what they are good at is a good thing. It is, of course, a different question whether or not to do what they are good at is a good thing for those people. But properly parsed, the principle that it is good for people to do what they are good at is the principle of justice.

The second point about virtue is this: to say that justice is the principle of a differentiation of function that is based on *natural ability* is tantamount to saying that it is the principle of differentiation based on *virtue*. For a virtue just is, as we have seen, a quality that enables its subject to perform some function well. When, therefore, Socrates says that justice is the principle “that everyone must practice one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited” he is essentially saying that in a just city, each person practices the occupation for which he has the appropriate virtue.

The same type of analysis, as I indicated, yields an understanding of justice in the individual; justice is the harmony achieved when each functionally differentiated element of a person is given and performs a

function for which it is best suited, that is, for which it has the virtue. Realizing this fact should lead us to reflect on the question, what is the virtue, say, of mind—that is, what is wisdom or σοφία—in terms of the question, what is the appropriate function of mind? But we should also be led to ask about spirit, what is its appropriate function and its virtue? And what is it to desire and to desire appropriately?

Note that in the case of these questions, our earlier *political* uneasiness about how best to determine who is qualified to do what presents itself quite differently. Within the context of a psychological theory based on a notion of faculties and their natural activities, the concern for appropriate differentiation of function and faculty is simply a concern for psychic harmony and balance. The notion that one might do well to think with one's heart appears as odd as the notion that one might do well to watch carefully with one's ears, or listen with one's eyes. To recognize that the mind and not the desires are to think us through how we are to act is not to deny that we need thoughtfully to attend to our desires, as to our emotions and spiritual urges. It is only to recognize that just as mind does not desire, but through its rational powers enables a proper exercise of the desiderative faculties, so desire does not direct our thoughtful action, even though it is critical to our understanding of the proper goals and directions of that action. The realization of this fact is the realization that in the good individual, as in the good city, that which rules—guardians and the mind—is non-tyrannical. I take one central project of the *Republic* to be inviting us to imagine our lives in this way: governed by a reason whose mode of government is non-tyrannical. In this dialogue, Plato offers as a proper model of governance for the living of our lives the vision of a commonwealth led by thoughtful rulers whose rule, as the dialogue never tires of reminding us, stands in sharp contrast to that of a tyrant.

An appropriate function, then, is the function for which a thing is best suited, and that in turn means the function for which it has the appropriate virtues. Justice, therefore, is a virtue of any complex and functionally differentiated entity in which function is determined on the basis of virtue. It turns out, therefore, that justice is, so to speak, a self-referring virtue. It is the virtue that characterizes those entities whose functional differentiation is in accordance with the principle of function following virtue. It is, to reveal again why we think of it as justice, the proper adjustment of function and virtue.

6

Justice may therefore be thought to be a quite general principle of a proper agreement between being and acting, or more precisely, between dispositional and active being: between the way things *are*, and what it is that they are busy at work *being*. It is for this reason that justice is able to appear in the *Republic* not simply as a politically and morally grounded concept, but as a metaphysical and ontological concept as well; the forms and their connection to the Good are governed by such a concept. For the universe as a whole can be thought of as a functionally differentiated complex, and ideally each thing *is busy at work being* what is appropriate for it *to be*, where the first being is analogous to the functioning of elements in the city and the second being, that of the forms, to the natures of such elements that makes them appropriate for such functioning.

It will help to recall in this connection earlier ontological invocations of justice; consider these two moments from the now fragmentary body of pre-Platonic philosophy. Anaximander speaks of generation as the appearance of things out of some indeterminate nature and corruption as their return to that nature when “of necessity they give to one another justice [δίκη] and recompense [τίσις] for their injustice [ἀδικία].”⁸ In Anaximander’s view, coming into being is figured as a mode, so to speak, of ontological *πλεονεξία*, the greed and overreaching of one’s due that violates proper justice; existent things overstep the primordial justice of equality represented in the indeterminate *ἄπειρον*. Compare this view with the saying of Heraclitus that war is common and that justice is strife.⁹ Heraclitus sees justice in the eristic struggle of difference found in being and in its deepest polemical structure.

We might describe the distinction between these two thinkers in anachronistic terms as the distinction between an ontological politics of equality and an ontological politics of difference. Plato situates himself in the midst of this dialectic, offering the allegiance of particular things to their essential natures, that is, to their forms, as a mode of justice. This ontological justice is determined by an equality of individuals under the forms, although the forms themselves are defined in their being by their essential difference from one another.

In a just cosmos, therefore, the forms must be governed by the same principles of right difference that I have suggested characterize a just

society or a just individual. Socrates is thus able to speak of justice and injustice among the forms themselves, as he does in book 6:

For surely, Adeimantus, there is little leisure for the person whose thought is truly on being to look down to human affairs, and by fighting with them come to be filled with envy and hatred; but by always looking at those things that are organized and always as they are, and realizing that they neither are unjust to nor are treated unjustly by one another, but all are in order according to reason, that's what he imitates and above all tries to be like. (*Republic* 6, 500C)

Think here, following the *Republic's* spatial metaphors, of justice as the ideal principle that governs the *downward* vector of book 6's divided line, a vector of imaging, but also of dispersion and exemplification, producing the diaspora of being whose upward direction is governed by eros, by the love that the phenomenal world has for its own true nature. As the horizontal dimension of the divided line is governed by principles of multiplicity and unification, so the vertical dimension evokes the twin themes of justice and love that properly divide and hold together the commonwealth of being.

Thus the sense in which justice plays a role in the *ontology* of the *Republic* becomes clearer in light of the notion of justice I have urged is at work in that dialogue. Insofar as it is right for things to act out their nature, justice is once again some form of agreement between on the one hand proper *being*, figured in the dialogue as virtue, and on the other proper *action*, figured in this dialogue as function.

7

As a study of justice, the *Republic* may then be seen as an inquiry into the ethics and metaphysics of *difference*, of the proper modes of being's articulation into differentiated parts. What I have suggested is that if a complex entity, a city for example, is, as a city perforce must be, functionally differentiated, it makes sense to ask what is the principle of right differentiation. And since that principle is justice, the inquiry into justice is an inquiry into that principle. The dialogue thus figures justice as a principle of difference, a principle in which function is determined by ability, and differentiation follows the lines of virtue.

In this sense, the *Republic*, insofar as it is an essay on justice, is an essay on the principle of appropriate *division*, an inquiry into the nature of *right difference*.

Several years ago, I had the occasion to read two books, both devoted in different ways to celebrating differences among people and urging greater respect and appreciation for those differences. I was struck by the fact that in both these books, Plato appears as a central arch-villain, repeatedly depicted as a relentless champion of unity understood as uniformity, and therefore understood in such a way as to undermine and establish impediments to what one of the authors termed “the dignity of difference.” What I have here tried to show is that the account of justice as a regulatory principle of difference ought to lead us to distrust such descriptions.¹⁰

The *Republic’s* foregrounding of justice as a regulatory principle of difference may temporarily obscure our vision of the issue of appropriate *collection*. But it is an issue that the dialogue urges requires our attention. What are the principles of right collection to which Plato’s discourse in this dialogue appeals? If a city is to be appropriately organized, it must not only be differentiated in the right way, which in the conceptual scheme of the *Republic* means that parts must be given the functions for which they are best suited. It must also be true, in the first place, that only differences that truly make a difference are honored. The city must be attentive to those accidental differences that obscure an underlying equality. Justice must therefore attend to equality at a deeper level than that of mere equity. It must also be true, in the second place, that the city is a whole, and not merely a random cluster of parts. We might call this the Platonic virtue of integrity. It is not mentioned explicitly in the *Republic*, but I take it to inform the discussion of that dialogue from its politics to its ethics to its ontology. The integrity of being, as I have urged with the differentiation of being, must characterize generally the complex entities in the *Republic’s* purview, not only the city, but the individual soul as well, and the modes of being attended to in the ontology of book 6.

The requirement that complex entities if they are to be good must exhibit integrity and wholeness as well as proper differentiation is revealed in a number of ways in the dialogue’s argument. At the most obvious level, it is represented in the correspondent virtue of $\sigma\omega\varphi\rho\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$, which in the *Republic* matches justice as a global virtue,

that is, a virtue that characterizes complex beings like cities or persons by reason of global facts about them rather than facts about one or another of their parts, in this case the global fact of proper agreement rather than proper differentiation. It is thus the principle of political friendship and psychic harmony.

It is more subtly exhibited in two dimensions of the divided line. One is the lateral relation of items at the same level to one another, items that are given unity and integrity only in reference to the principle on the next level of the line, the principle at once of their commonness and of their integrity. The other is the vertical relation of those items to that principle, the ideal unity and integrity of the line itself. This latter unity figures the most basic unity of the *Republic*, the ideal harmony of being and appearance. It is this harmony that in one sense is most fundamental to the dialogue's vision of justice. Recall the witty adumbration of this fact in Glaucon's remark in book 2 (361A) that the paradigmatic form of injustice is the *discrepancy* between appearing and being: appearing to be just while actually being unjust.

Very early in book 5, and therefore quite soon after the explicit account of justice as a principle of proper difference, the discussion turns, in a way that might seem accidental, to the question of women. Here Socrates mounts a notorious argument for the equal access of women to the role of guardian by means of the distressing premise that since women are inferior to men in *every* respect, there can be no significant difference between men and women. Note that the issue in fact follows from the discussion we have been engaged in. For the question as Socrates articulates it is explicitly the question of whether all differences are differences that demand differentiation of the sort we have been talking about. Here is how he puts the issue:

When we assigned different ways of life to different natures and the same ones to the same, we didn't at all examine the form of natural difference and sameness we had in mind or in what regard we were distinguishing them. . . . [So] we might ask ourselves whether the natures of bald and long-haired men are the same or opposite. And, when we agree that they are opposite, then, if the bald ones are cobblers, we ought to forbid the long-haired ones to be cobblers, and if the long-haired ones are cobblers, we ought

to forbid this to the bald ones. . . . And aren't we in this ridiculous position because at that time we did not introduce every form of difference and sameness in nature, but focused on the one form of sameness and difference that was relevant to the particular ways of life themselves? (*Republic* 5, 454B)

The question here is the question that obviously arises from an inquiry into appropriate difference: granted that men and women are different from one another, are they different in a way that legitimates functional distinction? Are they, as we sometimes say, different in a way that makes a difference? For not every difference, as this moment in the *Republic* means to argue, makes a difference.

Much of the rest of the dialogue concerns these conditions on difference. Some of them involve cases in which sameness trumps difference, as with men and women. Indeed one way of thinking of philosophy, introduced by Socrates at this very moment in the dialogue, is as the ability to understand principles of sameness and difference.

More important, however, is the respect in which difference is the condition of proper unity. I said earlier that one pole of ontological justice is represented by an equality of individuals under the forms; but this is not quite accurate. For a form is a principle of structured wholeness, not merely of a collective sum. The unity of instances under a form is, in the language of the *Theaetetus*, that of a ὅλον and not simply a πᾶν: a whole and not a totality. The instances of a form are in turn not fungible, that is, they are not identical with one another and therefore not interchangeable. For they are equal only insofar as they are instances of that form; each of them is characterized by many other predicates that make them different from one another. So the unity of a form is permeated by a contrary and inescapable element of difference, a difference among individuals brought into harmony by the form that marks their common being. These individuals inhabit a field of difference that is organized insofar as a form is the principle of their being this or that.

It is because the form governs a field of difference, and not merely a plurality, that I am led to speak of the horizontal vector of the divided line, the relation, that is, among the several images that are images of a single original, or among the several instances of a kind that are instances of that single kind, or among the several accounts of a being that are various ways of revealing the single nature of that being.

Elsewhere I have argued that attention to the horizontal is critical to grasping Plato's theory of dialectic and understanding.¹¹ My purpose in introducing the issue here, however, is to make two more local points. One is simply to stress the importance of the lateral dimension in the spatial metaphors of Plato's ontology, an importance that I think would make little sense without the recognition of justice as a principle of difference that I have here been championing. The other is to invoke the strength of the lateral in order to remind us that the Platonic form is ideal, that is, it is a virtual and at the same time transcendent principle of the being of its many instances. These instances, as I have suggested, occupy a field of difference such that their unity must be achieved in integrity and not mere collection. Recall the just individual: precisely because he

does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part . . . he puts himself in order . . . and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale. . . . He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes one, moderate and harmonious. (*Republic* 4, 443D)

This integrity of the individual and the corresponding integrity of the city are reproduced in the ontological register in the integrative harmony of the many in relation to the one. Ultimately what governs this mode of integrity for Plato is the Good, but as the passage from book 4 that we have just read makes clear, the recognition of integrity has its beginnings in a proper understanding of justice.

Several traditions in antiquity attest to the story that in his esoteric lectures on the Good, Plato, in his account of the Good, invoked the One and the indefinite Dyad as the fundamental principles of being. The testimony invokes for us an interesting connection between the Good and these principles. The principles of the One and the Dyad are different from those either of the cardinal or of the ordinal. One and two are principles of "cardinality," that is, of number as quantitative, as first and second are of "ordinality" or order, that is, of number as sequential. But the One and the Dyad are principles of the opposition between collection and division, dynamic principles of unity and multiplicity. Thus they are not in a sense principles of number at all; the One and the indefinite Dyad, unity and teeming diversity, are principles

of being, that is, principles of the modes of our understanding how it is that the manifold of experience presents itself to us in an organized fashion, both in our ability to organize elements of our experience into units, and in our ability to see similarities among the elements of our experience and organize things into their kinds.

It is this ability to understand the structure of our experience as involving the organization of things into their kinds that is part of the foundation of Plato's theory of forms. But that ability can be appreciated only against the background of our cognate ability to recognize difference and to understand it appropriately. My suggestion in this essay is that the *Republic's* attention to justice is grounded in this ability, and that justice is best understood as a principle of appropriate differentiation.

As we have noted at several moments, questions concerning why this is an account of *justice* are unavoidable. What is the relationship between this rather technical sense of justice as appropriate difference and our general sense of justice as a social and political virtue? Or more specifically, how is justice, understood as a virtue of individual psychic organization, related to the notion of justice as a general principle of social and political well-being, and to the individual's contribution to such justice? We can give a rudimentary answer to these questions by noting that no adequate theory of social justice can ignore the issue of how to accommodate difference and allow for proper and appropriate modes of distinction. But finally the *Republic* remains an aporetic dialogue by leaving us with these questions, questions that are perhaps part of the larger moral question that informs the dialogue. What is the relation between, on the one hand, virtue, broadly conceived as a state of soul, or as we would say, a state of character, an individual constitution characterized by proper desire, tranquillity, thoughtful courage, and self mastery, and on the other hand, the happiness, well-being, and political flourishing of individuals in the broad communal and social contexts of our collective lives?

At the same time, to recognize justice as a principle of appropriate differentiation is to recognize the centrality of issues of difference and similarity, division and collection, in the theoretical program of the *Republic*. Acknowledging that fact is also to acknowledge the importance of a proper understanding of the forms as principles of collection. We misread Plato disastrously when we read him in light of a gnostic otherworldliness that pictures the forms as resident in a place

far far away from ours, rather than as the principles of the intelligibility and being of this our sweet world. It is as disastrous a misreading to portray the forms as ontological tyrants designed to stamp out diversity, difference, and otherness. We need to remind ourselves often that, as I have urged, the *Republic* is an argument against tyranny, against the tyranny of the political ruler and the tyranny of reason alike, and against the tyranny of forms as well. It is indeed an argument for rational rule, but its rationality is one that can flourish only in the space of proper collection and division, only by the recognition of the true similarities and differences alike in the world. This is simply to say that in this dialogue, as throughout his writing, Plato is devoted to a philosophical vision designed to enable us to see things as they are.

Male and Female in Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*

*Va-yivra elohim et ha-adam betzalmo betzelem elohim bara oto zachar
u-nekai'vah bara otam*

καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν,
ἄρρεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς.

So God created the human in his own image, in the image of God
created him, male and female created them.

—*Genesis 1.27*

I

Why is it that one animal is male and another female? This question, addressed by Aristotle throughout his treatise *On the Generation of Animals*, does not mean merely to inquire into the process by which a particular animal is determined to be one sex rather than another; that question, to which he turns late in his treatise, presupposes the larger and more radical question of why animals should be sexed in the first place. Aristotle provides the broad outline of an answer to this question early in his treatise: in animals that are sexually dimorphic, the male and the female are, he says, the ἀρχαὶ γενέσεως—the principles of generation, and specifically of animal reproduction, that is, generation of animals of the same kind.

Animal reproduction, the generation by animals of others of the same kind—ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπον γεννῶν, for example, to paraphrase slightly Aristotle's description in the *Metaphysics*: human begetting

human (*Metaphysics* 7.7, 1032a25)—is a good thing for animals, given that living is a good thing but that animals are mortal. Unable therefore to achieve the solitary eternity of an immortal individual, animals settle for and thus strive for the continuation of their species, that there might continue what is one not in number but in kind. Generation is this strategy of providing for the continuity of family given the perishability of family members, and it is for this reason that families go on though their members perish: γένος ἀεὶ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ζώων ἔστι καὶ φυτῶν, as he puts it—the family of humans and of beasts and of plants is forever (*Generation of Animals* 2.1, 732a1–2).¹ The principles of this activity of generation, resulting in the existence of genera or families of animals, are the male and the female, and this fact answers one sense of the question, why do male and female exist?

Given the existence of a dual principle of animal generation, we should expect a differentiation in functional role for male and female; if there are two co-operative principles, there should be two different and coordinate functions. What are these different but coordinate functions? There is, according to one popular version of Aristotle's theory of animal generation, a simple answer to this question; according to that answer, male and female are distinguished by the fact that the male provides the *form* and the female the *matter* of the generated animal.

Such an account of what Aristotle takes to be the difference between male and female in the process of generation would, if true, have important consequences for how we view his larger understanding of the relationship between sexual differentiation and animal being in general. For if we think of an animal's form as the essence of what it is to be that animal, then according to this account the male alone provides the animal's essential nature; the female provides merely the stuff from which an animal is made, and therefore contributes nothing that is an essential part of the animal's being.

The male moreover is the active principle in the process of generation; the female is passive. The reason for this distinction is in turn that the male has a power that the female lacks; it is essentially the power of generation, and it is her lack of this power that leads Aristotle to describe the female as being “as it were, an ἄρρεν πεπηρωμένον”: a “mutilated male,” as the phrase is standardly translated, or as A. L. Peck interestingly renders it in the Loeb translation, a “deformed

male” (*Generation of Animals* 2.3, 737a28). So on this understanding of Aristotle’s view, the female, itself not a fully realized animal, is an instrument essential to the process of animal generation but does not contribute anything essential to the animal that is the result of that process.

In this essay, I hope to show that this common reading of Aristotle, though understandable given some of his language, is seriously misleading. Aristotle’s theory is not that the male provides the form and the female the matter of the generated animal, but that the male, in an act analogous to what we call fertilization, begins the process by which the female grows within herself and bears their mutual offspring. It is this process, the process of the generation of animals, in relation to which Aristotle speaks (though quite rarely) of the male as the formal and the female as the material principle, and in relation to which he identifies the male as active and the female as passive. To understand Aristotle’s views on this subject, however, will require understanding correctly form and matter, and active and passive roles in relation to this process. Such understanding will allow us to see more accurately Aristotle’s theory of animal generation.

In its most extreme form, the view that I have suggested is commonly attributed to Aristotle can come to be assimilated to a view that he explicitly rejects in the course of the *Generation of Animals*. This is the view, which in its early modern form came to be called “preformationism,” according to which the embryo or its parts are contained in miniature (in what some versions of preformationism called “homunculi”) in the body of one or the other of the parents, most usually the father. In antiquity, versions of this theory are found in Apollo’s famous speech in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus, in which the god allows that the mother, as she is called, is not the parent of the child, but the nurse of the fresh-sown embryo; it’s the one who mounts that begets (Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 657–664).² Aristotle is clear and forceful in his rejection of the notion that the offspring itself must somehow be from the very beginning in the seed of one or the other of its parents (*Generation of Animals* 1.21, 729b1ff.).

His rejection is made possible by a theory that employs the important concept of power or potentiality—δύναμις—according to which the animal is contained in the seed only in the sense that the seed has the power to produce the animal by a process of what came to be

called *epigenesis*. This essay is primarily a plea for the recognition that Aristotle's theory is through and through a theory of epigenesis, and an argument about what follows from that fact.

It is somewhat remarkable to see how often the preformationist theory is attributed to Aristotle; one author tells us that

Aristotle buttresses his already strained teleology of female nature with a defective science of biological and reproductive processes . . . [holding that] . . . the male . . . implants the human form during mating. He deposits within the female a tiny homunculus for which the female serves as a vessel until this creature matures. The female herself provides nothing essential or determinative.³

Another indeed lays the origins of the preformationist theory directly at Aristotle's feet:

It was not limits of observation that misled earlier centuries of scientists concerning the facts of generation; rather it was the 20-centuries-long concept, stemming from Aristotle, that women, as totally passive beings, contribute nothing but an incubator-womb to the developing fetus that springs full-blown, so to speak, from the head of the sperm. One's conceptual framework, a certain state of mind, permits one to see and accommodate certain things but not others.⁴

One indeed suspects that it may be a judgment concerning Aristotle's views on men and women, that is, his views on distinctions of gender, that permits this author "to see and accommodate certain things but not others" and that leads to such a radical misreading of Aristotle's views on sex and generation. In fact much literature about Aristotle's sexual biology is devoted to showing that it is his theory of the sexual differences manifest in generation that lead to his allegedly unsavory views on gender relations.

We may be able to understand what there is about Aristotle's views on men and women, or about views and institutions attributed to Aristotle, that might anger readers, but it is sad that this anger should lead to textual misreading as radical as what I have just quoted. We need, in any case, to become clearer about what Aristotle does and does not say concerning the roles of male and female in the process of generation

even to understand accurately what might be the implications of his views for what he elsewhere says about men and women.⁵

2

The view that according to Aristotle the female provides the matter of animal offspring is not a recent one. In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Alexander suggests that when, in a critical passage in book 9, Aristotle distinguishes between two analogous senses of activity or actuality (ἐνεργεῖα), in one of which activity is “as motion in relation to a potentiality” and in another of which it is “as substance in relation to some matter” (*Metaphysics* 9.6, 1048b9), he means the analogy to be understood in the following way:

As someone walking is to someone seated, so is Alexander to the menses. For someone is said to be walking as a motion in relation to a power, that is, as one attribute in relation to another, whereas Alexander is in relation to the menses as substance to matter; for the menses are the matter of a human being.⁶

Alexander’s choice here of menses as the matter in question misunderstands and subverts Aristotle’s argument. For Aristotle has in mind not the menses, out of which an animal *comes to be*, but the living body, out of which, in the special sense demanded by his ontological theory, *it is constituted*. If there is any sense in which the menses are the matter for an animal and an animal may be said to come to be out of menses, it isn’t one in which the animal would be said to be, as it were, *menstrual*, as a box that comes to be out of the wood from which it is made might be said to be *wooden*; the animal, in other words, does not bear the same relationship to the menses that is its matter as it does to the body that is its matter. It must be, then, that the notion of matter is operating differently in the two different cases.⁷

We know from the discussions of the *Metaphysics* that, as a matter of fact, this is true, and that the two senses parallel the two senses of δύναμις that Aristotle is so concerned to distinguish in book 9 of that work. Here is how we may think about it. A human body is qualified in several ways; among these modes of being qualified is the fact (of particular importance since it is essential) that it is alive in the way appropriate to it, that is, by being human. The relationship between the

body of a human being and its being human, that is, between a human body and the human being that it *is*, is a relationship that Aristotle describes in terms of his theory of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια—of powers and their modes of realization or exercise. In this instance the realization is a paradigmatic instance of that mode of ἐνέργεια proper that Aristotle is careful to distinguish from motion. But the relation to the human body of menses as that which *becomes* the human body is one of realization *through motion*. This motion is the development of sperm and menses (or as we would now say, sperm and ovum) into the embryo and finally into the independent animal.

However mistaken Alexander may have been about the particular sense in which Aristotle thinks it true that menses constitute the matter of a human being, Aristotle apparently does think it true in some sense, and we may well wonder why even this should be so. Why should menses be thought to be the matter of the animal in any sense whatever? For thinking of there being matter that is then formed into an animal is to think of birth on the model of production, as though generation were a case of making something out of something. And this way of thinking seems to picture animals as though they were artifacts; it thus seems to introduce that very independence of matter and form in substance that the *Metaphysics* argues against.

Shouldn't we instead expect to find Aristotle expressing a biological view of the coming into being of animals, a view that does not assimilate them to statues or wooden boxes? Such a view might be expressed most simply in the notion that an animal grows from seed. It does not come to be by a process of composition from independent matter and form any more than it is a composite of independent matter and form; its matter and form come into being simultaneously with one another and simultaneously with the complex entity that is the animal. Why then does Aristotle describe the process of generation in terms of matter conveyed by the female and form by the male?

One possible answer that has proved attractive invokes the feature of animal reproduction that I cited at the very beginning of this essay. Aristotle is interested in the fact that among complex animals, natural birth is as homospecific as it is heterosexual, and perhaps the latter of these features explains the former. It is true and important that in the *Generation of Animals* Aristotle is interested in the homospecificity of animal birth, and is concerned not merely, as we might carelessly

think, with one specific instance of the general problem of being arising from nonbeing, not merely with “proliferation and ontogeny.” If cats gave birth indiscriminately to different entities—kittens, puppies, chicks, or tufts of grass—the general problem of ontogeny would remain. But Aristotle’s interests are more particular; they are tied to one of the deepest and most remarkable features of animal life and therefore of the being of substance: the fact, with which we began, that animals replicate themselves in kind, that cats have kittens and dogs puppies. It is, as we might say, not merely genesis but genetics that interests Aristotle in the *Generation of Animals*, not simply how generation takes place, but why it takes place so as to guarantee resemblance between generator and generated. More particularly, it is the resemblance of kind that concerns him here and in general, the phenomenon of homospecificity—the fact, as he puts it in the treatise *On Generation and Corruption*, that from a human being always or generally comes a human being, and from wheat wheat, and never an olive (*On Generation and Corruption* 2.6, 333b8–9).

3

Here is an answer some have taken to be Aristotle’s; it is an obvious answer, but its details are what are important, and if we take those details as part of Aristotle’s embryology, they might serve to explain his theory of sexual function. Parents and their offspring are homospecific because a parent passes its specific form on to the offspring. We might then go on to say—and here perhaps we take Aristotle to be influenced by Greek culture in general and by his own views on the relative natures of male and female—that it is the male parent who does this, who passes on through his sperm the form of human being to the offspring. If we don’t slip into thinking of Aristotle as a preformationist, we can recognize that he thinks of this passing on as purely formal; the father’s contribution is in no way a material contribution. The sperm does not form any part of the *body* of the fetus or new offspring, but only contributes to its *form*: human being, horse, or whatever. The body, on the other hand, is, on this reading of Aristotle’s views, the contribution of the mother, who provides through her menses the material out of which the fetus is formed. So the whole picture is one that is startlingly modern in its appreciation of the way in which genetic

transfer is a formal transfer, and not surprisingly sexist in its view of the relative role of male and female. The mother supplies the matter and is thus the ultimate source of the body, the father supplies the form and is thus the ultimate source of the soul, and all this is offered by way of explanation of the homospecificity of parent and child. Such a theory would then provide a means of explaining sexual dimorphism. It is this view of Aristotle's theory that I mean to call into question.

4

I suggested that if Aristotle's theory of animal generation depicts the father as providing the form of an animal and the mother its matter, it is a theory inconsonant with his larger metaphysical views. Note that this would be true even if animals were not substances; for even the creation of an artifact does not take place by a joining together of form and matter, but by a process of forming the matter. What is especially true in the case of substances is that there is no constitutive matter that exists independently of the substance, and this fact increases the general oddness of supposing that this is an accurate view of the generation of animals. Indeed, the simplest objection to thinking of anything as the matter of a human being in this sense (and therefore to thinking of one thing as contributing matter and another form) is the fact that such a vision of how animals come to be turns out to be a vision of how animals are *made*. And animals, as I have maintained, are not made; they grow from seed. To imagine that they are made is to think of taking matter and imposing a form upon it, as one might imagine (think of the creation myth in Genesis 2) a god picking up clay and breathing animal life into it.

But indeed, none of this is Aristotle's view. To begin with, he does not claim in the *Generation of Animals* that the sperm of the male parent contains the specific form of the adult animal in any sense in which the female menses does not. There is, of course, a trivial sense in which human sperm may be said to "contain" the form of human being; for it is a part of the human being, and so has as part of its formal definition the form of human being, as does eye or blood or marrow. But in this sense so do menses; what is not true is that human sperm "contains" the form of human being in any special sense that explains the formation of human fetuses and the birth of human babies.

In fact, with very few exceptions, Aristotle does not characteristically describe the male as providing the form of the animal. What he says instead is that the sperm constitutes the first mover of a process that results in the adult animal; it is as ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως—a first principle or origin of motion—that the male and the sperm are first and typically described (*Generation of Animals* 1.21, 730a27; 2.1, 734b23; 2.4, 740b25). The sperm is a residue whose essential nature is in the power that it possesses by virtue of its motion, a tool that nature uses as something actively exhibiting the relevant motion—“ἔχοντι κίνησιν ἐνεργείᾳ” (*Generation of Animals* 1.22, 730b21). As such, it initiates, by that motion, the series of motions that result in the existence of an individual having the form of the adult animal; but it does not itself in any special sense *contain* that form.

The view that animals get formed by a successive series of motions that take place in the mother is at the heart of Aristotle’s epigenetic theory, and the claim that that series begins with the motion of the sperm is what connects the sperm to that epigenetic theory. To suppose that the sperm operates by containing the substantial form of the animal in question is exactly to forsake epigenesis in favor of a theory that is essentially preformationist, even if it is what we might call formal rather than material preformationism. Most simply, this essay, as I earlier remarked, is a plea for recognition of Aristotle’s *formal epigenesis*, a reminder that on Aristotle’s view the form or soul of the generated animal must come into being gradually during embryonic development, just as its body does. The form of the animal is not fully present at any time during the motion that is embryonic development, except potentially: not as the εἶδος of a very small animal, and not as a disembodied program or code for an animal.

If it were indeed true that the male is responsible for contributing the specific form of the generated animal, then it would be true that the female contributes nothing essential to the determination of that animal, and there would indeed be little difference between Aristotle’s view and the outlandish view of Aeschylus’s Apollo. The standard difficulties of interpreting Aristotle’s discussion of resemblance and inheritance in *Generation of Animals* 4.3 would appear moot; for it would be a mystery why Aristotle should have thought that the mother needed to be of the same species as the father, or indeed why there should be any such phenomenon as hybrid animals. The mule, a favorite

animal of Aristotle's, would be a totally inexplicable phenomenon. Furthermore, Aristotle's concern to explain the necessity of the male in generation (*Generation of Animals* 2.5, 741a6) would be strange; we should expect him to be concerned to explain the necessity of the *female* in the process of generation.

But these difficulties disappear once we are clear that the essential function of the male is to initiate a series of motions that take place in the mother, remembering that these motions continue in an automatic epigenetic fashion and that the menses remain throughout part of the mother's body, so that the development is affected both by the nature of the menses (different for different animals as any other animal part is) and by the continuing motions of the mother that constitute her life and support of the embryo. As Aristotle says:

By the embryo, I mean the first union of male and female.
(*Generation of Animals* 1.20, 728b34)

5

I said that with few exceptions, Aristotle does not describe the male as providing the form of the animal. But what of those exceptions? Doesn't Aristotle indeed talk about the male as possessing and contributing to generation *form*, even at the same time that he characterizes the sperm as ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως, the principle of motion? The male for instance is said to

furnish the form and the source of motion [παρέχεται τό τε εἶδος καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς κινήσεως], while the female furnishes the body and the matter [τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ὕλην]. (*Generation of Animals* 1.20, 729a10–11)

More generally, in the very midst of his account of generation, Aristotle characterizes as better and more divine the “first cause of motion [ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως] to which belong definition and form [λόγος and εἶδος]” (*Generation of Animals* 2.1, 732a4) and cites this as a reason for the separation of male from female. So even if the male or the male's sperm is the first cause of motion, the ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως, it would seem also to be that to which belongs definition and form.

What could Aristotle mean by describing the male as that “to which belong λόγος and εἶδος”? It is difficult to believe that he might by this

phrase mean that the male itself has the logos and form of *human being*, for example, or horse or dog, whereas the female does not; for no human being is more or less a human being than any other, no horse more or less a horse than any other. Male and female are not thought by Aristotle to differ in relation to *what* they are, but merely as different modes of the same essential nature, somewhat as people of different complexions differ from one another.

To be sure, the situation is more complex than that; the difference between the sexes is precisely of interest because it is not *merely* accidental, but functional. Neither however is it essential, that is to say, it is not the expression of a difference in species. It may then be of larger metaphysical interest to ask whether there are other such differences, and how they fit into Aristotle's ontology.⁸ Clues to how such a question could be answered may be found in the brief and puzzling remarks at the beginning of *Metaphysics* 7.5 on the differences between the sense in which an animal is white and the sense in which an animal is male or female (*Metaphysics* 7.5, 1030b16–27). But whatever we say, women and men, like mares and stallions, remain members of the same *species* and must therefore both exhibit the essential form of what it is to be human or equine.

Nor does it seem likely that Aristotle means to suggest that the sperm contains the λόγος and εἶδος of the animal, that is, the animal's specific form, except in the qualified sense that any part or organ of the animal does. For in the first place, the sperm itself would then be not a part of the animal, but something like, per impossible, the very animal itself with a severely truncated body. More to the point, Aristotle would then, as I suggested above, be espousing the very preformationism that it is his intent to avoid.

What then could he mean? Here I want to detour for a moment and look at the language of some contemporary accounts of animal generation, accounts that I think may help us to understand what Aristotle is about. Here is a description of sexual reproduction from what was some years ago a standard university biology textbook:

Sexual reproduction involves two parents, each of which contributes a specialized cell, a gamete (eggs and sperm) which fuse to form the zygote, or fertilized egg.⁹

Note here the move from thinking of the zygote as the fusion of ovum and sperm, the result of a yoking (as its name suggests) of two gametes, to thinking of it as a fertilized egg, as an ovum that has been fertilized, the result of the activity of one gamete upon another. This move is a common one, and both descriptions are found in biological writing side by side, as though there were no essential distinction between the two, as though what resulted from the fusion of an egg and a sperm were a fertilized egg. The authors of this textbook go on to say that the typical life cycle of an animal is a simple one of growth of a fertilized egg into an adult, which produces more eggs for fertilization.¹⁰ And this way of speaking is carried on in clear view of the mechanics of genetic contribution, which they describe in these words:

The union of one haploid set of chromosomes from the sperm with another haploid set from the egg, which occurs in fertilization, reestablishes the diploid chromosome number. Thus the fertilized egg or zygote, and all the body cells which develop from it by mitosis, have the diploid number of chromosomes.¹¹

Here is another description from a classic textbook, this time by no less a biologist than James D. Watson:

New organisms arise from the highly differentiated sperm and egg, whose union initiates a new cycle of division and differentiation. Thus, although a complicated organism like man contains a large number of cells . . . , all these cells arise initially from a single cell. The fertilized egg contains all the information necessary for the growth and development of an adult plant or animal.¹²

I have quoted these modern authors because it seems to me that their ways of speaking, and in particular their characterization of a zygote as a fertilized egg, the result of an egg having been fertilized by a sperm, would be quite familiar to Aristotle, and seeing so may help us understand what Aristotle's meaning is. Note first that to think of the zygote as a *fertilized egg* is to think of the egg as *passive* and the sperm as *active*. By "passive" I do not here intend the secondary sense of torpid or idle, nor the further derivative sense of submissive; I mean only to English Aristotle's παθητικόν, and so to refer to that which is *acted upon* in contrast to that which *acts*. The understanding that

associates passivity with idleness comes from the conflation of two different though related senses of *activity*. To avoid confusion that might result from this conflation, we need to keep in mind that acting is one characteristic form of ἐνέργεια, and being acted upon is another; in both forms a subject is active in the one sense, but in the first case it acts and is in a different sense active, in the other it is acted upon and is in that sense passive.

Describing the egg captured by the phrase “fertilized egg” as passive is then in a sense merely to remark upon the grammatical form of “fertilized” as a passive participle. But of course not simply grammatical: when we think of the formation of the embryo as a process of fertilization, we are thinking of the male gamete as doing something to the female gamete, namely fertilizing it, and of the female gamete as having something done to it by the male gamete, namely being fertilized. The act of sexual reproduction is thereby figured as beginning with this process of action and passion, namely fertilization, a process that results in what we call the fertilized egg, and in which the fundamental roles of male and female are those of acting and being acted upon. This process is exactly analogous to what Aristotle describes when he says that the male qua male is active and the female qua female passive in that process by which the semen “sets” the menses to form the embryo, where *set* menses is analogous to *fertilized* egg. As Aristotle puts it:

The female qua female is passive [i.e., is acted upon]; the male qua male is active, that is, is the initial source of the motion [τό γε θῆλυ ἢ θῆλυ παθητικόν, τὸ δ' ἄρρεν ἢ ἄρρεν ποιητικόν καὶ ὄθεν ἢ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως]. (*Generation of Animals* 1.21, 729b13f.)

To call the male active and the female passive (which is only slightly less deceptive than calling the male *poetic* and the female *pathetic*) may further mislead us unless we remember also that for Aristotle to be passive characteristically involves a capacity or ability that an entity possesses; it may in other words represent a δύναμις in the strongest sense of that word. We need only think of the many δυνάμεις that Aristotle thinks of as passive: the senses, the emotions, the mind itself. It is important in this respect to keep clearly in mind that the passive is not, in this sense, “just passive.”

To think of the zygote or the embryo as a fertilized egg or as set menses is, secondly, to think of the egg or the menses as matter and the sperm (in both our sense and Aristotle's) as the agent by virtue of which we may say *matter is formed*. But the matter and form in this saying are not the matter and form of the *adult animal*; they are rather the matter and form of the *zygote or embryo*, that is, of the *fertilized egg or set menses*, insofar as it constitutes zygote or embryo.

This point is less a specific biological than a general metaphysical one. Let me put it schematically: if some (bit of) M has the further characteristic of having been F-ed or of being F, and by virtue of this fact is an (instance of) E, then M and F are respectively the matter and form of the entity E; the entity just is formed matter, or matter in a form. If, for instance, a piece of bronze, by virtue of having been shaped into a statue or being statue shaped, comes to constitute or constitutes a bronze statue, then bronze is the matter and statuesque shape the form of the statue; or if an oak beam, by virtue of having been placed in or being in a certain position, constitutes a lintel, then the oak beam is the matter, and the position the form, of that lintel: for the statue is shaped bronze, and the lintel is a positioned beam. We will, of course, need to be able to tell a story about the relationship between the different senses of *being formed* that we have just invoked, and that story will necessitate our understanding the relationship between becoming and being. But having told that story, we will be able to say, with Aristotle, that just as the bronze is matter for the statue and the beam matter for the lintel, so, if an egg or menses by virtue of being fertilized or set comes to constitute a zygote or embryo, then the egg or menses is the matter, and the fertilizing or setting sperm provides the form of the fertilized egg or the set menses. Recall the interesting language of the first of the textbooks we listened to: "an adult which produces more eggs for fertilization."¹³

On this reading, we can begin to see how natural it is to speak of the female as the source of the matter and the male of the form without privileging one or the other with respect to the essential features of the generated animal. Recall in this respect how easily Aristotle himself moves from speaking of the fetus as the union of male and female (μίγμα θήλεος καὶ ἄρρενος) to speaking of the male as providing the form and the female the matter (*Generation of Animals* 1.20, 728b34–729a12).

6

Why do biologists (and the rest of us as well) speak of the zygote as a fertilized egg, rather than, for example, a fertilized sperm, or perhaps an egged sperm? Why do we think of the sperm as doing something to the egg, and not the other way around? Any answer to this question will have to be somewhat speculative, but we can make some guesses. I will begin with two that come from biologists to whom I have posed the question in conversation. (1) It might be, one colleague suggested, that the egg, relative to the sperm, is large, and, as she put it, sluggish and indolent, whereas the sperm is small and, in her words, motile and aggressive. It may seem unlikely that Aristotle, or anyone whose embryology is developed at the macroscopic level, might have entertained this notion; but if we think of avian eggs, which Aristotle studied intensively, it might seem less unlikely (*History of Animals* 6.1, 558b7ff.). (2) It might be, another colleague suggested, that the egg, as it were, stays home, while the sperm goes abroad, and that the place of the zygote is therefore the place of the egg. Generation thus takes place “with” the egg by means of the agency of the fertilizing sperm; precisely because the egg cannot become the embryo except through the agency of the sperm, it is the (fertilized) egg that becomes the embryo.

These suggestions are, as I said, highly speculative; they are meant merely to remind us that many people, eminent modern biologists among them, speak about generation in ways compatible with Aristotle’s embryology. Given his conceptual categories and philosophical vocabulary, someone could easily agree with Aristotle that “the male generates in another, the female in itself,” and that “the male is active and the female passive,” and that “the male provides the form and the female the matter of the embryo,” without in any way denying the real and significant genetic contribution of the female or the female’s formative role in reproduction.

It may be precisely the feature of generation remarked on in the second suggestion that Aristotle has in mind when early in book 1 he distinguishes the coordinate functional roles of male and female. Male and female differ, he there says, because their powers differ one from the other,

the male being that which has the power to generate in another
and the female that which has the power to generate in itself and

out of which comes to be a generated that exists in the generator.
(*Generation of Animals* 1.2, 716a21ff.)

Notice that thus to describe the male and female as distinguished by possessing different but coordinate powers is to attribute to each a power that the other lacks. The male lacks the power to generate in itself, a power that the female possesses, just as the female lacks the male's power to generate in another. This way of putting things, however, is somewhat disingenuous, for it is only the latter inability, the female's inability to generate in another, that Aristotle notes and upon which he remarks, just as though the only significant power were that of the male. The question I have just posed—why speak of a fertilized egg—is precisely the question, why, given the existence of coordinate powers in the male and female, does Aristotle emphasize the ability of the male to initiate the process of embryonic growth; why is the male, so to speak, thought to generate the process of generation?

But even to recognize the male's power as one of a coordinate pair of powers may be helpful. For one thing, it should help us to understand a notorious and generally misunderstood remark in book 2. Aristotle has just observed that the female's bodily contribution to generation, like male semen, is also a residue and also contains all the parts of the animal body potentially, though none actually, including the parts that distinguish the male from the female. He then proposes an explanation of how the female can contain potentially, that is, be able to produce, the sexual parts of a male. To this end, he offers his readers a figurative analogy:

Just as the offspring of disabled parents [πεπηρωμένων] are sometimes disabled and sometimes not, so the offspring of a female is sometimes female, sometimes not but rather male. For the female is, as it were, a disabled male [τὸ γὰρ θῆλυ ὡσπερ ἄρρεν ἐστὶ πεπηρωμένον]. (*Generation of Animals* 2.3, 737a25–28)

To figure the female as a *disabled* male is not to describe the female as mutilated or deformed; it is to register by strong metaphor the fact that the one sex lacks an ability that the other has. A female is, in this trope, comparable to, as it were, an impotent male, an animal that lacks the power of initiating generation—that is, as we have seen, of fertilizing. It does not lack anything essential to the nature of the animal in

question, but only a power specific to the male. The meaning of the figure is revealed in an earlier version of Aristotle's remark:

A woman is, as it were, an infertile male [ἔστιν ἡ γυνὴ ὡσπερ ἄρρεν ἄγονον] for it is on account of a certain inability that the female is female. (*Generation of Animals* 1.20, 728a18–19)

It is, to be sure, the female that is figured as lacking, and so we need to ask, as we have been asking, why that is the case. The female has a corresponding power, the power to generate within; but we find no passage that figures the male as a hysterectomized female. And so the question I have posed concerning our tendency to speak of a fertilized egg presents itself in yet another form: why does Aristotle give prominence in the course of his explanation of generation to the male's power to initiate the process of generation in another?

Perhaps thinking about our puzzle in terms of one power being explanatorily privileged over the other will be helpful. Think back to how Aristotle opens his treatise on the generation of animals. He notes that his discussion so far, presumably in the *Parts of Animals*, has dealt with the causes of animal life in all relevant senses of cause but one; it has considered formal, final, and material causes, but not “the ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως,” the “principle of motion,” that is to say, the cause responsible for initiating the process by which animals come into being. In this work, he says, he will give a description of the parts of animals devoted to generation, and consider the “motive cause.” For, he goes on to say,

inquiry into this [that is, inquiry περὶ αἰτίας δὲ τῆς κινούσης—concerning the motive cause] and inquiry into the generation of each animal is in a sense the very same thing. (*Generation of Animals* 1.1, 715a12–15)

These remarks suggest that Aristotle views the *Generation of Animals* as a work devoted not simply to explaining the conditions of generation, but specifically as well to explaining the *process* of generation, and in particular the initiation of that process. Generation in this respect is explained by appeal to the ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως, the cause that is responsible for generation getting under way. Aristotle's theory identifies the power of the male as precisely that power to initiate the process of generation. So this understanding of the explanatory project of Aris-

totle's treatise on generation provides a different answer to the question why he attends specifically to the power of the male. It is the male, most simply, that has the power to start things going, to initiate and thus in this genetic causal sense to bring about the generation of a new animal.

7

Besides attempting generally to domesticate Aristotle's language of matter and form, action and passion, these last remarks have had a more specific purpose; it is to emphasize again that when Aristotle speaks of matter and form in the *Generation of Animals* he generally understands not the matter and form of the animal that is generating and being generated, but the matter and form of the entity that is in process of being generated or of the process itself, that is, the matter and form of the embryo.

What in this view is the form of which Aristotle is speaking? It is first the form of what for him is the analogue of being fertilized, namely the motion by which the menses first becomes the developing embryo. In this sense, as I have suggested, the male clearly does provide the form, since the male parent provides the semen that contains the motions that transform the menses into fertilized menses. It is secondly the form of the continuing process that results in the animal offspring, the entity in motion that is the developing embryo. Embryos, of course, do not just happen to become the animals that they become; it is no accident that a human fetus becomes a human being. This is because such an embryo is a human being in the making. And so for embryos in general; it is essential to their nature to become the animals they are in the course of becoming.

If what I have suggested has plausibility, it may make Aristotle's views on generation seem less outrageous. Should we be concerned that it does so at the expense of making unclear the very features of homospecificity in generation that I earlier invoked as a possible explanation of why Aristotle speaks of matter and form? For if it is correct that Aristotle rarely mentions form in his account of generation, and if when he does so he is referring to the form of the embryo qua embryo and not to the specific form of the parent (male or female) qua the kind of animal it is, then it would seem that the power of the theory as an

explanatory device for homospecificity has vanished. If the form of the animal is not passed on, what does explain the fact that ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ—human begets human, and not horse or hippopotamus or mink?

But my contention has not been that animal form is not present in the act of generation; it must be, as Aristotle insists repeatedly, present in the parent(s). But it is not, I have meant to argue, present in the sperm (except in the trivial sense mentioned above), nor is it conveyed in the sperm; Aristotle's view is that animal form is passed on by means of the sperm and is reproduced through the agency of the sperm, but is not transmitted *in* the sperm (nor a fortiori *in* the menses). Just so, in Aristotle's analogy, the form of the table may be present (in some sense) in the mind of the carpenter and may be transmitted to the table by the active kinetic agency of the tools. But it is never present *in* the tools, except of course, δυνάμει, as a power that the tools have, the power to form a table from wood. And this is what Aristotle means by speaking of the animal existing potentially—δυνάμει—in sperm and menses alike.

We may put the matter this way: the passing on of animal form from parent to offspring is not an explanatory principle in the *Generation of Animals*; it is (one of) the items that he sets out to explain, and he explains it not by further reference to a form passed on like my grandfather's pocket watch, but by reference to a complex theory of spermatogenic motions, menses, pneuma, animal heat, and so on, a theory meant to explain how form is passed on. The sperm initiates a series of motions that eventuate in the birth of a young animal by virtue of its powers as sperm. But these powers are not more uniquely associated with the specific form of the animal than are those of any other functioning part of the animal—blood, marrow, or, at a higher level, eye and liver. Because the sperm's function is to produce another living animal of the same species, it is said, by virtue of these powers, to contain potentially the soul, that is, the form of the animal, as it contains potentially the body and its parts, and exactly as the female menses are said to do, presumably by virtue of their δύναμις. But the sperm does not contain the form in any *actual* sense; it operates as a mover, that is, as an initiator of a process that results in there being another individual of such and such a form. It is this power to *initiate* the process of generation that the male possesses and the female lacks, and it is this

power with respect to which the female is said to be impotent in comparison with the male. But this asymmetry of power with respect to initiation is not true of generation per se. In general, the sexes are distinguished primarily, as we have seen, not by the fact that one has power and the other lacks it, but by the fact that they have different powers: one is capable of generating in itself and one capable of generating in another.

These two powers are made active only when the male initiates the series of motions that constitutes generation. It is in the context of the power to effect that initiation that Aristotle speaks of the female in terms of privation. It is also in the context of that power that a female offspring is said to be in a sense a prodigy, deviating not from being human, but from having the power of the parent who initiates her conception. If the initiating movement of the male is dominant, Aristotle writes,

it will produce a male and not a female, and a male who resembles its male generator and not its mother. But if it is not dominant [we might say recessive] then in whatever power it fails to be dominant, it will make the offspring lack that power. (*Generation of Animals* 4.3, 767b22–24)

If the sperm is essentially a first mover or the ἀρχή of a κίνησις, then an account of its nature will have to involve reference to this κίνησις. We may want to say that the embryo itself is this motion, or as I suspect is preferable, we may want to say that the embryo is an entity whose nature is to be in this motion, the motion initiated by the sperm in the menses and eventuating in a new animal.¹⁴ In either case, we will need to remember that a motion, like any other entity, has a form, and that its form will necessarily involve its whence and whither, what it is a motion toward (recall the discussion of *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.4, 1174129–74b8). The form of the sperm is thus not that by virtue of which it is the initiator of just any old motion, but of a very particular motion of a very particular sort—a motion that, when it takes place not just any old where, but in matter of the right δύναμις, namely the menses of the right sort of female animal, will result in not just any old offspring, but in an animal of a specific nature: a horse, a hawk, a human being, or a hippopotamus. One animal initiates the generation in another animal of yet a third animal of the same kind not by communicating

to that animal a specific form, but by initiating in that animal a motion of a determinate nature that will result in an animal of that specific form.

8

I have argued (1) that form is rarely mentioned in the *Generation of Animals* in descriptions of the male or sperm, (2) that the male and its sperm are rather described as the initiator of the generative motion, (3) that when form is mentioned it is characteristically the form of this motion or of the embryo that is meant, and (4) that this makes better sense of Aristotle's theory of kinetic epigenesis. Homospecificity and family inheritance are therefore explained in a fashion that I would describe (cautiously and with appropriate qualifications) as "Aristotelian" rather than "Platonic" or say rather as parental rather than patriarchal: I mean, without a leap of form from father to child. I want to suggest finally that these questions of homospecificity and the subsidiary forms of resemblance between parent and child are not the only questions that interest Aristotle in this work, and they may not even be the most central; it is not just the mechanics of generation and inheritance that attract his attention in the *Generation of Animals*, but the question as well of why generation employs a differentiation of the species into two sexes, and, more generally, why it should be the case at all that certain kinds of living organisms exhibit such a differentiation.

The *Generation of Animals* opens with a description of what Aristotle terms τὸ θῆλυ and τὸ ἄρρεν—the Female and the Male, whose neuter forms, as Peck points out, indicate that the discussion is about female and male as principles—principles, as we immediately learn, of generation in animals. Book 2 then begins, as we noted at the opening of this essay, with an inquiry into the reason for there being male and female. The account that immediately follows, in which male and female are explained by appeal to an explanation of that generation of which they are the principles, is only one half of the account; it gives the reason in terms of a functional teleology of sexual differentiation. What it does not give is the account that we might expect given Aristotle's theory of hypothetical necessity: an explanation of why, given that end, this should be the means for its achievement. Why it is that

animals of a certain level of complexity employ both males and females in the process of reproduction?

This question concerns the principles and causes of sexual differentiation, not in the scientifically interesting but relatively minor sense of book 4, which asks how individuals come to be determined as one gender or another, but in terms of the larger question of why there is, so to speak, the institution of gender at all. Nor can it be answered simply in terms of the question why generation demands two parents; it must be framed in terms of the question why generation demands two different kinds of parents. It is not uncommon to encounter in contemporary discussions of this question accounts of the origin of sexuality in terms of genetic recombination. But while such accounts might explain isogamous multiple parentage, they do not explain the central fact of sexual dimorphism; they do not explain, in other words, why the male and female gametes are different in nature from one another.

But it is this question of why the male and female principles are different and separate that lies behind much of the discussion of the *Generation of Animals*, and which lies at the heart of Aristotle's concern with the different roles of male and female in animal generation and, as he hints early on, "ἐν τῷ ὄλῳ" which Peck sensitively Englishes as "in cosmology" (*Generation of Animals* 1.1, 716a15).

I don't know whether Aristotle ever answers this question. I have argued that the fundamental difference on his view between male and female is not between two modes of animal being, one of which is fully human and the other somewhat less than human, nor one of which is human and the other merely a deformed human, nor one of which has the power of generation while the other lacks it. It is rather the difference between two modes of animal being that exhibit complementary powers of generation. The male has the power to engender, the female the power to bear. Aristotle, as we have seen, expresses these complementary powers of originating and of giving birth by describing the male as that which is capable of generating in another, the female as that which is capable of generating in itself. I have argued that this characterization is directly linked to his view of the male as the ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως, the initiator of the motions that lead to birth.

It is precisely this description that Aristotle invokes when, at the beginning of book 2 of the *Generation of Animals*, he argues that nature

has kept the male separate from the female, that is, created different sexes, because the male is better since, he says, it is the ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τοῖς γιγνομένοις; the initiator of the motions that result in generated animals (*Generation of Animals* 2.I, 732a7–9).

This description may lead us to conjecture whether Aristotle's understanding of the differences between men and women has to do not with some notion of being more or less human or more or less rational, but with what he takes to be their relative capacity to act, as it were, at a distance and as an instigator, to initiate and govern productive activity without necessarily participating in it. One might say: to sire. This is a topic for another discussion, but I mention it in closing, admittedly with chutzpah, as a protreptic. A feminist perspective in reading Aristotle will perhaps not best be served by charges of misogyny, or of Aristotle's holding a view of woman as not fully human, or for that matter of his doing bad science. We need instead to begin by reading carefully Aristotle's actual science; we can then consider, for example, the implications of his characterization of the male as ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως, a characterization that I have argued is central to his views concerning sex in the *Generation of Animals*.

Self-Knowledge and Self-Control in Plato's *Charmides*

I

It's out of the question, Critias assures Socrates in the middle of the *Charmides*, that someone should act temperately, that is, act with self-control, and yet not know of himself that that's what he is doing—not, in other words, be aware of himself as someone acting temperately or being temperate. Critias's assurance comes as a response to a concern that Socrates has just expressed. Socrates is troubled that the account given by Critias of σωφροσύνη—temperance—as *a virtue that consists in the doing of what is right* (ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν πράξις) has this consequence, perhaps unintended, but nonetheless distressing: it allows for someone's behaving temperately, that is, doing what is right, without being aware that that's what he is doing. Someone might, Socrates says, act temperately and be temperate (πράξας πράττει μὲν σωφρόνως καὶ σωφρονεῖ) and yet be ignorant about himself that he is being temperate (ἀγνοεῖ δ' ἑαυτὸν ὅτι σωφρονεῖ). “No way,” Critias responds. “If that were to follow from the account I've offered, I would give up the account” (*Charmides* 164C).

What makes Critias so certain that a proper account of σωφροσύνη reveals the impossibility of acting temperately while not knowing that one is doing so? If we had only this piece of dialogue, we might imagine that he thinks self-awareness is a requirement of temperance being *a virtue*. Perhaps he thinks that it's not sufficient for attributing a virtue to an agent that the agent perform the act and that it be of a certain sort; an agent who can be said to act virtuously, as Aristotle will make explicit, must *know what she is doing* (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.4, 1105a).

While it's reasonable to think that Plato would agree with such a view, and reasonable to suppose that he may wish to intimate it as a subtext of Critias's remark, it is not clear that the awareness required for an act to be virtuous is what Critias has in mind. For an agent *knowing what she is doing* in the case of such a requirement is not so much an instance of what we think of as *self-awareness*; it is rather an instance of acting in full *awareness*—awareness, that is, of one's actions, but not of oneself as thus acting. It is—here our idiomatic structures are subtle and revealing—a matter of an agent's *knowing what she is doing* rather than of *knowing what it is that she is doing*.

Perhaps, however, what the subtlety reveals is that there is not a clear and decisive distinction between the two cases. But in any case, as the dialogue continues, it becomes clear that virtue per se is not what Critias has in mind. For his attention, as we immediately discover, is focused not on virtue in general, but specifically on the virtue of temperate self-control—on σωφροσύνη. “I would sooner say I was wrong,” Critias continues, “than at any time admit that someone ignorant of himself *might be acting temperately*”—ἂν ἀγνοοῦντα αὐτὸν ἑαυτὸν ἄνθρωπον σωφρονεῖν. “I would almost say,” he goes on, “that that's the very thing temperance is: self-knowledge” —τὸ γινώσκειν ἑαυτόν (*Charmides* 164D). He concludes with the admonition that Socrates think of what is inscribed at Delphi: “For ‘Know yourself’ and ‘Be temperate’ are the same thing.” —τὸ γὰρ Γνωθι σαυτόν καὶ τὸ Σωφρονεῖ ἔστιν μὲν ταυτόν (*Charmides* 165A).

So it is on the basis of an essential feature of this *specific* virtue that Critias rests his argument. It is also on this account, as we will shortly see, that Socrates concludes that σωφροσύνη involves, on Critias's understanding, *knowing* something, and in a moment we'll see what Socrates makes of that fact. But first note the change in the understanding of *self-knowledge* that has occurred in this small span of argument. What Critias initially finds implausible (164C) is that someone should act temperately without self-knowledge in a very specific sense: she does not know of herself that she is acting temperately. But what Critias then insists on (164D) is the impossibility of someone being temperate without self-knowledge in a less qualified sense: a person can't be temperate if she lacks knowledge of herself *tout court*, above all (though perhaps not exclusively²) knowledge that she is temperate.

This change may be merely stylistic, or it may at most signal the difference between self-knowledge considered episodically and self-knowledge considered more generally. On the one hand, I may be said to know myself when I know that at this moment I am acting out a fear of exposure, or am about to be overcome by a moment of painful self-consciousness; on the other, I may be said to know myself because I have a broad and general sense of my likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, erotic and culinary tastes, propensities for one type of behavior or for one type of coffee over another, and so on. But this is not a negligible difference; we may be able to imagine how to translate from one form of self-knowledge to the other, but there is a difference. And it's a difference that Critias underscores by the end of the paragraph, in making clear that it is the latter sense of self-knowing that he has in mind:

Forget everything that's gone before; I want to abandon all the previous argument and concentrate on a single simple assertion. Here's what's true: σωφροσύνη is someone knowing himself: τὸ γινώσκειν αὐτὸν ἑαυτόν. (*Charmides* 165B)

Critias now offers *knowing oneself* as a definition of σωφροσύνη, and not merely *knowing what one is up to* nor merely *knowing oneself to be temperate*, σώφρων. So Critias's underscoring ought to lead us to think that the differences are even more than we had at first imagined. It is one thing to know of myself that I am doing what a temperate person, a σώφρων, does, and another to know myself to be temperate, σώφρων, and yet another simply to know myself.

Consider now the argument's next move starting at 165C. If, Socrates says, σωφροσύνη is in fact an instance of knowing something, it must involve some kind of skill or understanding, some ἐπιστήμη, and it must be the skillful understanding *of* something; right? "Indeed it is," replies Critias, "of the self"—ἑαυτοῦ γε. Most simply, this reply can be read as a reprise of the earlier definition of σωφροσύνη as someone knowing himself. But the separation of subject from object, enforced by the particle γε, has the rhetorical force of submerging the particular reflexivity and creating instead an account of the virtue in terms of an abstract reflexive: understanding *of the self*.

And what thus emerges under the recondite description "the self" must be a fairly robust object of knowledge, for it is the object of a

dispositional understanding of the sort enjoyed by those who can be generally said to understand the world, that is to say, it's the object of an ἐπιστήμη. As medicine is a science of health (ἐπιστήμη ὑγίεινοῦ), so σωφροσύνη is a science of the self (ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ) (165D). And that knowledge and its object have emerged from the rather more modest fact of an agent being aware that what she is up to involves acting with moderation or self-control, that is, being aware of what she is doing as an act of temperance. The thought that temperance is an awareness of *what I'm about* has segued into the thought that it is a science or understanding of an abstract and reified *self*: an ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ.

We may feel a need to somehow warrant this move the argument has made from *knowing what I am doing* to a more extensive *knowing the self*. But that feeling may be eclipsed by the sense of a philosophical finding, the sense of having discovered the pathway to our concept of *the self*. It is just that pathway for which Sartre argues in an early essay, *The Transcendence of the Ego*. There, and more elaborately in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre argues that it is out of moments of self-consciousness, moments when we become aware of our conscious states as objects, that we construct the ego as a transcendent object. This theory is not original with Sartre, but has roots at least as far back as Husserl and Brentano, and many philosophers have found quite respectable this segue from episodic self-awareness to a robust theory of what Sartre calls a *transcendent ego*.

By “transcendent” Sartre means something different from what many of us in a different lexical tradition might understand. He means “in the world as an *object* of our experience.” For Sartre the I is not figured as a *transcendental ego*, not, that is, as a self that lies *behind experience*. He attributes such a notion of a self that lies behind experience to a false Husserlian reading of Kant. Instead, Sartre understands the self as *transcendent*, that is, as an *object of our experience*, an analogue of virtual subjectivity. Such a self is revealed in and constructed out of moments of *self-conscious reflection*, moments like what David Velleman, speaking from a different discursive tradition, calls *presentations in reflexive guise*.¹ So perhaps Critias's move from an episodic self-consciousness *secundum quid* to a robust awareness of the self simpliciter represents what is a respectable candidate for a theory of how we in fact acquire the concept of the self; it therefore represents at least a thread of continuity in our understanding of σωφροσύνη as self-

knowledge. But suppose we put this question aside and follow the argument of the *Charmides* further.

2

Socrates proceeds to ask Critias a series of questions based on this definition of σωφροσύνη as “an understanding of one’s self”—ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ. The first of these questions asks: if σωφροσύνη is a kind of skilled *understanding*, an ἐπιστήμη, what is its ἔργον? That is, what is it that this skilled understanding enables you to do? The science of medicine enables someone to produce health, which is therefore its ἔργον; carpentry—knowing how to build something—enables someone to produce, say, a house, which is therefore its ἔργον. So what is it that σωφροσύνη enables one to produce? (165D). That’s not a good question, Critias responds, for it supposes that all skills are alike. It supposes specifically that all involve the ability to produce something. But clearly that’s not true; for example, what does geometry *produce*? (165E).

Socrates recognizes this reply to be a strong one, but it is one for which he has a counter-reply ready to hand. It is true, Socrates responds, that geometry does not produce anything in the way that medicine engenders health. But geometry is not therefore without an ἔργον, because even geometry is *of* or is *about* something, something that is distinct from it. In this way, Socrates now asks Critias, what distinct thing is it that the knowledge or understanding that you say σωφροσύνη is, is a knowledge or understanding *of*? What is it *about*? (166B).

This is a critical moment in the dialogue. In asking Critias to specify what this knowledge—the knowledge that σωφροσύνη has been proposed to be—is the knowledge *of*, Socrates directs our attention to a feature of the cognitive that has been present in the dialogue until now, but unmarked. For until this moment, the dialogue has attended to what we might term *formal* features of σωφροσύνη and the psychic conditions offered by way of its analysis. What Socrates’s question highlights is the ubiquitous but unmentioned fact of the *intentionality* of these states; it highlights the fact that a feature of σωφροσύνη consistently alluded to concerns whether it constitutes, for example, knowledge *of the good*. Particularly since the dialogue’s turn to a discussion of the cognitive dimension of σωφροσύνη, this feature is a critical feature

that has remained, so to speak, in the dialogue's unconscious, masked by an attention to formal features of the virtue. Socrates's question brings into the open this question of intentionality, that is, of *aboutness*.

Note that this question is a recognizable Socratic question. It is a question that exposes, to be sure, the complexity of our notions of understanding; but more importantly it is a question that invokes, as I have suggested, the *objective intentionality* that understanding shares with other concepts. By "objective intentionality" I mean to designate the characteristic of things insofar as they are directed toward an *object* that they are *of* or are *about*.² The objectively intentional in this sense is a frequent topos in Plato. Think of the conversations early in the *Gorgias* on rhetoric, conversations in which Socrates insists that Gorgias be able to specify what rhetorical discourse is *about* (449D, 454A). Or recall the conversation in the *Symposium* between Socrates and Agathon about that feature of love revealed in the fact that love is always τινός—*of* something (199E). These conversations concern the objective intentionality of rhetoric and love; rhetoric and love are both—each in its way—directed toward an object, which object they are of or about. The intentionality that I mean to draw attention to is therefore not confined to the cognitive; it is a feature of many affective as well as cognitive states, and it's a feature of practices and modes of discourse like rhetoric that are cognitively based.

So at this moment in the dialogue, Socrates asks Critias: Given the objective intentionality of ἐπιστήμη, if you are right that σωφροσύνη is an ἐπιστήμη, what is it an ἐπιστήμη *of* or *about*? What is its distinct *object*? For even if it's correct that not every instance of understanding is productive, so that there may be no answer to the question, what *product* does σωφροσύνη *produce*? there should at least be an answer to the question, what distinct *object* is σωφροσύνη an understanding *of*? (166B).

Given the argument that has just preceded this question, surely Critias could be expected to have an answer ready to hand. For as we have just learned, insofar as σωφροσύνη can be thought to be a kind of understanding, it is an understanding of the *self*. Indeed, we might wonder, why didn't Critias offer this response earlier, in answer to Socrates's inquiry into the ἔργον of σωφροσύνη? Why didn't he reply that this is what σωφροσύνη *produces*: a robust but appropriate *self*.

In any case, when Socrates now asks what is this understanding an understanding *of*, Critias might be expected to repeat his description

of but a moment earlier. Recall that Socrates had posed this implicit question: You say that this is an ἐπιστήμη and that it is τινός—of something? To which Critias replied: That's right: ἑαυτοῦ γε—of the self (165C). Now Critias could simply repeat this account of what σωφροσύνη is *about*; it is about the self: ἑαυτοῦ γε. But look at his actual response. Once again, Critias charges Socrates with imagining that σωφροσύνη is like all the other sciences. And now adds: it is different from them, for all the other sciences are *of some other* object and *not of themselves*, whereas this science alone is both *of other sciences* and is *itself* also *of itself*—καὶ αὐτὴ ἑαυτῆς (166C).

It may take us a moment to realize what is odd about Critias's surprising reply, but only a moment. For then we come to hear the subtle but unmistakable shift from ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ to ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτῆς—from, for instance, Schwarzenegger's understanding of *himself* (analogous to his love of himself or his fear of himself) to the understanding of understanding, an understanding that is of *itself* (analogous to the love of love or the fear of fear—the only fear one needs to have, as some of us may recall). These modes of understanding, clearly distinguished in Greek, may both be represented by the English *self-understanding*, in which case the distinction requires being uncovered. But more often translations give us the difference between “the understanding of *one-self*” and “the understanding of *itself*,” in which case the distinction can be clearly heard. And once heard, it makes clear what is dicey about the move in Critias's reasoning. If I love myself, it doesn't follow that my love loves itself; self-criticism need not criticize itself, nor need self-abuse abuse itself. So if the σώφρων understands himself, why should we then imagine that his self-understanding must understand itself?

Perhaps the segue can be made more innocuous by seeing it as merely a version of (what is somewhat oddly termed) *Pauline predication*: just as “charity is patient” may mean that those who are charitable are patient, so “self-love loves itself” may mean merely that the self-lover loves himself.³ And just so, “self-knowing knows itself” may signify merely that the self-knower knows himself. The reflexivity of the subject (“Schwarzenegger loves *himself*”) is replaced by a reflexivity of the predicate's nominalization (“Schwarzenegger's love loves *itself*”), and the latter can therefore be parsed in terms of the former. But the segue remains disturbing. Whatever theories of Pauline predication

may do to reassure us at the logical level, at the rhetorical level (or perhaps just below) something troubling has occurred. Of course we realize that the phrase *understanding of understanding* normally signifies *someone's understanding of understanding*, and that this in turn means simply that *someone* understands something. But *discursively* something has happened in a text whose focus has shifted from speaking of *someone* understanding something to speaking of *understanding* understanding something. Talk that was of the subject and only secondarily of the subject's understanding has been turned topsy-turvy; attention is now centered primarily upon the understanding.

Perhaps what occurs at this moment of the dialogue is something like a corrective response to the shift we noted earlier, the shift that led from *knowing oneself* to a *theory of the self*, what we might describe as a shift from a *reflexive* self to a *reified* self. (Think of the difference between self-love and narcissism, the difference between Jane loving *herself* and Jane loving *her self*.) Now at just the moment when Critias might invoke this self as the object of an understanding that governs a temperate life, we witness a return of the repressed reflexive. But now the reflexive in a purely impersonal (and most zany) form; here, as though the self-lover's love were imagined, as if by sympathetic attraction, to love itself, just so does the self-knower's knowledge know itself.

As we read on, we soon see that this deference of the knower to her knowledge is not casual and not without its trace of regret. For after an extended discussion of how we are to understand reflexivity, a discussion to which we will return in a moment, Critias reassures Socrates that they are indeed on the right path. He does this by invoking an inference that is the converse of the one we have just discussed, and which is, if possible, even zanier: someone, he says, possessing a knowledge that knows itself will himself (αὐτὸς) be like the knowledge he possesses and will thereby know himself (169E). Just as someone who has speed is speedy, or someone who has beauty beautiful, or someone who has knowledge knowing, so someone who has self-knowledge will be self-knowing, that is to say, someone who has a knowledge that knows itself will be a knower who knows himself.

It's a witty inference, though it's not too difficult to see what is problematic about it. But set aside the question of whether it is valid; allow that the inference might be one of the corps of wanton inferences that Plato so effectively uses in the course of his philosophical

dramas. Here I want to draw attention to the fact that it is used (a) to reintroduce the knower to center stage, to reinvigorate his focal centrality in the discourse of self-understanding, and, at the same time, (b) to play a role in the reemergence of the reflexive. That reemergence, I suggest, is meant to generate in us once again the thought that talk of the self, as its very name suggests, has its home in reflexive constructions. And if the inference is troublesome, it may be because of the tension between the intentionality that Socrates has earlier exposed and the reflexivity that here surfaces. For in the one case, that of intentionality, consciousness reaches outward toward the world, which it is said to be about or of; in the other case, that of reflexivity, it turns inward toward the recesses of the self, whose very reflection it there captures.

3

So we encounter an array of cognitive states in the course of Critias's argument at the center of the *Charmides*. Beginning with the knowledge that an agent has of himself in the course of a specific activity or mode of activity, the conversation moves to a more general sense of reflexive self-knowledge, and from that to the knowledge we may be said to have of the self as a substantive object. Talk of that general sense of reflexive self-knowledge and of a knowledge that can be thought to have the self as an independent object leads to the consideration of a rather different state, an understanding that itself is of itself: a self-knowing that knows itself. The conversation finally moves back to the personal reflexive via the inference (whether licit or not) from one sense of self-understanding to another (169E). I have suggested that the larger dialectic of the conversation, as it moves from the reflexivity of the knower to that of knowledge and back, serves to enforce the connection between the self of reflexivity and the reified self, as well as the priority of the former to the latter. At the same time, it reminds us of the intentionality of these modes of knowledge; if self-understanding is a form of *understanding*, then the fact of its intentionality is always real, an intentionality that, as we are about to see, makes problematic the reflexivity that introduces it.

Now I propose that we look for a moment at the dialogue's discussion of reflexivity, because I think that doing so will shed light on the

dialectic we have noted—the dialectic that embraces self-knowledge *secundum quid*, self-knowledge in general, the self’s knowledge of its own “reified self,” and the self-knowledge that is as it were itself of itself. To do this, we will need to look briefly at the discussion that occurs between the first introduction of reflexivity (164D) and its subsequent reappearance (169E). Then I’ll ask us to take another excursion, this time into thinking about a question whose striking *absence* from the *Charmides* might surprise us, the question of *self-control*.

Between the passages that I have suggested mark the force of the reflexive in Plato’s imagination, witnessed by its initial presence and subsequent reemergence, Socrates invokes a series of familiar paradoxes that attend the notion of reflexivity. They show that the very notion of a knowledge that is of itself and of other instances of knowledge is a very strange notion (ἄτοπος) (167C). He begins by listing a series of activities *objectively intentional* (in the sense I indicated earlier) where it seems obvious that the activity is directed “outward” toward its appropriate and alien object, and not “inward” toward itself or other activities like it. These activities, in other words, are activities in which *intentionality* makes awkward any thought of the activity being *reflexive*. Sight, hearing, and perception in general, desire, purpose, fear, love: these are all directed toward their appropriate objects and not toward themselves. Indeed, if hearing were to hear itself, it would have to have a sound, and seeing similarly would have to have a color. But how weird is that? And how purposeless? Given our sense of what hearing and sight are good for, a sense revealed by our coming to understand what they are *of* or *about*, it becomes unclear what purpose such reflexive hearing and sight might serve.

What we need, Socrates urges, is an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of *reflexivity* in light of the requirements of *intentionality*; how is it possible that faculties might apply to themselves, and which of them might, and what would the good of them be? And for this, he says, we are in need of μέγας τις ἀνὴρ, some great man, someone who could explain how seeing could be *of* seeing without making itself, as that which it sees, colored, or hearing *of* hearing without making itself a sound, and who could explain for us what good there would be in such self-regarding moments in the annals of activities that are essentially other-regarding (169A). The need for a “great man” who could thus reconcile for us intentionality and reflexivity may not seem as

pressing as the need remarked on in the *Phaedo* for a charmer who can exorcise the fear of death (*Phaedo* 78A). But we may find it notable that in that dialogue death is repeatedly figured as a disintegration and a consequent loss of self, the very *self* that we might take Echecrates's opening intensifier to invoke: "αὐτός, ὃ Φαίδων, you yourself, Phaedo, were you there with Socrates that day?" And to which Phaedo refers in his answer: "αὐτός; I was there myself" (*Phaedo* 57A). And if we recall how close this issue of reflexivity is, in another context, to the aptly named question of self-predication—how can the large be large without being one of the large things?—we can see why the question is a pressing one (*Parmenides* 132A). And surely it is pressing in any case; for what has been called into question is that deeply Socratic aspiration to self-knowledge.

But Socrates, in response to Critias's perplexity—a perplexity that he describes as infectious like yawns of the mind—concedes to Critias the issue, and turns away, in order that he might lead the conversation in another direction (*Charmides* 169C). And if Socrates can turn, so can we, at least for the moment. So I propose that we attend to a different question, one that might have occurred to us earlier: Why is this dialogue, ostensibly devoted to a discussion of σωφροσύνη, concerned with the question of ἐπιστήμη at all? I propose to follow out this question in a direction that will at first not seem connected to what we have been talking about up until now.

4

Our discussion began by my remarking upon Critias's supposition that self-knowledge is a necessary component of σωφροσύνη. Critias is not alone in that supposition; recall the facility with which σωφροσύνη is identified with self-knowledge in the *Alcibiades* (131B, 133C). But we might wonder why this is so; why is our dialogue so centrally concerned with issues of *cognition*? For think how the discussion of ἐπιστήμη can obscure the common identification of σωφροσύνη as a virtue of self-control or self-mastery, or as a virtue of moderation in the enjoyment of pleasure—involving, to be sure, but hardly *essentially* concerned with cognition. The virtue of σωφροσύνη, in other words, is not obviously, and perhaps only mediately, a virtue that involves self-knowledge. It concerns, as we know from the conversation in the *Republic*, as well as from

Aristotle's extended discussion of the virtue, a person's ability to act so as to be *in control* of himself or *master* of himself, particularly in his relation to pleasure.

The fact that σωφροσύνη is essentially concerned with self-control is made explicit in Socrates's description in the *Republic*: "Temperance is clearly a kind of order, I said, and the mastery of certain pleasures and desires, as people indicate when they use—I don't know in what sense—the phrase 'being in control of oneself'" —κόσμος πού τις, ἧν δ' ἐγώ, ἡ σωφροσύνη ἐστὶν καὶ ἡδονῶν τινῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν ἐγκράτεια, ὡς φασι κρείττω δὴ αὐτοῦ ἀποφαίνοντες, οὐκ οἶδ' ὄντινα τρόπον (*Republic* 430E).

This account of σωφροσύνη as the *control* (ἐγκράτεια) of pleasures and desires and explicitly as the condition someone is in when in *control of himself* (κρείττω δὴ αὐτοῦ) is interesting for several reasons. In describing the virtue of σωφροσύνη as the condition of an agent in control of himself, the argument reaffirms—independent of its shift from the operative activity of *knowledge* to that of *control*—the central role reflexivity plays in our dialogue's argument.

But the description will be surprising to anyone who has read Aristotle. For Aristotle the distinction *between* ἐγκράτεια and σωφροσύνη is of considerable moment, not merely as a distinction between two different if related virtues, but as a governing principle of distinct *modalities* of self-control, and indeed of virtue in general. Aristotle's analysis of moral weakness becomes clear only when we recognize the complexity of his contrasts between, on the one hand, self-control and lack of self-control—ἐγκράτεια and ἀκράτεια (or ἀκρασία as it is more normally found)—and, on the other, between depravity and (for want of a better term) self-mastery—ἀκολασία and σωφροσύνη.

The one is a contrast between having and lacking control. The other is a more radical contrast, a contrast between licentiousness and the ease of infixed discipline that allows the quietly virtuous to *serenely pass by* rather than to *control* or *subdue* temptation. Control and lack of control represent a different modality, a different dimension in the economy of moral life, from that of licentiousness and moral mastery. Recognizing these differences and the structure of moral sentiment and action that they represent for Aristotle should make clear to us the importance of properly understanding the notions of *self-control* and *self-mastery*. The point has been nicely put by Michael McGhee:

The vacillation we experience between control and lack of control, *enkrateia* and *akrasia*, reflects an instability in our emotional life, in our capacity to respond, so that, to quote T. S. Eliot, “Between the emotion and the response / Falls the shadow.” *Sophrosune*, traditionally translated into English as “temperance,” reflects, by contrast, a flourishing sensibility the directions of whose attention dominate consciousness, so that there is no longer any inner conflict with the contrary inclinations that the *enkratic* individual defeats, and the *akratic* succumbs to.⁴

It is tempting to think of Plato as failing to recognize this distinction between *ἐγκράτεια* and *σωφροσύνη*, tempting to think of its recognition as specific to Aristotle. Indeed we often think of Plato and Aristotle as distinguished from one another precisely in these terms. Plato, perhaps on the basis of his description of *σωφροσύνη* in book 4 of the *Republic* (430E–431B), is thought to elide the distinction, identifying *ἐγκράτεια* and *σωφροσύνη*; Aristotle then becomes the first to appreciate it.

The temptation is understandable; these thoughts are part of a larger view in which Plato considers desires and passions intrinsically in need of straitened containment and control, in need, that is, of *ἐγκράτεια*. But I believe these thoughts to be misleading, and precisely because they imagine that Plato fails to recognize the distinction between these two modes of control, that he identifies *σωφροσύνη* and *ἐγκράτεια*. For notice how the description in the *Republic* that signals just such identification—“as people indicate when they use (I don’t know in what sense) the phrase ‘being in control of oneself’”—is immediately called by Socrates absurd—*γελοῖον* (430E). And it may be that allowing such identification to govern the description of *σωφροσύνη* explains the qualifications that Plato gives Socrates in the course of the discussion. Introducing the account, Socrates hedges his remarks with the words “seen at least from here”—*ὡς γε ἐντεῦθεν ἰδεῖν* (430E); and more strikingly, some lines later he qualifies the claim that they have discovered the virtue of *σωφροσύνη* as true “at least in relation to these views”—*ὡς γε οὕτως ἰδοῦσιν* (432B).

Above all it should be of interest to us that in the *Charmides* the concept of *ἐγκράτεια* plays no role. In the colorful parade of suggestions as to what *σωφροσύνη* really is—a kind of quietness, modesty,

minding one's business, knowing oneself, and so on—wouldn't there have been room for someone (think of the *Republic*) to slip in a suggestion of enkratic self-control? Not a whisper. I can easily imagine a Platonic dialogue on σωφροσύνη whose inquiry began not with *quietness*, but with *enkratic self-control*, much as the *Laches* begins its definition of courage not with *loud and boisterous*, but with *steadfast*. But this is not that dialogue, and I have no idea why Plato adopts the strategy he does. But I suspect that the reason must somehow be connected with this truth: insofar as we understand σωφροσύνη as *enkratic* self-control, we figure it as a subtly lesser virtue, a virtue undoubtedly, but a skilled counterfeit of the coin of σωφροσύνη. The σωφροσύνη that Plato and Aristotle alike wish to endorse is the virtue that just transcends ἐγκράτεια; it lies just beyond this mode of strong-willed containment and is linked to the wisdom by which the σὺφρων is freed from the need for restraint.

The distinction that I am here invoking between a just lesser and an ideal form of self-mastery is a recognizable topos in many “wisdom traditions,” but I believe that we are familiar with it in broader outline from ordinary contexts. Think of the skill by which a beginning artisan, as the result of intense effort, achieves control and mastery over his intractable material, and then contrast to that difficult control the ease and virtual nonchalance with which the master craftsman works. Or contrast to the equestrian skill of a novice able to control his horse only with effort and struggle the apparent effortlessness of an experienced rider. Her control doesn't even look like control, but if we have ridden we know that to hold the reins that lightly is a consummate achievement.

With this understanding of σωφροσύνη in mind, we can understand Plato's treatment of Simonides's poem in the *Protagoras* (339B–C). That poem speaks at one moment of the difficulty of virtue: “It is hard for a man to become good”—ἄνδρ' ἀγαθὸν . . . γενέσθαι χαλεπὸν (339B) and at the very next moment seems to deny that difficulty: “Pitacus was out of tune when he said that it is hard to be a man of worth”—χαλεπὸν . . . ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι (339C). The contrast that saves the coherence of Simonides's poem is not, as Socrates immediately makes clear, that between mere goodness and true worth, the ἀγαθὸν of the first line and the ἐσθλὸν of the second; it is rather between becoming and being, the γενέσθαι of the first line and the ἔμμεναι (that

is, the εἶναι) of the second. The poem contrasts, in other words, the struggle involved in the cultivation within oneself of virtue with the effortless mastery that virtue allows in the activity of the σώφρων who has so cultivated it.

When such unrestrained mastery rules the city, it becomes the political virtue of σωφροσύνη, a virtue, it is important to recall, that stands in contrast to a tyranny's forceful control of its citizenry. And when later in the *Republic* the virtuous person is described, it is as someone at peace with himself, one rather than many, self-masterful and harmonious—σώφρονα καὶ ἡρμουςμένον (443E). In such a person, what would be the place of the restrained and bonded self-control of ἐγκράτεια? Think of reading the *Laches* and asking the same question with regard to ἀνδρεία—courage; what need would a fully virtuous person have of the καρτερία, the endurance, first offered by Laches as the nature of courage? (192C).

This distinction that I have sketched and which I have attributed to Plato, the distinction between the σώφρων as a person of effortless and harmonious mastery, and the ἐγκρατής as a person of strong will but conflicted control, has not always been easy to keep in sight, but it has never been lost. Here is an example: Maimonides devotes a sizable section of his twelfth-century commentary on part of the Mishnah to the distinction between “a person of virtue” and a person whom he describes as “conquering his inclinations.” Maimonides is interested in the fact that the ancient philosophers seem to privilege the former, whereas rabbinic tradition appears to favor the latter. The distinction that exercises him here is clearly that between our two modes of self-mastery, σωφροσύνη and ἐγκράτεια: we might say between temperance and continence.⁵

I have elsewhere suggested that this understanding of σωφροσύνη as tranquil self-mastery explains Charmides's first account of σωφροσύνη as ἡσυχία τις: a kind of quietness—that is, a mode of tranquil and harmonious self-direction in which the agent is not in conflict with herself.⁶ It is nonetheless a mode of self-control, but it is not so much a mode of the agent controlling herself as it is of her being herself in control of her actions. Just so, the autodidact is not someone who is “self-taught to”—simultaneously teacher and student—but someone who is self-taught, having learned through his own initiative and power without submission to anyone, not even himself, as teacher.

It is important, however, to keep clear that self-control is, after all, a mode of control. The σώφρων is in control of his actions, that is to say, he *knows what he's doing*. Keeping that fact in mind may help us to recognize how for Plato the self-presence and self-knowing that are required for virtuous agency need not involve the self-alienation of ἐκρατεία. The virtuous person, the σώφρων, is, we might say, self-masterful, not self-mastered; and it is in that sense that he is self-controlled.

5

In suggesting that we might have expected the *Charmides* to be more centrally concerned with self-mastery, a self-mastery such as we find explicitly expressed in the account of σωφροσύνη in the *Republic*, I have not meant to undermine the centrality in our dialogue of understanding (ἐπιστήμη), nor in particular of self-understanding (ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης). I have instead hoped to encourage us to think of how complex are the uses to which language that looks to be reflexive may be put. In particular, I want to encourage us to rethink locutions like ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης. For these are, I want to suggest, locutions that appear to express a simple reflexive but in fact do not.

To understand these locutions and the reading I mean to recommend, I propose that we think of self-understanding in light of our more recent discussion of self-control. The suggestion I offer is simple: (1) we can interpret self-understanding on an analogy with self-control, and (2) when we do so, we should think of achieving a mode of self-understanding analogous to a self-control that is *in contrast to* ἐγκράτεια rather than *represented by* ἐγκράτεια. Indeed, we could say that what we want is a self-understanding that is the analogue not of self-control at all, but rather an analogue of self-mastery, something perhaps like self-presence.

With that self-understanding as the model of ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης, the paradoxes that came in view when we thought deeply about reflexivity vanish (167Cff.). For self-control and self-understanding on this model do not conceive of a relationship between one part that controls or knows and another that is controlled or known, where in each case the second is the object of the first. But of course the question of how exactly we are to understand the nature of that relationship remains.

That question is at the heart of how to understand σωφροσύνη, an undertaking that I have here only minimally addressed.

So my thought is this: the apparent reflexivity of the form that governs the discussion of our dialogue, ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης—*knowledge of knowledge*—functions like a number of locutions that Aristotle employs, among them *perceiving that we perceive* (*De Anima* 3.2), and the divine *thinking of thinking*—νοήσεως νόησις (*Metaphysics* 12.9).⁷ The contexts of these locutions should be of interest to us. In the first the clear intertextuality of Aristotle's arguments (*De Anima* 3.2, 425b11–20) with the catalog of paradoxes in our dialogue (167C–168A) should lead us to read Aristotle's model not as one of hierarchical reflexivity (perceiving that one perceives) but of that unity of self with self I have been trying here to articulate. The text of the *Metaphysics* is of interest because Aristotle there interrogates thought itself precisely in terms of its intentionality, arguing much as our dialogue does, though with a somewhat different strategy, that intentionality both represents a necessary feature of the cognitive and poses a difficulty for its proper understanding.⁸

These locutions are wrongly understood if we read them on the model of a reflexive self-knowing; they are expressions designed to reveal the nonreflective self-presence that is an irreducible aspect of the cognitive, as indeed it is of awareness in general. The locutions of self-awareness here point not to the self as object, but to the self as present to itself—we might say to the self as its own companion. We can think of all these cases—the understanding of our dialogue, which is an “understanding of understanding,” the perceiving of *De Anima* 3.2, which is a “perception of perceiving,” and the divine thinking of *Metaphysics* 12.9, which is a “thinking of thinking”—as instances of what we might call *faux reflexive*.⁹ In each case what is expressed looks like a standard reflexive but is not. We are inclined to think of these as instances of *self-awareness* because of the syntax of Plato's and of Aristotle's expressions. But we need to understand that here self-awareness is not reflexive self-awareness, but simply the self-presence of all conscious experience.

Just as in *Metaphysics* 12 Aristotle continues to speak of thought as an object of thought and in *De Anima* 3.2 of perception as an object of perception, so here Plato allows Critias to speak of ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης, knowledge as known. But in none of these cases are we to understand

reference to a reflective self-awareness—my turning ever so slightly away from looking at Regent Street to engage in the vivid thought that I am now, at last, viewing the vibrant streets and byways of London—but rather to the self-awareness that characterizes simple first-order consciousness: my knowing what I am thinking, or seeing, or saying, or doing. And that is how the dialogue circles back to the awareness of the *σώφρων* with which we began. For even at the end of the dialogue, when Socrates continues to express confusion about the nature of *σωφροσύνη*, he is able to agree that the *σώφρων* knows what he's doing, that he is, as Socrates describes him, someone who understands about that which he knows that he knows it, and about that which he doesn't know, that he doesn't know it: *ἐπιστήμων ὧν τε οἶδεν ὅτι οἶδε, καὶ ὧν μὴ οἶδεν ὅτι οὐκ οἶδε* (175C). He knows what he's up to; but since this is not an objective self-consciousness, but self-aware action, intentionality is not blocked: he knows what he knows. That is why in the dream of a world governed by *σωφροσύνη*, the dialogue is able to articulate for us the hope that knowing what we are doing, we will be able to do things well and to live happily: *ἐπιστημόνως ἂν πράττοντες εὔ ἂν πράττοιμεν καὶ εὐδαιμονοῖμεν* (173D). Note how the objective intentionality of *σωφροσύνη*, problematic throughout the dialogue, is here restored; on that day, let it come speedily and in our time, we'll know what we are doing.

On this Plato and Aristotle are in agreement: cognition is in its nature objective, that is, intentional; it reaches out toward a world other than itself, which it posits as its object. But at the same time it involves a mode of self-awareness that is, as it were, nonobjective, a consciousness of the *subject as aware* in which the *subject as aware* is *present to itself* but not *before itself* in the mode in which the posited object of consciousness is *before* consciousness. The attempt to explain and elucidate this nonobjective mode of self-awareness, to articulate the sense in which it is a condition of consciousness of the objective world while preventing it from collapsing into simple reflexive self-awareness, is in some ways a deeply modern concern. It is common to thinkers as central as Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, thinkers who, in different ways and with different degrees of manifestness, express the view (to put it in Kant-Hegelian terms) that the spontaneity of self-consciousness is a condition for the possibility of the receptivity of consciousness. What I am suggesting is that that modern concern is present, *mutatis mutandis*, in our ancient authors.

6

It's a virtue to know what I'm doing, to act consciously and with self-awareness. Gluttony, sloth, licentiousness, procrastination, like all their vicious cohort, sneak up on me when I lose sight of myself and forget what I am about, when I fail to take account of what it is that I am doing. So it's a healthy phronesis that is conscious of its actions, and we can therefore understand why σωφροσύνη might be thought to be the virtue of self-consciousness.

But reading this last paragraph, I am put in mind of the dangers of self-consciousness, of how easily the I can cloud awareness; I think of what Virginia Woolf calls "the dominance of the letter 'I' and the aridity, which, like the giant beech tree, it casts within its shade."¹⁰ We can easily imagine a reading that connects Charmides's second account of σωφροσύνη as modesty—αἰδώς—(160E) with Woolf's concern about the power of the I to eclipse our vision. But we may find troubling the incandescence that Woolf imagines as a mode of cleansing consciousness of self-opacity, the hot intensity of self-illumination by which artistic consciousness is enabled to turn out to and, with its fictional intentionality, illumine the world. Such self-immolating intensity, however, may be the peculiar calling of the writer; there are surely other and gentler ways of self-cleansing. Some mode of abnegation, however, is surely a virtue for all of us, some mode of the self's relinquishment of itself by which the self-consciousness necessary for thoughtful action is kept from acquiring the opacity of egotism and self-absorption. A figure of that self-erasure and self-accomplishment is the virtue of σωφροσύνη to which Plato points in our dialogue, points and leads us through a discourse of quiet and order, modesty and skilled self-knowing. Like the empty mindlessness of the fully mindful and enlightened sage, σωφροσύνη is a virtue of self without self, a virtue of wisdom and self-mastery in which wisdom, self, and mastery vanish, and there remains only the quiet, orderly, and effortless grace of skilled living.

Beauty and the Good

SITUATING THE *KALON*

I

Early in the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas, discussing the nature of goodness, considers an argument purporting to show that the good is not a final cause. Goodness is very much like beauty—we may recall Dionysius saying that *bonum laudatur ut pulchrum*.¹ But beauty is a formal cause; so perhaps we should see goodness, like beauty, as a formal rather than a final cause. Here is his response:

Beauty and goodness in a subject are basically the same, for they're founded on the same thing, namely form; and because of this, goodness is praised as beauty. But they're conceptually distinct. For goodness is properly related to appetite; for it's the good that all things desire, and therefore it involves the concept of an end, for the appetite is a kind of movement toward something. Beauty, on the other hand, is related to a cognitive power, for things are said to be beautiful which please when seen. Hence beauty consists in due proportion, for sense delights in things of due proportion, as something similar to them; for sense also is a sort of reason, as is every cognitive power. (*Summa Theologica* 1.1, question 4, article 4, reply to the first objection)

Aquinas here begins by gesturing toward agreement with the view of Dionysius that the beautiful and the good are identical, a view that has led one scholar, Jan Aersten, to characterize Dionysius as “a typical representative of Greek thought, for in Hellenic culture the beautiful and the good are brought together in a single notion.”² But when Aquinas goes on to *distinguish* beauty from goodness, his word for

beauty—pulchrum—presumably corresponds to the Greek καλόν. This, however, is the very term most often thought to designate the “single notion” in which Hellenic culture has “brought together the beautiful and the good.” So the question arises: how are we to situate the καλόν with respect to the good and the beautiful? This is the question I want to think about in this essay.

2

We might begin with two related considerations. The first concerns how much for us but not for the Greeks discourse about beauty is rooted in the project of what we now call the *aesthetic*. I was led to think of this passage from the *Summa* because it is a text to which the young artist Stephen Dedalus refers in Joyce’s novel. “You are an artist, are you not, Mr. Dedalus? said the dean. The object of the artist is the creation of the beautiful. What the beautiful is is another question.”³ In the course of responding, Stephen (slightly misquoting Aquinas) offers the pithy *pulcra sunt quae visa placent*: things are beautiful which when seen please us. Note that *the beautiful* here is what the artist sets out to create. But if we think about the beautiful in Plato and Aristotle—or rather if we think about the καλόν in Plato and Aristotle—what we are thinking about doesn’t primarily have to do with what we would consider the project of art, that is, the aesthetic. Occasionally, particularly in Homer, καλός is applied to artifacts that may for us acquire the status of an art object. But such usage is secondary to the natural beauty of persons and to the beauty (what the *Liddell and Scott* entry delicately calls “moral beauty”) of their actions, states of character, and the like. And in any case the use of καλός in relation to such objects attends to their efficiency, their utilitarian virtue, how well they are made; think how this fact plays out in the argument of *Hippias Major*. It attends, in other words, to features that for our post-Kantian aesthetic imagination seem precisely *not* to be associated with objects of pure, or as we say, “fine” art. Much the same is true of another category of entity that we characteristically find beautiful: nature in all her glorious aspect. Where in antiquity do we find sunsets, meadows, groves and streams, waterfalls and fields of daffodils described as καλός?

The second consideration, perhaps a more central one, is the obverse of the first. It arises from noting how comfortable the notion of τὸ καλόν is instead in the fields of moral discourse, and how uneasy we

are with talk of *the beautiful* in this context. Here is Aristotle: “So it is for the sake of the beautiful [καλοῦ δὴ ἕνεκα] that a courageous person endures and performs emotions and deeds appropriate to courage” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.7, 1115b23-24) And this remark follows fast upon the heels of the more general claim that a courageous person does what he does “for the sake of the beautiful [τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα] for that is the end toward which virtue is directed [τοῦτο γὰρ τέλος τῆς ἀρετῆς]” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.7, 1115b12-13).

Aristotle’s thought here—that lives marked by the virtue of courage and by virtue in general are to be sought after in order that such lives should exhibit *beauty*—ought to strike us as remarkable. The desire for a beautiful life or for a life of beauty—an eagerness “for to shine in the high aesthetic line,” as a later wordsmith puts it—may well characterize some of us, “men of culture rare.” But what such people aim for surely is different from and subordinate to the life toward which Aristotelian virtue is directed. Though we may be happy for him if he does, we do not expect the φρόνιμος, as a part of his virtue, to “walk down Picadilly with a poppy or a lily” in his eudaimonic hand.⁴

It may be that we are called upon or desire to fashion our lives or characters in a way that could be described in terms of an artistic endeavor. But to heed such a call properly must be to read it by way of a kind of hortatory analogy. As an artist should strive to be serious but not earnest, moving but not sentimental, witty but not frivolous, or detached but not cynical, so ought we to strive in the living of our lives.⁵ But all of this is about living well, that is, about living lives whose beauty may shine forth as a *result* of their goodness (a goodness that may indeed be read by analogy with that of a work of art) but not about making our lives beautiful and *therefore* good. That order of causality—beautiful and *therefore* good—may apply to a person’s looks, or it may apply to a work of art; but for our lives, if we are not to make of them works of art, goodness must precede beauty and neither arise as a consequence of it nor be defined teleologically as a means to its accomplishment. We ought not set out to fashion our lives and their moments as if they were primarily works of art.

Someone might want here to object that my argument begs the question since it assumes that our lives are not works of art; it posits the rejection of the very aestheticism that I am questioning. But it seems right to do so. Even though the making of art may be distinc-

tively human, and even though many of the features of our moral lives may share principles with our aesthetic faculties—most notably principles of conception and imagination—a life is not a work of art. It does not, for one thing, flourish by virtue of its novelty, originality, or radical individuality. It may exhibit those features in response to the necessary specificity of its circumstance, but its virtue, as Kant consistently reminds us, lies in the proper deportment that we would ask of anyone in such circumstance.⁶ So when we think of the relation of our lives to works of art, the vector of priority must go in the right direction. The primary focus of our endeavor to realize the good is our endeavor to live well and in doing so to live good lives, of which our endeavor to create good poems, for example, may, like our interest in culinary excellence or in religious piety or in erotic prosperity, or more generally in the creation, possession, and contemplation of beauty, be a part, but only a part. So the analogy must primarily go in that direction as well: as we endeavor to lead good lives, so do poets endeavor to create good poems or artists to paint good paintings. This is true despite the fact that the shapes and strategies of these several endeavors, though different, may exhibit the same formal requirements. And it is true despite the importance, in the formation of ourselves as deliberating moral agents, of imagination, of our fiction-making capacities and of our ability to think of what is not, all of which faculties are literary in their further import.

Nor do I mean to deny, when I urge that the analogy needs to be structured with the vector I have here offered, the arguments of philosophers like Bernard Williams and Susan Wolf, arguments showing that what we think of as moral good is not the only human good. Morality is neither the only source of our values nor the only good of a human life, and moral value does not always trump other values (even though when it doesn't the price we pay may be significant). I have not meant to deny these facts, but simply to assert that there is a general sense of a good human life that is importantly not founded upon, even though it includes, aesthetic notions, notions of what it is for our lives and our activities and our possessions to be beautiful.

All of this is perhaps merely a long-winded and roundabout way—a philosophically fussy way—of saying that we ought to be uneasy with what appears to be Aristotle's claim that virtue is for the sake of the beautiful. I think we would find it decadent or something like

belletristic to be directed to keep a promise because *it would be lovely* or *in good taste to do so*, or enjoined not to commit mass murder because *doing so would be tacky*.⁷ For us, “she acted beautifully” and “she acted rightly” do not mean the same thing, nor do “she’s beautiful” and “she’s virtuous.”

3

But if we are uneasy with Aristotle’s claim, this uneasiness will perforce be considerable, for the role of beauty in Aristotle’s moral thought and Plato’s as well is itself considerable. One way to settle this uneasiness is to reveal a causal connection between our love of beauty and our moral character. This is, for example, what Gabriel Richardson Lear sets out to do in the case of Plato in her thoughtful essay on our attraction to beauty in the *Symposium* and its connection to moral grace, and with regard to Aristotle in her essay in the Blackwell Guide to the *Ethics*.⁸ It is also what Elaine Scarry undertakes in a very general and rather different mode in the last of her Tanner Lectures, *On Beauty and Being Just*.⁹ These essays elaborate interesting and what seem to me strong and compelling arguments for the moral power of our attraction to beauty.

But they do less than they might to answer a question that may escape our attention, even though in a sense it is obvious. Is the *beauty* to which these essays attribute moral power the very thing that is referred to as τὸ καλόν in Plato and Aristotle? That is, are the concepts of *beautiful* and καλόν sufficiently congruent that arguments showing the moral power of beauty at the same time explain Aristotle’s τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα—for the sake of the *kalon*? Scarry, to be sure, is under no obligation, given the general project in which she is engaged, to establish such congruence. Nor need Lear show that the concepts are identical for the sake of elucidating the argument of the *Symposium*, or for showing the relevance of what she refers to (revealingly, as we are about to see) as the *fine* to the *good* in Aristotle.

But this question is of greater consequence than it might at first appear to be. For asking whether it is actually *beauty* that is under consideration in these texts suggests a more direct and straightforward way to settle the uneasiness of which we have spoken: we can simply avoid the *translation* that first leads us to think of Aristotle as a “moral es-

there.” For we will only be perplexed by Aristotle’s remarks to the degree that we render καλόν as *beautiful* and τὸ καλόν as *beauty* or *the beautiful*. And sure enough, as though precisely to avoid such perplexity, translators frequently avoid this rendering, particularly in philosophical texts. So when Aristotle writes: “καλοῦ ἔνεκα ὁ ἀνδρεῖος ὑπομένει καὶ πράττει,” translators frequently portray him as meaning that a courageous person acts and feels as he does not for the sake of *the beautiful*, but for the sake of *the noble* (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.7, 1115b23). In Rackham’s translation it is “for the sake of that which is noble” that a courageous person thus acts and feels, and in the versions of Ross and Ostwald it is “for a noble end.”

And if we are uncomfortable with *noble* because it suggests that excellent character is grounded in something like *patrician status*, as though it were for the sake of being an aristocrat that one should behave courageously, other options are available and in common use in translations of Aristotle and Plato. Here is an example: Responding to his account of σωφροσύνη as a kind of quietness, Socrates begins to subject Charmides to a standard cross-examination beginning with a question we have heard elsewhere: “οὐ τῶν καλῶν μέντοι ἢ σωφροσύνη ἐστίν?” Isn’t temperance among the things that are *kalon*? But translators do not give us: Isn’t temperance *beautiful*? They give us, and understandably: Isn’t it *admirable*? or *fine*? or *honorable*? (*Charmides* 159C).

We might worry that this way of settling our uneasiness—abandoning *beautiful* as a translation of καλόν—is like a rule for flawless reasoning that goes: when you encounter a contradiction, cross it out. Manipulating the translation may merely hide the issue rather than determining whether it is a real one. The question surely has to be whether καλόν in fact points to something different—whether very different or only slightly different—from *beauty*. But we need only to look again at Plato’s text to see why we cannot translate καλόν by *beautiful* in this passage from the *Charmides*. For the subsequent argument would make little sense if the several instances that Socrates proceeds to give of activities in which quickness and speed are more καλός were appealed to by virtue of their being more *beautiful*. The argument requires that it be a question of their being *better*: better, to be sure, in the sense of more *admirable*, but still *better*. Similarly when Laches suggests that the virtue of courage may be a kind of steadfast endurance. Here, again in

response to Socrates, Laches asserts that courage is not merely καλόν, but κάλλιστον, one of the things *most* καλόν. When Socrates then leads Laches to acknowledge that endurance can sometimes be harmful and injurious, and that it would be odd to say that something harmful and injurious is καλόν, he must mean that it would be odd to say that something harmful and injurious is, even as the translators give us, *admirable* or *fine* (*Laches* 192C).

These choices of translation reflect an appropriate concern about whether *beautiful* is a proper rendering of καλόν. And this concern, which is at the heart of this essay, is related to our earlier questions: if beauty is for us associated with what we think of as art and nature, why is τὸ καλόν so little associated with these matters? And if καλός means *beautiful*, why do Aristotle and Plato treat τὸ καλόν as morally normative?

Note that this same concern would be appropriate with respect to the text from Thomas with which we opened this conversation. Is *pulchrum* an apt analogue of καλόν? Indeed, the first thing that caused me to mistrust the suitability of Thomas's remarks to our topic was the fanciful question, how would we translate Thomas's thought into Greek?¹⁰ Would *pulchrum*, to ask a question that is the reverse of what I have been asking, be appositely Greeked as καλόν? Perhaps it would. But we should surely be well advised if we made that choice to recall that καλόν is as often rendered in Latin by *bonum* or *honestum* as by *pulchrum*.

Indeed, to see the complexity of the semantic field of the term καλόν, consider these moments in biblical translation: the Septuagint at Genesis 1.10, “καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι καλόν,” translates the Hebrew “*va-yar elohim ki tov*”—and God saw that it was good—which becomes in the Vulgate “*et vidit Deus quod esset bonum*.” But the Septuagint at Song of Songs 1.15, “ἰδοὺ εἶ καλή ἡ πλησίον μου,” translates the Hebrew “*hin-ach yafah rayati*”—Behold you are beautiful, my love—which then becomes in the Vulgate “*Ecce tu pulcher es, dilecte mi*.” In these locations, καλόν is seen on one occasion consorting with the *Good* and on another with the *Beautiful*, like an uncertain lover attracted to one person because of their noble character and to another because of their striking looks.

4

So there is a deep history of uncertainty about how properly to translate καλόν. Here is further evidence of that uncertainty. In translating the *Hippias Major*, Paul Woodruff renders καλός everywhere by the English *fine*, so that the question Socrates imagines and focuses upon at *Hippias Major* 287D, τί ἐστὶ τοῦτο, τὸ καλόν, is no longer, as in Fowler's English, "what is this, the beautiful," but "what is that, the fine." This striking choice makes some of the passages feel strange. Hippias now offers not the slightly archaic observation that "a beautiful maiden is beautiful," but the somewhat slangy "a fine girl is a fine thing."

Woodruff offers this translation, I imagine, because in other contexts it is hard to support translating καλόν as *beautiful*. It may be that a wooden spoon is more desirable than a golden spoon if it is better able to perform its spoonly functions. But does it follow that it's more *beautiful*? (*Hippias Major* 291C). And although it is surely desirable to be able to bury one's parents with honor and dignity, wouldn't it be odd to describe that ability as *beautiful*? Do we want our translation to make even Socrates's imaginary interlocutor, discussing the view that "παντὶ . . . καὶ ἀεὶ καλὸν εἶναι ὑπὸ μὲν τῶν ἐκγόνων ταφῆναι, τοὺς δὲ γονέας θάψαι," say that "it is beautiful for everyone to be buried by his children and to bury his parents?" (*Hippias Major* 293A). It may be a good thing or a desirable thing; could it be *beautiful*?

Here, then, is the problem: καλόν describes both girls and the burial of one's parents, but for that very reason it leaves us perplexed about what to say in English. As so often in the project of translation, we feel the need for different words in different contexts. We might imagine adopting this rule: for a proper translation of καλόν, use *beautiful* when applied to girls and boys, and *fine*—or perhaps *desirable* or *admirable*, or for that matter *good*—when applied to other things, for example, to moral notions.

Commonly we describe this fact by saying that καλόν means both *good* and *beautiful*. But what do we mean when we say that a word like καλόν *means several things*? And for that matter, what do we mean when we say that two things, such as the good and the beautiful, are *brought together in a single notion*, as in the description of Greek thought with which I began? We don't mean that the word καλόν means several

things in the way in which a homonym like the English *fluke* means several things. A fluke is a fish, a flatworm, the end of an anchor, the tail of a whale, and a stroke of luck. But in a case like that, a word has several meanings because the single word form, though one, is only *accidentally* one. In fact there are several words—several lexemes—each with different etymologies that through the vagaries of English orthographic history share a single lexical instantiation but do not in fact represent the same lexeme.¹¹ They constitute instances of homonymy no different from more obvious homonyms such as *pear* and *pair*. No one thinks to say that *pear* and *pair* constitute one word with two meanings, except in the trivial sense in which a single phone in fact represents two different lexemes. And this is not the sense that we have in mind when we say that καλόν “means both” good and beautiful, that is, has two meanings. If we think that the term has these two meanings, it’s not because we think of it as a kind of linguistic minivan, able to contain more than one meaning in its commodious cargo area. It is because the meanings are related to one another: and not merely accidentally, for example through the happenstance—the metonymic flukes, as it were—of linguistic history, but related to one another essentially.

Perhaps Woodruff’s translation seems slightly awkward because he wants to finesse the question of such a relation. Whether or not that is the reason, he in any case offers *fine* not simply because *beautiful* is odd in some contexts, but also because he wants one and the same English word to consistently represent one Greek word. But why should he want that? Isn’t it our standard practice, when translating, to treat differences in semantic geography between languages by variation in the target language? Think how often that happens in the complex project of translating philosophical texts. English versions of the *Charmides*, for example, struggling to capture the meaning of the difficult term σωφροσύνη, often use three or four different English terms to represent the Greek in different contexts.

It’s an understandable strategy. Apart from the fact that neither *temperance* nor *moderation* nor *self-control* nor *self-mastery* nor, God help us, *chastity* quite captures the semantic register of σωφροσύνη, the different moments in the argument of the *Charmides* tempt us to the easy and in one sense more revealing expedient of rendering it here with one English term and there with another.

In one respect, this does make for more revealing local translations; the structure of each argument's moment is made perspicuous by tailoring the vernacular to its demands. But this local felicity and the clarity that it purchases are paid for dearly by the fact that the shape of Plato's overall argument is obscured. This price is always borne home to me when students, having lost their way trying to follow the argument of the dialogue in English, express anger upon learning that the Greek word the translator has represented to them as *temperance* is the same word he later represents to them as *virtue*, and still later as *wisdom*. A parallel difficulty is generated by English versions of Euripides's *Hippolytus*, in which an understandable variation in the translation of the same key term obscures the central thematic opposition between ἔρωξ and σωφροσύνη. More globally, students experience frustration on discovering different English renderings of the same term in different dialogues, for example, the different English translations of σωφροσύνη in standard editions of the *Republic* and of the *Phaedo*. The same well-intentioned strategy, with the same baffling and frustrating consequences for the Greekless reader, can be witnessed in the wide range of words used to translate key terms—οὐσία, τί ἐστι, τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, καθ' αὐτὸ—in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, a variability that never ceases to confuse students.¹²

We can therefore understand and even applaud the desire for consistency underlying Woodruff's choice. And given that constraint, *fine* is perhaps preferable to *beautiful*, a woman being *fine* (we may need to amend: *fine looking*) preferable to our ability to bury our parents being *beautiful*, even when we bury them with dignity and honor. But although we might be comfortable with the unexpectedness of that choice in a work like *Hippias Major*, which is not among the most widely read of the dialogues, it is harder to contravene the tradition of *beauty* and *beautiful* in Platonic texts more firmly established in our reading canon. So it is that in Woodruff's translation of the *Symposium*, *beauty* is everywhere; and at 204B, Woodruff translates the claim that wisdom is among the things that are κάλλιστον with the words: "and wisdom is extremely beautiful."

Despite what surrounds these words in the *Symposium*, this claim should strike us as odd. Wisdom is not *beautiful*. It's not ugly; but it's not beautiful. It's a good thing, and being beautiful is one way of being good; but it is not the only way, and it is not wisdom's way. Helen, on

the other hand, is beautiful. It is indeed a *person*—Helen or Tadzio or any of the others whom we lust after or dream of or are merely pleased to admire—it is a person that is above all the subject, and the shared subject, of the predicates *beautiful* and καλόν.¹³ *Person* here embraces in its meaning countenance, aspect, carriage, and body, including body parts, as most famously recognized in the Renaissance *blason*, and as Greek recognizes in χρυσηῖς καλλιπάρηος, fair-cheeked Chryseis of *Iliad* fame (*Iliad* 1.143), or Callipygian Aphrodite, Venus of the beautiful butt.

A sunrise over Lake Michigan may also be beautiful, or the bucolic view of a meadow (as well as its representation in “cold pastoral”). Giotto’s frescoes in the Scrovegni are beautiful; I find the andante of Schubert’s E-flat Piano Trio spectacularly beautiful. Even someone’s *act* of charity, or *expression* of clarity, or (as in *beautifully explained* or *articulated* or *dealt with*) a certain *display* of wisdom might be said to be beautiful. But not *wisdom* itself. It is this very fact that underlies Woodruff’s reluctance to translate καλόν in the *Hippias* by *beautiful*. And it seems to me that in this Woodruff is right.

5

We found ourselves compelled by the supposition that *beautiful* translates καλόν to attribute to Aristotle the use of *beautiful* as a term of moral praise; now we find ourselves compelled by this supposition to attribute to Plato the odd and ungainly view that wisdom is beautiful. This may indeed be Plato’s view, and in the end, I will suggest that something like it indeed is. But first the obvious strategy is once again to question the felicity of the translation. And once again there therefore appear to be contrary constraints attending our translation of καλόν and contrary practices that result. Sometimes it seems perverse or at least silly to use terms of beauty in translating καλόν; sometimes it seems perverse or at least silly not to do so.

If we need an instance of how odd the former practice can seem—a practice that insists on the appropriateness of the term *beautiful* as a translation of καλόν, avoiding alternatives such as *fine*, *noble*, or *admirable*, as well as strategies of variation, such as using *fine* here and *beautiful* there—we have the courageous and principled translations of Joe

Sachs.¹⁴ Here is Sachs, in a discussion of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in which he explains and justifies his translation:

Aristotle says plainly and repeatedly what it is that moral virtue is for the sake of, but the translators are afraid to give it to you straight. Most of them say it is the noble. One of them says it is the fine. If these answers went past you without even registering, that is probably because they make so little sense. To us, the word noble probably connotes some sort of high-minded naiveté, something hopelessly impractical. . . . The word fine is of the same sort but worse, suggesting some flimsy artistic soul who couldn't endure rough treatment. . . . The word the translators are afraid of is *to kalon*, the beautiful. . . . What the person of good character loves with right desire and thinks of as an end with right reason must first be perceived as beautiful.

As we can hear, Sachs is aware of the fact that his choice will make him seem a maverick. But he thinks that Aristotle's use of *καλόν* is "not some special usage of the Greek language, but one that speaks to us directly, if the translators let it."¹⁵ He also thinks that it's represented analogously in English. So:

In the most ordinary circumstances, any mother might say to a misbehaving child, in plain English, "don't be so ugly." And any of us, parent, friend, or grudging enemy, might on occasion say to someone else, "that was a beautiful thing you did."¹⁶

That's not a mother whose mothering (or at any rate whose discursive mothering) I find, as it were, attractive; and the difficulty is manifest in her use of *ugly* where *mean* or *selfish* or, simply, *bad* is what is wanted. And I can neither hear nor find evidence for *beautiful* as a paradigmatic term of moral evaluation. To my ear, when we tell a friend that what he did was *beautiful*, we recognize some behavior of his as supererogatory or unexpected; in any case, I don't hear it as an expression of simple moral praise for having done the right thing. But linguistic intuitions undoubtedly differ, and what seems standard to one person to another may seem someone's idiolect. I mean to say only that Plato and Aristotle's use of *καλόν* as a moral predicate is standard and unmarked and that our use of *beautiful* as a moral predicate is not. Claims that it is should make us uneasy, like the claim that mass murder is *tacky*.

Here is the question that once again emerges from these observations about translation: What is indicated by the predicate term *καλόν*, applicable to the fair *tuchis* of a goddess, as in Callipygian Aphrodite, and at the same time to wisdom, and how ought we to translate the term? The first case seems to cry out for *beautiful* (though as I've implicitly suggested, we could imagine Woodruff offering: she's got a fine ass, that goddess), but the second calls for some inflection of *good*, and *beautiful* seems oddly inappropriate. Wisdom is something we value, something precious, something worthy of our admiration and striving, something estimable. It is decidedly *good*; but it is not *beautiful*, nor for that matter *ugly*. Wisdom simply doesn't look like anything.

I have offered these observations not as advice to translators, but by way of indicating how complex and therefore difficult their task is and what we might learn from that fact. The commentary and the classroom make it possible for us, when we are not translating and have at our disposal a more expansive discourse, to explain this complexity to readers and students. At this point a kind of Wittgensteinian "say what you will" might emerge; *beautiful* will work just fine, as will *fine*, and as will whatever, so to speak, fits the meter. For we will have understood the central point: *καλόν* and *beautiful* share enough semantic ground that it's not unreasonable to think of one as the translation of the other. But the contours of their semantic fields differ considerably, and we need to keep always before us an awareness of the differences.

So if I seem to endorse Woodruff's practice in the *Hippias* rather than his practice in the *Symposium*, it is not because I think it would in general be wrong to translate *καλόν* by *beautiful*. It is rather in the hope that in contemplating the practice of avoiding *beautiful*, we might be led to rethink our reading of the philosophers. Such rethinking should affect our understanding of Plato's arguments about τὸ καλόν, particularly in the *Symposium*, and it should prevent us from ascribing to Aristotle an aestheticism that, I have suggested, ought to make us uneasy.

We may nevertheless be inclined to think of the issues I have tried to generate with respect to *καλόν* as problems specific to the task we face as translators, especially when we set out, as every philosophical generation must, to present past texts in a modern vernacular. They are challenging issues and, as I have hinted, have no perfect solution, but it's easy to see them as not significantly different from the tasks facing someone who wishes to give to English readers a sense of the

imagery, diction, and semantic complexity of the *Duino Elegies* or of the stylistic and rhetorical nuances of *War and Peace* (think of the recent pitched battles among translators of that text!).

Those concerns, however, reflect a translator's project of representing in another language a very specific cultural and literary moment, a highly particular aesthetic artifact, connected specifically to Rilke and Tolstoy; and even this project requires a more elaborate discourse, that is, something in addition to a *translation*, for a complete analytic representation. The issues of translation at which we have been looking are less literarily specific, and therefore reveal deeper cultural and philosophical patterns of meaning. The impossibility of finding, for οὐσία and the complex of associated terms I mentioned earlier, a simple and unelaborated translation that might map the ontology of the ancient world onto current philosophical parlance reveals more general differences between ancient and modern philosophical imaginations, and not simply between ancient and modern philosophical lexicons.

But even this case (despite the fantasies of those of us who enjoy hard-core ontology as a topic of breakfast conversation) is finally of a technical and therefore somewhat parochial interest. The impossibility, however, of finding an exact mapping of σωφροσύνη reveals differences between the cultural and moral discourse of our world and that of ancient Greece much more general in scope. It is those differences that make Plato's *Charmides* and Euripides's *Hippolytus* so hard to translate, and make that fact so interesting. And the difficulty we have been discussing, the question of how to render καλόν, may reveal even more general differences.

I've tried to suggest broadly what those differences might be. They leave me with the urge, an urge that I will of course resist, to say that the Greeks had no concept of *beauty*. But this much is right: the concept of *beauty* is sufficiently different from that of τὸ καλόν to make the urge understandable.

6

I offered these two features of our notion of *beauty* not found in a comparable sense in the notion of the καλόν: (1) *beauty* critically involves the world of art;¹⁷ (2) *beauty* critically involves the world of nature. Greeks assuredly recognized the beauty of art and of nature, but they didn't

centrally link it to the beauty of the καλόν. So in Philostratus's *Imagines*, to take one example, καλός words appear only in descriptions of the subject matter of the art.¹⁸ The concepts of beauty and of τὸ καλόν share a central and important applicability to the countenance, aspect, carriage, and bodies of persons—boys and girls, men and women; but at that point their semantic courses diverge. Actions, institutions, virtues, and the like were said by them to be καλά; paintings, musical compositions, sunsets, and the like are said by us to be beautiful.

The concept of καλόν then is different from that of *beautiful*, so that it may be misleading to translate καλόν as *beautiful* or τὸ καλόν as *beauty*.¹⁹ But as I have also indicated, it would be a will-o'-the-wisp to suppose that somewhere there is a translation that is just right. Maybe *fine* or *noble* or *desirable* will sometimes be preferable to *beautiful*, and *good* often will; in some cases it will be preferable to use one term sometimes and sometimes another. Basically, however, the dream of an ideal translation, like the more general desire to reproduce the semantic field of one language in another or to hold back the hermeneutical dislocation that comes when we move from one language to another, is vain.

But as philosophers and interpreters, we enjoy a luxurious prolixity that is not afforded the translator. That fact has consequences. For example, if we come to realize that for Plato, love's proper object, that toward which ἔρωσ is per se directed as toward its appropriate end, is καλόν, or is indeed the καλόν itself, we should feel no inclination to infer that Plato believes love's object to be what we would call *beautiful*. We will have acquired evidence that for Plato the object of love is cousin-german to the beautiful, that it is admirable or fine or noble, or indeed that it is good. We may in good conscience continue to speak of the argument as pointing us in the direction of *the beautiful*, but only if we take pains to elaborate a nuanced sense of beauty, a sense that captures the subtleties of τὸ καλόν. If we do, we may then be able to understand why Socrates describes wisdom as among the κάλλιστα and why he begins the argument in the *Charmides* with the obvious point that σωφροσύνη is a καλόν thing. And if we do, we may have taken steps toward learning an art that is at the very core of our project of scholarship. This is the art of recovering our ancestors—an art that will allow us to see Plato's view that *wisdom is beautiful* as other than odd and ungainly and to understand what leads Aristotle to assert that *virtuous action is for the sake of the beautiful*.

This paper is therefore a prolegomenon; for the really interesting and hard work remains to be done. That is the work required when we go beyond the facile use of *beautiful* here and *fine* there, or beyond the easy acknowledgment that καλόν somehow “‘means both’ good and beautiful,” and ask the question, how so? How are these predicates connected in the concept of τὸ καλόν?

To ask such a question is analogous to asking the question, how can quietness, self-control, modesty, self-awareness, chastity, and temperance comprise the notion of σωφροσύνη? What is the shape of such a concept, able as it is to contain all these disparate and self-conflicting features? Notice that this question is a characteristically *Platonic* question, the kind of question that is typically entertained in and emerges from the dialogues, particularly the early Socratic dialogues.

I offer here only gestures in the direction of answering this question, of situating, as I put it, the καλόν relative to the good and the beautiful. The gestures are given direction by our earlier thoughts about *wisdom*. Trying to evoke the oddness of speaking of wisdom as beautiful, I proposed that although it is something we value, something precious and worthy of our admiration and of our striving, something *good*, wisdom is not *beautiful*. It’s the sort of thing, I hastened to add, which though good is neither beautiful nor ugly. It simply, I suggested by way of explanation, doesn’t *look like anything*.

This explanation works, I think, because *beauty* is in some sense specific to the modalities of sense, particularly to sight and hearing, or perhaps we should say to the modalities of the sensible appearance of those things said to be beautiful. These are the things that have to them a look and a sound that when pleasing constitute their beauty: “pulchra dicuntur quae visa placent,” as Aquinas puts it in the discussion with which we began: those things are said to be beautiful which when seen please us. It’s no surprise then that beauty lives in the realm of the *aesthetic*, that is to say, the sensible.

Perhaps then this is what we want to say: because wisdom is good but not visible, it can be said to be καλόν but not beautiful. For it has no characteristic *look* or *sound*. And just so with other things that Plato characterizes as καλόν but that we were reluctant to describe as beautiful, the virtues in the *Charmides* and *Laches*, for example; perhaps that reluctance is connected to their not having a *look* or *sound*, to their not being visible or heard.

But this connection to visibility—the fact that beautiful things are *seen* and have *looks*—is true, as we just noted, of entities described by Thomas as *pulchra*. And indeed Plotinus makes the connection for *καλόν*, asserting that what is *καλόν* presents itself chiefly to sight (Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.1). How then could it be thought that having a look or a sound marks the beautiful in contrast to the *καλόν*? So although it might seem promising to think of beauty in terms of visibility and analogous modalities of the sensible appearance of things—in terms of their look, sound, and the like—it’s difficult to see the promise as amounting to much.

Perhaps it would help if we were to attend specifically to the notion of *appearance* that is implicit in this account of “the modalities of sensible appearance.” If we think specifically of appearance as *presentation to subjective awareness*, we may find within that concept some quality that will offer a more fruitful connection to the *καλόν* and to the beautiful. To do this, I suggest that we think of Plato’s *Gorgias*, a dialogue that highlights the opposition between the *καλόν* and the *αἰσχρόν*. It is easy to understand that opposition simply as an opposition between the beautiful and the *ugly*. But such a simple understanding overlooks a fact made clear in the *Gorgias*, the fact that the fundamental meaning of *αἰσχρόν* has less to do with something’s being *ugly* than with its being *shameful*.²⁰ What the argument of the *Gorgias* reveals is that these concepts are together importantly situated in the register of honor and shame, and what this means more generally is that they are in the register of our *appearance to one another*. (Recall how attractive it was to translate *καλόν* as *admirable*.) We could say (and here Plotinus is again helpful) that the *καλόν* is to the good as *appearance* is to *being*.

To think of the *καλόν* this way is to situate it in the realm of what we might figuratively call the *rhetoric* of being, that is, the realm of being’s presentation to our subjective awareness. We might say more generally that the *καλόν* and the beautiful alike invoke the realm of the *phenomenal*. The fact then that a cardinal term of Plato and Aristotle for what is commendable is rooted in the phenomenal reveals something important about their ontology. Or perhaps we should say instead: it reveals something important about their phenomenology—not so much, that is, about their understanding of *being* as about their understanding of *appearance*. And maybe this is still not right; maybe we

should say that it reveals something important about their understanding of the *relation between ontology and phenomenology*, the relation, in other words, between *how things are* and *how they make their appearance*.

Here is why I think that is true, and how it bears upon our considerations, both about beauty and about τὸ καλόν. Our understanding of the nature of appearance and its relation to being, the role that appearance plays in what I have called the “rhetoric of being,” affects our attitude toward beauty. One reason that we are so often unsure about the appropriateness of valuing beauty is that we tend to think of beauty in cosmetic terms, as though it concerned always and only a superficial façade of being, separable from its inner nature, a mask that being wears.

But the reason we hold that view of beauty has to do with the view we hold of appearance. It is because we are inclined to conceive of appearance as antithetical to being, or at least as independent and separate from it, that we are inclined to regard beauty as the cosmetic epiphenomenon of being. For we are then led to read appearance with what is at best a hermeneutics of indifference, as though appearance were equally likely to represent being with or without fidelity, as though it were an independent mask worn by being that may or may not resemble its true face. At worst, that hermeneutics becomes a hermeneutics of suspicion, in which appearance spells in its nature the distortion and deformation of what is: as though appearance were essentially being’s *falsification*.

But for Plato, appearance is not something separate from being, but simply the presentation of what is to a subject: being, as we say, making its appearance. It is not therefore essentially deceptive; the phenomenological is not standardly the *illusion* of being. It becomes illusory only in the context of something going wrong, a failure of uptake. Standardly, appearance is being’s *presence to subjectivity*, face not as façade, but as organic *expression*. The καλόν in turn reveals the integrity of being and its proper appearance; it constitutes the *virtue of proper and expressive appearance*. Why this is the source of pleasure is another topic, but it is. What appears well, we might say, appears in the mode of beauty.²¹

It is easy for us to become confused about these matters, since in our thinking appearance is so often confined to *mere* appearance, and

this partial and misleading view then foisted upon Plato. We read deeply and with understanding Kant, who shows us why the phenomenal is the realm of the objective, and what it is for an object to *make its appearance*. But we then casually embrace, and project upon our ancestors, a gnostic vision according to which the phenomenal, far from being the site in which being makes its appearance, is instead a theater of illusion and false semblance.

Such an understanding constantly insinuates itself into our discourse, both about being and appearance, and about beauty. Here is a small example, from Alexander Nehamas's recent book on beauty. Nehamas is talking about Plato:

Let's turn instead to the problem that appearance, according to yet another tradition that goes back to Plato, is the foremost object of desire, especially desire of the most questionable kind rooted in sense and sensuality. The desires elicited by how things look, and not by what they really are, aim at pleasures that Plato says are neither "true" nor "pure."²²

This last sentence perverts Plato in a thoroughly traditional and wholly disastrous way. Nehamas links beauty with desire and therefore with appearance, but through his phrasing makes the beauty of appearance inevitably cosmetic. Compare, in order to see this, how subtly but importantly different it would have been had Nehamas written: "The desires elicited by how things look, *when this is* not what they really are."

What we need is a proper rhetoric of being that shows appearance as the presentation of being, a presentation that can but need not betray, and beauty as the goodness of such appearance. It is true for us that beauty is the good of appearance, but for us, appearance too often is only about the superficial look. Of this fact there are consequences. The central locale of the beautiful in our culture is attested to by the beauty parlor and the beauty pageant. We then say that one shouldn't make a choice of, say, office manager as though it were a beauty contest; to do so would be to engage in *beautyism*. Try now to imagine if you can Plato or Aristotle saying that one shouldn't choose managers, or senators, or vice presidents on the grounds of their being καλοί. Why in the world not?

Understood properly, the relationship of the beauty represented by τὸ καλόν to the good thus reveals the relationship of appearance to

being. A thing's being καλόν is not a cosmetic supplement, a surface that is painted on; it is the shining forth of the thing's nature. The καλόν is then not something in addition to the good, and so to speak on its surface. It is the mode of the good that shows forth; it is the splendor of the appearance of the good. The καλόν, we might say, is the splendid virtue of appearance.

7

So the argument I have proposed is finally a simple one. Beauty is a mode of the good, as the καλόν is of the ἀγαθόν. In this regard the beautiful and the καλόν are analogous modes of a general and catholic desirability, a desirability that marks not merely *what we find ourselves desiring*, but rather *that which is to be desired*, that which is desired, as it were, "in the space of reasons." But although the two concepts are congruent in this way, they are not identical. For the beautiful and the καλόν are marked as the desirable in the mode of appearance; and as our understanding of appearance has shifted, so have the beautiful and the καλόν come to exhibit the differences that I have tried to bring out, differences that make it problematic that *beautiful* should serve as a translation for καλόν. Problematic, but at the same time, as I have argued, understandable, and perhaps even on occasion (with an appropriate caveat lector) the best game in town. This understandability may not be very helpful, one way or another, for the enterprise of translation. But it is of no small significance for our understanding of Plato's and Aristotle's moral theories.

Think of the fact that for Plato and Aristotle alike the moral sphere is governed by a principle so clearly cousin-german to the beautiful. And when we recall that it has a foundation, shared by the καλόν and the beautiful alike, in the faces of the young and fair, we will recognize this principle as specifically erotic—rooted in what we are attracted to. We may then find ourselves inclined to think that the moral theories of Aristotle and Plato alike are essentially informed by their allegiance to a notion of the good rooted in *what we are attracted to* rather than to a notion of the good rooted in *a concept of the right*.

We may then imagine that this is what a robust pre-Kantian moral theory must look like. A good life on such a theory is characterized not by desire subordinate to a reason that alone enjoys a view of the right,

but by desire informed by reason and thus right in its own right. So we are called upon not to act properly in accordance with rational choice made in response to our desires, but to learn to desire properly and to act rationally in accordance with those proper desires. (Just when you thought you had heard the last of σωφροσύνη!) So it is in an important sense our view of the beautiful—understanding the beautiful as the intentional object of proper desire—that governs our moral life.

That's a good way for a moral theory to look, and when we have such a vision, it may present itself to us, appropriately, as a prophylactic against a mistaken assimilation of Greek moral theory to a morality of the right or of duty. Seeing the place of τὸ καλόν in Aristotle's thought supports that corrective impulse. But to recognize what I have here been suggesting, that τὸ καλόν is a somewhat different modality of the good from the beautiful as we picture it, should lead us to recall how important it is for Greek moral theory that our desires *be appropriate*. We may then want to somewhat temper our sense of a contrast between a morality of attraction and a morality of the right.

But even with that caveat in mind, the beauty of the καλόν, if we may finally call it that, reminds us, by its radiance, of important things about our philosophers. It reminds us that Plato and Aristotle alike invite us to understand the goodness of the world as, among other things, phenomenal; that is, they invite us to a vision of a world of splendor and radiance that is there for us to behold and love (though of course if we wish to behold and love it appropriately, we are required to understand it, that is, to see it clearly for what it is). That's why for Aristotle a good life culminates in the divine bliss of an awareness of *spectacle* that he nominates θεωρία, just as for Plato, philosophy, beginning with the love of theater, is, in its refined form, still a love of *spectacle*. "Who then do you say are the true philosophers?" Socrates is asked, and he replies: "Those who love the spectacle of truth"—τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας φιλοθεάμονας (*Republic* 475E). So although a philosophical life may in its more workaday moments be importantly informed by a love of wisdom, its beginning and finale is a love of clearly seen splendor, a love of beauty.

Translating *Ousia*

I

In a letter to his Hungarian translator, Thomas Mann posed this question: “Who would wish to discourage the peoples of the world from translating,” he asked, “merely because it is fundamentally impossible?”¹ The characteristics that Mann here mischievously attributes to translation—translation is *ubiquitous* and it’s *impossible*—are meant to strike us as odd, indeed as oxymoronic.

Scholars of ancient philosophy rarely raise such a question of translation’s possibility, even though we devote a good deal of our time to the act of translation. Perhaps we have no heart for the hyperbole of “impossible” or perhaps none for waggish oxymorons in general; or perhaps we merely adhere to the thought that lies behind the humor of Mann’s quip: *ab esse ad posse valet consequentia*—from *it is* infer *it can be*. For most of us the *esse*—the *it is*—is perfectly clear. We publish translations of texts or we translate the texts that we talk about or we decide whose translation of those texts to cite or to talk about. Sometimes we engage in the form of translation that occurs when, for example, we restate Aristotle in the form of indirect discourse: “Aristotle next argues that xyz,” where xyz is an instance of paraphrase, a mode of translation common among the ancient commentators.

In asking his question, Mann himself had in mind not the translation of philosophical texts at all, but that of *literary* texts like his own.² Similarly, many theorists of translation, though frequently thinking about philosophers qua fellow theorists, rarely consider them qua the authors of texts subject to such theory; they focus in their thinking upon problems of translating poetry and novels. This is understandable; words and the ways they are situated in the conceptual and semantic landscape of a particular language count in literary texts in a way they

don't seem to in philosophy. Philosophical texts appear relatively bare of the polysemy that characterizes other more literary discursive modes and so complicates their translation. There appears to be a purity of meaning in "technical" discourse such as philosophy, a purity that we never think to characterize as poverty, but prize as something that makes translation a matter simply of understanding and proper intention.

But the recognition that philosophical texts, like any other instance of written discourse, constitute a genre of literature, and must therefore be taken at their word, their materiality and the facticity of their discursive expression acknowledged, has come to dissuade many of us from such talk. We might try to soften the consequences of this acknowledgment by thinking that it is only qua literature that philosophical writing resists translation. Plato's writings, we think, are difficult to translate because they are so literary in nature. But can the same be said, for example, of Aristotle?

In this essay, I propose to think further about these issues by considering a simple question: how ought we best translate into English Aristotle's term οὐσία? I hope to show how this question can shed light upon the contours of larger questions, questions that might lead someone to think the project of translation impossible when there are so many instances before us.

2

The modern practice of translating Aristotle in the Western philosophical tradition exhibits a virtually universal agreement about the answer to the question of how ought we to translate οὐσία. Not merely in explicit translations of Aristotle, but in discussions of his writings as well, and almost without exception, English versions of Aristotle render οὐσία by the English word *substance*. This choice is part of a broad pattern of choice among traditions that either write in Latin or that import their technical terms from Latin, all of whom by and large choose to use *substantia* or one of its derivatives to translate οὐσία.

This is an odd choice, or at the least not an immediately obvious one. When the word οὐσία occurs in Plato's writings, as it does not infrequently, it is standardly translated not as *substance*, but rather as *essence* or *being*.³ Such a translation would certainly seem to make more

sense; οὐσία, after all, is a part of the verb *to be*. It must have been for some such reason that early Latin translations of οὐσία employed the Latin coinage *essentia*. So the Roman rhetorician Quintilian:

Aristotle established ten elements with which every question seems to be concerned: οὐσία, which Plautus calls *essentia* (and indeed there's no other Latin word for it). (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.6.23)⁴

Quintilian was not altogether happy with this word; he criticizes the translation of Greek ῥητορικὴ as *oratoria* by pointing out that it's "no less unsophisticated than Plautus's *essentia*" (*Institutio Oratoria* 2.14.2.). But he is not the only one who nevertheless uses it; here it is again, although this time once more with relation to Plato:

Plato says that there are two [modes of] οὐσία, which we call *essentia*, through which everything comes into being. (Apuleius, *On Plato* 1.6)

How then does it happen that we, and centuries of philosophers before us, use *substance* or some linguistic variant of that term to translate Aristotle's οὐσία?

The answer to this question would require that we tell two interwoven stories, one about Stoic philosophy, and the other about Christianity, both of which involve the appearance of another Greek word, the word ὑπόστασις. The Stoic narrative is one in which the process by which a determinate individual emerges from undifferentiated being is formulated in terms of the medical and scientific discourse of sedimentation, a discourse in which the technical term for the residue of such a process is ὑπόστασις. The Christian narrative concerns the history of the church's understanding of the Trinity, a history in which ὑπόστασις and οὐσία play shifting roles but are identified long enough for the translation of the one to serve as a translation of the other as well. The result of all this is that by the fifth century, Boethius standardly uses *substantia* as the translation of Aristotle's οὐσία, and it is through Boethius's commentaries on Aristotle that the term passes into the vocabulary of modern philosophy.⁵

The key word in these narratives, as I have indicated, is the Greek ὑπόστασις, of which the Latin *substantia* is a virtually literal rendering, and which is therefore the main character in the narratives of οὐσία's

transformation into *substance*. My intentions here are not to go through these narratives, but rather to think about the displacement that occurs as a result. I say “displacement” because οὐσία, as a nominalized form of the verb εἶναι, primarily means something like *being*; how it does is of course a very complicated matter, but the choice of translation that renders Aristotle’s οὐσία as though it were ὑπόστασις situates οὐσία in two registers that are other than *being* and therefore different from those native to Aristotle’s thought about what we call *substance*.

One, which is not central to Aristotle’s thought, is the economy of the real and the merely apparent. When the author of the pseudonymous *De Mundo* uses ὑπόστασις, it is to contrast phenomena like rainbows, which are “κατ’ ἔμφασιν”—mere appearance—with those like shooting stars and comets, which are “καθ’ ὑπόστασιν”—real and not merely apparent (pseudo-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 395a29–30). You can hear both how the relationship is represented in this text and how it is rightly though confusingly associated with *substance*, by listening to the 1914 translation of *De Mundo* by E. S. Forster:

To sum up, some of the phenomena which occur in the air are merely appearances, while others have actual substance and reality. Rainbows and streaks in the sky and the like are only appearances [κατ’ ἔμφασιν], while flashes and shooting stars and comets and the like have real substance [καθ’ ὑπόστασιν].⁶

In his translation forty years later, David Furley is careful not to make an association that might confuse the reader:

Briefly, the phenomena of the air are divided into those which are mere appearances and those which are realities: the appearances are rainbows and streaks in the air and so on; the realities are lights and shooting stars and comets and other such things.⁷

We can see what has happened here; *substance* has become so thoroughly identified with οὐσία that the translator must refrain from using it to translate ὑπόστασις.

The relationship between reality and appearance that we see here is the cousin of the relation—a relation at the heart of Plato’s ontology and that of Neoplatonism—between being and its appearance; it is not surprising therefore, when we discover it to be at play in the imaginary

in which later Neoplatonic understandings of οὐσία grew. And remembering that there is no Hellenistic Aristotelianism that is not also Neoplatonic offers a sense of how οὐσία comes to be confused with ὑπόστασις in both subsequent versions of and subsequent understandings of Aristotle's ontology.

But Aristotle's use of οὐσία and the meaning of ὑπόστασις are quite different from one another. Similarly, when the author of the letter to the Hebrews allows in his famous phrase that πίστις is the ὑπόστασις of ἐπιζομένων, he means that *faith is the reality of those things that would otherwise be merely the longed-for object of our hopes* (Hebrews 11.1). That is considerably less pithy and elegant than Jerome's "est autem fides sperandorum substantia" or the King James's "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." But my point is mundane philosophy, not elegant pith; I want to make clear what *substance* in that phrase represents, and it's not οὐσία.

3

The second register in which οὐσία appears when, because of choosing to call it *substance*, we situate it with ὑπόστασις, is that which contrasts foundation or substructure with supervening property. Here ὑπόστασις is functionally equivalent to Aristotle's ὑποκείμενον, that is, to *substratum* or *underlier*—in other words, *that which lies under*. And this fact should alert us to the dislodgement that has occurred by the choice of *substance* as a translation of οὐσία.

This dislodgement, which reads substance as *substratum*, is clearly understandable, or at least tempting, and that fact may constitute an explanation of its success. It is tempting for the same reason that it is tempting to understand Aristotle to endorse without qualification the moment early in book 7 when he identifies οὐσία with substratum. The intuition on which the appeal of this identification depends is an intuition critical in the earliest shaping of the argument concerning substance that the central books of the *Metaphysics* articulate. It is the sense in which οὐσία, as the primary mode of being—*this horse*, for example—is the subject of such predicates as *is white* or *is in the field*, and therefore that which underlies the accidental being of *a horse being white* or *a horse being in the field*. Substance (as we call it) is that being of which all other being is, in just this way, predicated. That's the

characterization in terms of which we first encounter substance early in the *Categories*; there Aristotle writes that

οὐσία, in the strictest and most primary and most appropriate sense of the term is that which is neither said of a particular subject nor in a particular subject, as for example this particular human being or this particular horse. (*Categories* 5, 2a11–13)

And then a few lines later adds:

All other things are either said of primary οὐσίαι as of a subject or are in them as in a subject. (*Categories* 5, 2a33–34)

This is the characterization as well that governs the earliest account of οὐσία in the *Metaphysics*. Here is Aristotle's account in the book 5 lexicon of the *Metaphysics*:

We call οὐσία first the simple bodies, that is, earth and fire and water and the like, and in general bodies and the things composed of them, both animals and heavenly bodies, and their parts. All of these are called οὐσία because they are not said of a subject, but all other things are said of them. (*Metaphysics* 5.8, 1017b10–14)

But these identifications of οὐσία with the real, and of οὐσία with substratum, although understandable, do not represent a wholesome reading of the final view of the *Metaphysics*. They confuse, in the one instance, Aristotle's interrogation of a primary mode of being with the very subsidiary and quite different question, a Neoplatonic question, of the real and the merely apparent, and stop, in the other instance, precisely at the moment that Aristotle judges a disastrous moment at which to stop, the moment in book 7, chapter 3, of the *Metaphysics* at which οὐσία appears to be defined as substratum, ὑποκείμενον. It is disastrous, as Aristotle goes on to argue in chapter 3, because it will lead us to think of *substance* as *matter*.

On one view, these two displacements are essentially one: what distinguishes the real (καθ' ὑπόστασιν) from the merely apparent (κατ' ἔμφασιν) is that the former exhibits but the latter lacks what we might call backing or underpinning, that is, substratum or ὑποκείμενον, a substantial support, as we might say, that underlies the look of the phenomenon that, without support, is merely apparent.

Substances are indeed for Aristotle those instances of being that are best suited to serve as the predicational subjects of all other modes of being. It is a human being that is pale, and is in the Lyceum, and is five feet tall. But the ability of such entities as humans, horses, hounds, and hares to serve as subjects or substrata is not, on Aristotle's understanding, primary; it is a function of their exhibiting that determinate being that Aristotle is focusing on in his developed theory of *substance*, a being that on his view belongs primarily to living organisms. That being is reflected in something's *being its essential what*, a horse for instance being what it is to be a horse. It is this mode of essential being that is at the center of Aristotle's theory of substance. But that centrality is obscured when substance comes to be thought of primarily as substratum, and when subject takes the place of essence at the heart of Aristotle's theory. A mark of having gone wrong is the frequency with which being and essence keep jumping on stage to offer themselves as the translation of οὐσία, either in place of *substance*—οὐσία as *essentia* or as *being* or as *nature*—or else as somehow a necessary part of the package: οὐσία, that is, *substance or essence*.

4

So it was not a happy moment in the narrative of Western metaphysics when ὑπόστασις laid its cuckoo egg in οὐσία's nest, and that laying was in large part accomplished via the translation of οὐσία by a term that is the semantic correspondent of ὑπόστασις. But what should we offer instead of *substance* in our search for a correct translation of οὐσία? Several times I have offered what might surely seem a viable alternative. Why not use *being* as the word we want to translate οὐσία?

Well, in the first place, when we say that οὐσία means *being*, we risk obscuring a significant distinction in Greek, the distinction between active participle and verbal noun, or gerund. In English, there is no morphological sign of that distinction; both terms are represented by the ending *-ing* on the verbal stem. So in the two sentences

(1) Running into the living room, Nahum discovered the source of the sound

and

(2) Running is Nahum's greatest source of pleasure

two different modalities of *to run* are represented by the same form. Similarly with the verb *to be*: English *being* renders nicely both the Greek ὄν (for which Latin uses *ens*) and the Greek οὐσία, and we court obscurity if we attempt to use it for οὐσία. To recognize this fact, note simply how such use would render opaque one of the central arguments of the *Metaphysics*, the argument that Aristotle signals at the beginning of *Metaphysics* 7 (7.1, 1028b2–4) when he asserts that the question τί τὸ ὄν? is just the question τίς ἢ οὐσία? It would be a particularly unhappy translation that rendered both of those questions as “what is being?” Imagine reading in Aristotle, at the end of the first chapter of *Metaphysics* 7:

The question that has, both in ancient times and now, always been asked and always been the source of perplexity, the question, what is being? is just the question, what is being? (*Metaphysics* 7.1, 128b3–5, reading both ὄν and οὐσία as *being*)

To register the difference between these two questions, τί τὸ ὄν and τίς ἢ οὐσία, and to register the project of ontological explanation in which an understanding of οὐσία enables an understanding of ὄν and indeed of *being in general*, the translator needs some inflected form of the verb *to be*—as οὐσία is of εἶναι—but other than *being*. *Being* can't do the job of rendering in English the being of οὐσία; its office is more obviously to render the being of τὸ ὄν, of *ens*, and so we need some other relative of the verb *to be*. But it needs to be closer than that third cousin twice removed who has somehow acquired the position—closer, that is, than *substance*.

Early Latin translators, realizing that fact, and perhaps attempting to replicate the structure of Greek in which, as I have indicated, οὐσία is a nominalized form of the verb εἶναι—that is, a form of the verb *to be*—sometimes used *entia* as an elaboration of *ens*, parallel to the elaboration of οὐσία in οὐσία. Joseph Owens employs a similar strategy in English, replacing, with an unfortunate resulting infelicity, *substance* by *entity* throughout his discussion of the *Metaphysics*.⁸

But there is another early Latin translation that attends not so much to the morphological as to the functional; it looks to what must be said in light of Aristotle's conclusion in chapter 3 of *Metaphysics* 7 and the subsequent discussion in chapters 4, 5, and 6. These discussions force us to think about the features of οὐσία that consider the *being*, that is,

the ontic nature of entities thought capable of serving as ultimate subjects of predication. What strikes me as the most interesting early choice of Latin translation that follows from these considerations, and one I want to invite us to reconsider, is the use with which we began, the use of *essentia* to render *ousia*.

5

As I suggested earlier, *essentia* was the preferred translation of a number of authors in Latin antiquity and the early Middle Ages, but one that did not finally win the day. And, we might think, too bad. For think of what greater clarity Western ontology might have enjoyed had it done so. Here is the fantasy: imagine οὐσία translated as *essence*. *Substance*, freed from its office as a translation of οὐσία, might then have been available to serve faithfully as the handmaiden of ὑπόστασις, or if we wished to be more adventurous or less pious, as a translation of its close cognate that we have been rendering as *subject* or *substratum*—ὑποκείμενον. Meanwhile, with *essence* otherwise employed, we would have been moved to translate the Greek τί ἐστίν (what-it-is), now standardly though problematically rendered by *essence*, by the much more perspicuous *quiddity*, on an exact analogy with the translation of ποῖόν (how-it-is) by *quality*, and of ποσόν (how-much-it-is) by *quantity*. Medieval writers did just that; in his treatise *De ente et essentia*, Aquinas calls essence “that which is signified by the definition indicating what something is—*quid est res*—which is why philosophers changed its name to quiddity.”⁹

To appreciate the naturalness of this translation of οὐσία as *essence*, think of the fact that the English equivalent of παρουσία, which stands in the same syntactic relation to οὐσία as does *being present* to *being*, is *presence*, and ἀπουσία similarly is *absence*. Here are analogies that may make this clear: (1) as (a) παρουσία is represented by *presence*, and (b) ἀπουσία by *absence*, so (c) οὐσία is to be represented as *essence*. For παρουσία is to ἀπουσία and to οὐσία as *being present* is to *being absent* and to *being*, and as (therefore) *presence* is to *absence* and (wait for it!) to *essence*. As long as we remain clear that this is an analogy, we won't be led (as some philosophers have been) into the spurious identity of being and presence; we will however be able to recognize why *essence* might serve well as English for οὐσία.

This recognition might lead us to speculate further that perhaps *being* could after all emerge as the most apt English translation of οὐσία: as *being there* is to παρουσία, so *being* is to οὐσία. If we then used *entity* as a translation of τὸ ὄν, our lexicon would settle into clarity, and we could make amends to Heidegger for our churlishness about *Anwesenheit* by making perspicuous his *ontologische Differenz: Seiende and Sein, entity and being, τὸ ὄν and οὐσία*.¹⁰

6

It is a rich and moving fantasy—at least for those of us who cry at weddings and find ontology moving. But it's not a plan on which could be based a project of translational reclamation. In fact there is no English word that could magically recuperate and reinstate Aristotle's original meaning, no English word that could realistically give us more than an icon of Aristotelian οὐσία.

One reason for this is that *substance* has so effectively taken root as the translation of οὐσία and has thus become, if not its legitimate, at least its de facto heir. So consider the confusion that the shadow of ὑπόστασις and *substantia* created for Locke:

Not imagining how simple ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some substratum wherein they do subsist, and from which they do remit, which therefore we call *substance*. (John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* 2.23.1)

What leads Locke on is evident in the next paragraph:

The idea then we have, to which we give the *general* name substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist *sine re substante*, without something to support them, we call that support *substantia*; which, according to the true import of the word, is, in plain English, standing under or upholding. (Locke, *Essay* 2.23.2)

If however, in an effort to avoid Locke's errors in our reading of Aristotle, or in the development of our own ontology, we abandon *substance* in favor of, for example, *being*, we will have made invisible the continu-

ity of Locke's thought with that of Aristotle's and medieval neo-Aristotelianism. In our eagerness to gain sight of Aristotle, we will have lost sight of Locke, and of the history of thought connecting the one to the other. For consider how difficult we would find the reading of philosophy's history were we unable to see Locke's talk of substance, or Descartes's or Spinoza's, in light of Aristotle.

Western ontology has indeed made a wild detour from Aristotle in following "substance" rather than "essence." But that is the detour it has made, and we would not understand it nor understand our place in it if we suddenly stopped translating οὐσία as *substance*. Our recognition of historical continuity thus depends upon our willingness to mistranslate Aristotle. To realize fully how hopeless our situation is, recall that we are already blinded to historical continuity by the fact that translations of Plato cheerfully and more accurately do render οὐσία as *being*, a fact that obscures links and similarities between the two philosophers.

The necessity to choose between accuracy and the revelation of historical continuity is a larger and more diachronic analogue of a problem that occurs within particular texts and groups of texts. Translations of Plato, for example, must struggle to reveal the meaning of the difficult term σωφροσύνη, a term that represents in Greek a concept for which there is a linguistic gap (which is of course more than just linguistic) in English. As a consequence, translators often use three or four different English words in different contexts. The clarity that is purchased, however, is paid for by the fact that the shape of Plato's argument is obscured; the strategy achieves a local felicity only by surrendering global understanding. It hardly feels satisfying in these moments merely to shrug our shoulders and murmur some version of "traduttore, traditore." What we have lost is no less than an appreciation of the work itself.

The same well-intentioned strategy of local translation can be witnessed in versions of the *Metaphysics*, where, for example, the key technical concept καθ' αὐτό is rendered by a bewildering array of terms and expressions. *Per se*, *essential*, *in itself*, *necessary*, *intrinsic*—all these confront the English reader of the *Metaphysics* as translations of καθ' αὐτό, with no clue that there is a single, if complex, conceptual thread that ties together the arguments in which these terms appear. Ross, in a footnote students of mine found both amusing and angering, has at least the decency to warn his readers; appended to his translation of *Metaphysics*

7.3, 1029b14, is the following note about the translation of καθ' αὐτό as *propter se*: “It seems convenient here to translate thus the phrase translated in v. 18 as ‘in virtue of itself.’” “Convenient?” one of my students screamed in a pedagogical apostrophe to Ross; “Not convenient for me!” And we can sympathize; for the contours of Aristotle’s argument are concealed by Ross’s practice.¹¹

7

In these cases, I find myself overwhelmed by a bleak yearning to translate all instances of the same term in a source language by the same term in the target language. I call this yearning bleak because, like the more general desire to map one language’s field of meaning onto that of another or to evade the skid of sense that occurs when we move between languages, it is not a hope for something of which faith could be the substance. These are hopeless desires all; there is no recapturing of οὐσία or of σωφροσύνη, but only a rereading of *substance* and of *temperance*. The nostalgic reader may mourn the loss of these originals, but for philosophers and translators alike the task is how best to create a site of appropriate hermeneutical respect for both Aristotelian language and the continuing dialogue of substance. That dialogue takes place in the discourse of philosophical texts, both in the interpretational hermeneutics of scholars like Trendelenberg and Ross, and in the ongoing rewriting of philosophy by thinkers from Aquinas to Spinoza to Hegel to Heidegger and Strawson.

I expect that by now it is clear that this essay is not simply about translation, or rather, that like any piece of writing about translation, it is also about the larger phenomenon of cultural transmission, or at least about one particular version of that phenomenon. This is the task: how are we to make articulate the written thought—the texts—of those from whom we are far distant in time, and from whom we are separated by the generations of translators and interpreters who have made possible our reading these texts by handing them on to us in a procession, each moment of which leaves its fingerprints upon them. I say both translators and interpreters—it’s no accident that the terms overlap in their meaning—to make clear that the dislocation and loss of which we have been speaking occur not simply between languages or between cultures, but between one moment and another in a literary or cultural

tradition. Here *loss* is merely another version of the *impossibility* with which we began.

But as I urged a moment ago, history may be the site not only of loss but of the dialogue whose multiple perspectives make for continuing triangulation and richer understanding. It may then be that philosophy after all proves easier than other literary genres to translate. For an interpretative variorum of great richness and complexity standardly accompanies every philosophical translation, a variorum that can fruitfully be thought of as a necessary part of the translation, rather like Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land*.

But if we lose sight of the necessary refraction of translation and allow ourselves to be lured by myths of its transparency, we may come to think of these contributions to our understanding of οὐσία as though they were marginal, and as though they were separate from its supposed transparent appearance as *substance*, or as *essence* or as *being*. But then we will have indeed made translation out of the question; for if we are unwilling to surrender the myth of translation's ease and transparency, we will constantly fail at grasping what our translations have and have not achieved, and we will constantly do violence to the ancient writers in their appearance and violence to the concepts to which they introduce us. Think of the way we imagine Aristotle's ontology to be one of things and their attributes, or think of Locke's struggle to get clear about the nature of substance. So it looks as though we can understand Mann after all: it is only by acknowledging the impossibility of the project of translation that we can hope for its success.

Aristotle on the Virtues of Thought

I

Near the beginning of book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle reminds us of a distinction he has earlier drawn:

Distinguishing the virtues of the soul, we said that some were virtues of character [τοῦ ἤθους], others virtues of thought [τῆς διανοίας]. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1, 1138b35–1139a2)

He then announces his intention to consider in book 6 the virtues introduced but not discussed since that distinction was announced, the virtues that he calls *virtues of thought* (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1, 1139a2–4; 1.13, 1103a5–8; 2.1, 1103a14–16).

In this essay I'll propose two interpretations of what Aristotle means by "virtues of thought." For reasons that will be clear, I will call one an *intellectualist* interpretation and the other a *deliberative* interpretation. The two interpretations appear not merely to be different from one another but to be in competition with one another; each gains plausibility by attending to certain features of Aristotle's account of virtue and ignoring others. I will argue that we would do well to preserve for the moment both interpretations, even if doing so appears to put a strain on the consistency of Aristotle's thought. The reasons for countenancing discordant interpretations are relatively straightforward. In book 6 of the *Ethics* Aristotle intermingles two sets of remarks, (1) remarks on the characteristics that enable us to think well, and (2) remarks on the characteristics by which we are empowered to act thoughtfully. The project in the one case is to live lives characterized by virtuous thought, in the other lives characterized by thoughtful virtue. Aristotle does

little to help his readers distinguish the one project from the other, and as a result there appear at first to be two different but attractive understandings of a single project.

2

So what are virtues of thought? Here is an account that I think might immediately occur to us: the virtues Aristotle discusses in book 6 include a wide range of cognitive states that enable an agent to reason correctly and to judge truly, sometimes about what is the case, sometimes about how best to make something, sometimes about how best to act. Early on in the book, Aristotle specifies five of these states in particular. These he designates τέχνη (*skill* or *art*); ἐπιστήμη (*understanding*, or, as it is frequently called, *scientific knowledge*); φρόνησις (*practical understanding*, or *prudence*, as it was once known); σοφία (theoretical wisdom); and νοῦς (mind or insight—the power of “getting it,” or, more narrowly, reason) (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.3, 1139b16–17). These virtues appear to be states of character relative to the kinds of activities in which we engage and to the kinds of states that characterize us when we deliberate or reason or plan or develop theories—when we conduct ourselves, in other words, as thinking agents. They are virtues, to put it simply, that enable us to think well.

A virtue according to Aristotle is a dispositional characteristic that informs how we act or are acted upon, such that these activities are done well and such that we are in consequence deemed good or worthy of praise (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13, 1103a10; 2.6, 1106a15–19; *Topics* 5.3, 131b1–4). The kinds of characteristics that make us *good* insofar as we are determined to *think well* are thus Aristotle’s *intellectual virtues* or virtues of thought. Such virtues are to be distinguished from so-called *ethical virtues*, that is, virtues of ἦθος or character, which are characteristics relative to the kinds of action and feeling with which Aristotle is concerned in books 2 through 5 of the *Ethics*, and which are normally thought of as *the* virtues: courage, generosity, temperance, and the like.

This distinction is connected for Aristotle to a taxonomy of the soul and to his early remarks that the soul can be divided functionally into rational and nonrational elements, a division that Aristotle repeats in the opening chapter of book 6 (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13, 1102a27–1103a10; 6.1, 1139a5–18). This means simply that we can specify functionally

different modes of human activity on a cognitive/noncognitive axis, relative to which there will be correspondingly different virtues or indeed families of virtue. Some of these will be virtues of noncognitive (though not necessarily irrational) action; others will be the virtues that we might normally call virtues of thought.

So virtues of thought appear to be just that: virtues that inform activities and passions related to *thinking*; they are in contrast to those that inform, for example, activities and passions related to pleasure or to the management of wealth or to the complex economies of fear. These activities may be governed *by* thought, but they are not activities *of* thought. Virtues of thought, on the other hand, concern, according to this intellectualist account, precisely such activities of thinking.

3

If we consider the actual context at the beginning of book 6, in which Aristotle directs our attention to these so-called “virtues of thought,” the account I have just given will seem inaccurate. Just before the distinction between virtues of character and virtues of thought, Aristotle begins book 6 with this remark:

Since we earlier said that we ought to choose the mean, neither too much nor too little, and that the mean is as right reason tells us it is, let’s discuss this. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1, 1138b19–20)

He then argues that we need to understand the reasoning that enables a moral agent to choose the proper mean, and at the end of this argument he draws the distinction with which we began (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1, 1138b21–34). Aristotle continues by distinguishing the rational part of the soul into the part that is engaged in understanding (τὸ ἐπιστημονικόν) and the part that calculates and considers options (τὸ λογιστικόν)—whose activity, he notes, is the same as the activity of deliberation (1139a5–14). He then adds, as though by way of concluding the argument,

thus the calculative is one element of [the part of the soul] that has reason. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1, 1139a14–15)

The rhetorical structure of this presentation should lead us, I think, to believe that it is the calculative part of the soul, the faculty responsible for deliberation, that is the focus of Aristotle’s concern. But if we

believe this, a different picture begins to emerge, one that highlights the fact that virtuous activities are *governed by* thought, rather than the fact that some virtuous activities are *instances of* thought. In this picture, the distinction that Aristotle means to invoke is not a distinction among the several kinds of virtue, but a distinction between two aspects of virtue necessary to the carrying out of good activity. One aspect of moral agency involves dispositions of character that empower us to desire correctly and to engage the proper modes of perception, readiness, and feeling involved in such desire. Another involves dispositions of thought that empower us to reason well concerning how best to bring about the objects of our desire. They enable deliberative action appropriate to the satisfaction of desired ends. It may be understandable that Aristotle should refer to these different modes of disposition as different virtues, but they don't represent two different kinds of virtue in the sense I sketched in my opening remarks; they are rather two conditions of excellence necessary for a virtue.

On this reading of book 6, the one I am calling the deliberative interpretation, Aristotle begins by reminding us of two different components of the virtue that characterizes a life seriously devoted to well-being: on the one hand appropriate desires, and on the other powers of thought sufficient to satisfy these desires. These components are jointly required for the presence of moral excellence in the fullest sense and for the virtuous action that a good and serious human agent strives to choose and carry out. It is for this reason that choice (προαίρεσις) is described by Aristotle alternatively as desiderative thought and as thoughtful desire—ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς ἢ ὄρεξις διανοητική (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139b5–6)—and hence the joint importance of character and thought (ἦθος and δiάνοια), not simply, we might remark, in the *Ethics* but in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* as well.

These principles of virtuous action are different, but the link between them—between character and thought or desire and deliberation—is neither accidental nor casual. Neither, we might add, is it impervious to rupture. Just as the possible rupture of the link between virtue and happiness hovers at the edges of Aristotle's treatment of tragedy in the *Poetics*, so the possible rupture of the link between character and thought lies behind the discussion of incontinence in book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as in the complexity of Aristotle's discussions of persuasion in the *Rhetoric*.

So we can read Aristotle's distinction between ethical and intellectual virtues as a projection of the distinction between character and thought that together make up good deliberative human action. The one class of virtue points to the excellence of character that enables a person to desire well; the other to the excellence of deliberation and counsel that enable a person to know what to do in order to bring about the proper modes of action and their ends, given the desires, valuings, and general orrectic orientations that are ordered by virtues of disposition. On such a reading book 6 investigates what the aspects of this latter mode of virtue are; it proceeds by elaborating a typology of states of character relating to thought, pointing out that it is not this one (technical or scientific understanding, for example) but this one (prudence or knowing how to act) that is important to a life of virtuous conduct.

One of the things that make book 6 neat is that in the course of this investigation Aristotle spells out for us the nature of intellectual states in general. But on the deliberative view that I'm elaborating, we shouldn't think of the distinction that is drawn at the beginning of the book as one between good ways of thinking on the one hand, and moral virtues on the other. Aristotle's discussion, in other words, doesn't propose to take time out to consider what the virtues of good thought are. It rather marks the fact that in the domain of virtue instrumental to living a good life, we need to distinguish between characteristics that enable us to desire properly and those that enable us to know what to do on the basis of that proper desire. The first of these constitute the "ethical" virtues, that is, virtues of character. The second constitute virtues of deliberation, what Aristotle calls the virtues of thought. But these virtues are distinct from the virtues of intellect or theory, or for that matter of the several modalities of thought considered in their own right, and it is important that we be enabled to see that distinction clearly and properly.

I've suggested that this interpretation will recommend itself to us if we attend more carefully than I initially did to the opening paragraphs of chapter 1 of book 6. But it may also appear warranted by a more general reading of the argument of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a whole. Note in particular the care that Aristotle consistently takes to impress upon us the cooperative nature of character and thought in the formation of a good life, and the care that he takes to situate choice in a space shared by character and thought.

4

Not all readers are comfortable with the idea that the deliberative interpretation of Aristotle's project, marked by the distinction between character and deliberation, is in fact indicated by the beginning of book 6. Some commentators think that there are in fact two introductions to this book, and that only the first unrealized introduction points in the direction I have noted. Here for example is J. A. Stewart in his once widely read *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*:

In §§1–3 we are told that the ideal or law of the perfect exercise of reason must now be examined, because reason (as distinguished from feeling) is the faculty which perceives the exact point where, in a given case, the moral mean lies. The completion of the doctrine of the moral mean thus seems to be presented by the writer of §§1–3 as the justification of a formal discussion of the ἀρεταί of the rational part of the soul, leading up to a definition of the ideal, or law, of the perfect exercise of reason. But in §4 the discussion of the intellectual ἀρεταί is not introduced as for the sake of the right understanding of the moral ἀρεταί; the writer, having finished what he has to say about the moral ἀρεταί, simply passes on to the second coordinate part of his treatise—the discussion of the intellectual ἀρεταί.¹

And it is clear which of these introductions Stewart thinks is truer to the larger scope of the work (as well as to the views of the *Eudemian Ethics*):

The writer of §§1–3 . . . misrepresents himself, when he thus—apparently from a desire for logical connexion between the parts of his treatise—introduces reason as if it were merely ancillary to moral virtue. It cannot be his real intention to put reason on any such footing. . . . Reason does not exist (as becomes afterwards clear) to accommodate itself to the exigencies of the moral life, and to perform the function of blind-man's leader to passion; rather the moral life is for the sake of the life of divine speculation, as matter is for the sake of form. Reason must regulate passion, that man's life may become . . . receptive of its true form, capable of the contemplation and service of God.²

We might find quaint Stewart's claim that moral life on Aristotle's view is only for the sake of "divine speculation," or that the true form of human life is the "contemplation and service of God." But surely he is right that mind has activities other than moral guidance, and its virtues a claim to independent treatment. Stewart goes on to fault Eduard Zeller, who, he says

hardly does justice to the place of the Sixth Book in the *Ethics*, [since] he regards the Sixth Book as written merely to complete the doctrine of moral virtue by an account of φρόνησις—the other intellectual ἀρεταί being discussed only with the view of defining more accurately the sphere of φρόνησις.³

It seems to me that here we must agree with the judgment that lies behind Stewart's use of the words "merely" and "only." I say this not simply because the explication of practical wisdom—φρόνησις—involves along the way reference to virtues that might be said to be intellectual, but also in light of the independence of the attention Aristotle gives to the virtues of thinking in our text, an independence slighted by the account to which Stewart objects. And this agreement reflects the fact that the second view I have articulated does not do justice to the complexity of what Aristotle means by the introduction of "intellectual virtues" nor to the distinction between them and "ethical virtues."

5

I have offered two competing interpretations as though to invite choice between them. But perhaps the shape of Aristotle's discussion would be clearer if the invitation were declined. What we have encountered are two different distinctions at work in Aristotle's thinking, and they are independent of one another. On the one hand (A), there is the distinction between (A₁) a practical virtue, which is any one of a variety of capacities enjoyed by moral agents to choose well and to act accordingly well, and (A₂) a cognitive virtue, which is any one of a variety of capacities we enjoy as thinking beings to reason and to think well. On the other hand (B), there is the distinction within virtue between (B₁) virtue of character, which is the affective disposition that leads us to desire what situations ask of us, and (B₂) virtue of deliberation, which is

our ability to understand situations, to see what they require, and to deliberate properly on how to meet those requirements. The two interpretations of book 6 I have sketched invoke one or the other of these two distinctions as central. On the first interpretation, the discussion is directed toward a general account of cognitive virtues (A₂), since practical virtues (A₁) have already been dealt with in the discussion leading up to book 6. On the second interpretation, the discussion is introduced as directed toward what I have called virtues of deliberation (B₂), that is, toward the features of practical virtue that involve reasoning, since the features of virtue that have to do with character (B₁) have already been dealt with.

So here is the thought. Aristotle appeals at different times to one or the other of these two different distinctions, and as a consequence, two different senses of “ethical virtue” and two correspondingly different senses of “intellectual virtue” seem to emerge. When the first of these distinctions is in view (A), Aristotle attends to the *type of activity* for which the disposition enables choice. Here an ethical virtue (A₁) is a characteristic disposition for choice relative to human conduct—action and passion—and in this sense it is represented by the complex array of virtues that make up the central books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Corresponding to this, an intellectual virtue (A₂) may be seen as a characteristic disposition relative to activities of the rational part of the soul, including theoretical activities of understanding, explanation, and finally and above all, the general capacity for cognitive awareness that Aristotle terms *nous*, and which he sees as divine in nature.

When the other is in view (B), Aristotle attends to the *elements within the complex activity of choice itself*. Here an ethical virtue (B₁) may be thought of specifically as a virtue of character, that is, a disposition of the desiderative part of the soul that enables us to desire in an appropriate fashion, while an intellectual virtue (B₂) is a virtue of deliberation, a disposition of the calculative part of the soul that enables us to deliberate and choose action correctly.

This structuring prompts further questions about an Aristotelian theory of virtue and action. Here are two that come immediately to mind: (1) What is the conceptual relation between virtues of theory (A₂) and the virtues of successful deliberation (B₂)? (2) Is the distinction and relation between virtuous character and deliberation (B₁ and

B2)—or some interesting analogue of it—to be found not only in practical virtues but in cognitive virtues as well, virtues in the category A2? I don't now mean to suggest any answers to these questions. At this stage, I want only to point out that they arise when we recognize the complexity of Aristotle's thought, and resist an overly fastidious reading of book 6, a reading which supposes that there must be one and only one distinction at work throughout his discussion.

6

So let's make a fresh start, as Aristotle would say, and ask yet again—third time's the charm—about the intellectual virtues that book 6 introduces. The distinction at the beginning of that book, it should now be clear, ought not to be read simply as a reflection of the difference between desiderative and deliberative aspects of rational choice and thus of the different elements necessary to virtuous action. Recall that when Aristotle sets out to give an account of intellectual virtues, he begins by further dividing the rational part of the soul into two faculties,

with one of which we think about those things whose principles cannot be otherwise, while with the other we think about those whose principles can. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1, 1139a7–9)

The first of these he calls a faculty of understanding (ἐπιστημονικόν), the second a faculty of calculating (λογιστικόν), which, he hastens to assure us, is the same thing as deliberating. We are therefore prepared for the fact that in at least some of the discussion that follows, the thinking whose virtues are being discussed is, in Aristotle's view, to be *contrasted* to the thinking involved in practical deliberation. And if this is so, then although Aristotle's focus may indeed be on practical deliberation, still, at least for some of the discussion that follows, the original interpretation I gave of an intellectual virtue is required.

As we proceed in book 6, it becomes clear that the virtues he means to discuss include not simply those of moral deliberation and practical reasoning, but those associated with what we might call theoretical understanding as well. And he moves among these virtues with no attempt to give prominence to the one over the other, as if indeed his project were, as we initially thought, one of discussing the several vir-

tues appropriate to the various modes of thinking. And although chapter 1 indeed suggests by its rhetorical structure that it is the deliberative element of the soul upon which Aristotle wishes to focus our attention, the chapter ends with this recommendation:

Therefore we need to consider what is the best characteristic relative to each of these parts [namely the ἐπιστημονικόν and the λογιστικόν] for that will be the virtue of each of them, since virtue is relative to a thing's proper function. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1, 1139a15–17)

It can come as no surprise to us that there should be intellectual virtues of this sort, both theoretical and deliberative, and that they should be on a par with the so-called ethical virtues. Even at its most theoretical, understanding—no less than perception, of which it is a formal analogue—involves a form of human *activity*, so its virtues are perforce practical virtues of the same genus as those of courage or generosity or temperance, and worthy of the same attention given those virtues in a work part of whose project is an analytic survey and taxonomy of human virtue in general. Since the *Nicomachean Ethics* may be thought of as an essay on human happiness insofar as it is grounded in the excellence of human activity, all the excellences about which we are talking must be in some sense kindred virtues.

If so, it will indeed turn out to be true that, as I fancied a moment ago, the distinction between character and thought applies even to intellectual virtues; even thinking must be engaged in and carried out thoughtfully. In the first place, as pragmatists and moral epistemologists have repeatedly reminded us, the truth is discovered and indeed warranted only by good paths of inquiry. Moreover, once realized, the truth must not merely be thought; it needs to be thought out. For it is not sufficient that truth be merely grasped in bare bone; it must be fleshed, situated in its ancestry, affiliation, and consequence.

7

Our thought now is this: Aristotle's discussion at the beginning of book 6 points to a distinction between two kinds of cognitive praxis and their virtues, one involving deliberation, that is, reasoning well and properly about choosing how to act in the world, the other involving

scientific and theoretical understanding, that is, reasoning well and properly about how to think what is true of the world.

It is true that chapter 2 opens with an extended argument concerning the first kind of reasoning, that involved in proper action. The argument may be seen as directed toward revealing the true nature of virtue and virtuous action to those who might have thought, on the basis of a careless reading of the *Ethics* so far, either (a) that virtue is simply a matter of a proper *orectic disposition*, or (b) that the end of practical reasoning is a *judgment*. But to desire the good, and to know what to do are neither of them sufficient; one must *do* what is to be done, and that requires *knowing how to* do it. And this is true even when our judgments involve a *readiness* to act. For though the readiness is all, it is not true readiness that does not know how and when to eventuate in the action it is a readiness for.

But in book 6 Aristotle does not set out simply to remind us of these facts, to remind us that moral agency must involve true deliberative reasoning as well as correct desire. He sets out to connect a discussion of the cognitive element in moral agency with a discussion of the virtues of cognition, virtues of human thought that have an independent status in his analysis of the modes of human excellence. This is the explicit argument of chapter 2 (1139a20–30): ethical virtue broadly conceived is a *ἕξις προαιρετική*, a *characteristic capacity for choice*. That choice (*προαίρεσις*) is described by Aristotle as *βουλευτική ὄρεξις*—deliberate desire, that is, desire that emerges from and has been determined by deliberation (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139a23; see also 3.4, 1113a11). So the exercise of ordinary virtues in which we act out of a desire for the good is at the same time an act of *thinking*; if then, Aristotle continues, our choice

is to be seriously good, it's necessary that both the reasoning be true and the desire right, and that what the one affirm the other pursue [δεῖ . . . τὸν τε λόγον ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθὴν εἶπερ ἢ προαίρεσις σπουδαία, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ τὸν μὲν φάναι τὴν δὲ διώκειν]. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139a24)

And this, he concludes, is thinking and truth in the realm of action: ἡ διάνοια καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια πρακτική (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139a26). If it were not evident enough that acting is by its nature a form of thinking, Aristotle redescribes *προαίρεσις* near the end of the chapter so

as to make the point clearer: προαίρεσις, he now says, can be described as ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς—desiderative thought, or as ὄρεξις διανοητική—thoughtful desire. And this, he adds, is how human beings are the source of action—καὶ ἡ τοιαύτη ἀρχὴ ἄνθρωπος (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139b5).

8

Here then is a fact about human virtue, perhaps not surprising, but no less important for that: necessarily involved in the very concept of such virtue is the concept of proper thinking and its modes. This fact is not surprising because of what we just said: a virtue is a disposition for προαίρεσις—for reasoned choice—and such choice necessarily involves deliberation and can indeed be described as a form of cognition. Although the intellectual virtues in book 6 are thus indeed introduced as virtues in their own right, their introduction serves another purpose as well; it facilitates our recognition of this feature of human virtue in general, the thinking that moral deliberation and its consequent action embody. Virtue is not simply excellence of character in the narrow sense exhibited by a person who, by dint of bodily constitution or genetic grace or early childhood experience, is not easily frightened, for example, nor prone to greed nor possessed by an insatiable hunger for thin chocolate mints. We can put it this way: virtue is not a disposition to behave in a certain way, but an ability to act. And virtuous action is a form of thought.

Aristotle marks this fact when, at the end of book 6 at 1144b, he points to a distinction analogous to that between prudence and mere cleverness, the distinction between moral virtue in the full and strict sense, and those virtues of character which he says belong to us merely naturally, by virtue of which we may be said to be just and temperate and courageous right from birth. (Compare Plato's analogous argument in the *Statesman*.) This is why Aristotle is able to speak—in the *Politics*, for example (1282b16)—of the desirability of virtue *and* prudence, as though they were two things.

There is another and often overlooked fact about human virtue revealed here, a fact that my earlier presentation of the second interpretation slighted. The place of thought in moral choice does not emerge merely subsequent to an already independently formed appropriate

desire; for deliberation, as Aristotle has already revealed in book 3, guides desire and not simply action based upon desire. It is for this reason that rational choice (προαίρεσις) is said by Aristotle to constitute deliberate desire (βουλευτική ὄρεξις), so that

having reached a decision on the basis of deliberating, we desire according to the deliberation. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3,3, 1113a11–12)

In guiding our choices, reason shapes not merely our understanding of how to carry out our desires; it shapes desire as well.

But Aristotle's understanding of this fact is characteristically Aristotelian in several respects. In the first place, though reason may shape our immediate desires in focused deliberation, it reveals our remote goals not directly by thinking about them, but indirectly, by deliberating on what to do. This fact is an instance of Aristotle's general understanding of principles and those things governed by principles. Recall how in the *Posterior Analytics* our understanding of principles comes about not from our thinking directly about them, but from the scientific activity in which, by using them, we are able to explain phenomena.⁴ So in the case of action: the principles of moral action, which are the proper goals of our desire, come to be recognized and understood in the daily deliberations concerning the details of our moral, that is, our practical life. That is why Aristotle's view that reason shapes desire is consistent with his denial that we deliberate about ends.

In the second place, deliberation guides our desire only because in ideal moral action, an agent is able to achieve an organic unity of reason and desire. But this unity is itself ideal, and even its most vivid instantiations fragile and defeasible; it is not a given of human action and desire, but the fruit of a successful moral upbringing in the community of other moral agents who in friendship and love are able to instruct us, to support and correct us in the course of our moral growth. This fact, it seems to me, has broad implications for our understanding of Aristotle's theory of practical reason. In particular, it may lead us to read differently from the way we sometimes do the phenomenon of incontinence, or weakness of the will: that ability of ours to see clearly what is right and indeed best for us, and blithely to choose otherwise.

What concerns us about the incontinent person is not that he fails to act in accord with reasoned choice per se.⁵ Incontinence is of inter-

est to us because it reveals the articulation of human action, the fact precisely that the union of reason and desire is something that must be accomplished, and just how fragile any such accomplishment is. That is why incontinence is not in any simple sense a *vice*. It is similarly for this reason that *sophrosyne*, temperance or self-mastery, which in some moments of Platonic discourse and in the central books of the *Ethics* is simply one virtue among many, comes to seem in other moments of Platonic discourse and in the later books of the *Ethics* so much more than that, and so central to the project of a life well lived. In the simple sense incontinence or weakness of the will is opposed to continence or strength of will—ἀκρασία opposed to ἐγκράτεια. But the continent or strong-willed person—the ἐγκρατής—is simply someone in whom the conformity of desire and action to reason has been achieved by force; such a person is *in control* of himself, and thus in thrall to himself. The important contrast is not with this continent strong-willed person, in whom desire and reason are wired together, but with the *sophron*, with that person in whom there has come to be a free and spontaneous harmony between reason and desire, and so between deliberation and action. Such a person is not *in control* of himself at all, but not because he is out of control. He is rather simply master of his own actions; his is the tranquil self-command of silent discipline.

The quiet transparency of the discipline in moral and practical mastery might lead us wrongly to think that in such mastery thinking is left behind.⁶ For Aristotle this is clearly not true, and not true in conformity with his understanding of the way in which reason, like other formal principles of determination, rules most successfully when it rules most quietly and invisibly. Recall by way of analogy Aristotle's remarks at a critical juncture in his intricate and exacting account of substance being; the analogy I am about to offer may be strained, but perhaps it will help explicate my thought. At the very end of *Metaphysics* Zeta, Aristotle reminds us that entities both complex and determinate—the example he uses is that of flesh, but I mean to apply it to activities governed by mind—are not merely the elements of which they are composed. Flesh, he remarks, is not merely fire and earth or the hot and cold, but καὶ ἕτερόν τι: something else besides. But this "something else," he immediately adds, cannot be another element, another letter making up the syllable of flesh, for if it were, the familiar and obvious ad infinitum would result.⁷ So there must be something joining fire and earth;

but if that something is some *thing*, it will get in the way, and no flesh will result. It must rule invisibly, transparently, not, as Aristotle puts it, as an element but as a principle: οὐ στοιχεῖον ἀλλ' ἀρχή. Substance, he immediately remarks, is like that.

My thought is that reason in just this fashion governs and informs action in our most masterful moments—invisibly, by a deliberation made transparent by the exact conformity of its rhythms to those of desire and action. The analogy is strained because the reason for transparency is different in the two cases; but in each case, what is required is the transparency of a principle.

9

Someone might wonder about the felicity of Aristotle's use of the word "virtue" to denote such intellectual states as understanding, reason, or art. Grant that these are good psychic conditions of theorists who have a cognitive grasp of the truth, or of artisans who have the know-how to make good things. Why should we call them *virtues*?

Behind such a question is the sense that the word "virtue" properly belongs only to what we think of as "ethical" virtues; part of my argument has been to point out that Aristotle's use (at least of ἀρετή) includes no such restriction. I have already indicated some of the reasons that should lead us to think of virtues of thought, including theoretical virtues, as proper virtues. It is because they are dispositional capacities for desirable activities that are forms of intentional human action, capacities that enable the activities to be done well. Understanding and reason are dispositional capacities for the human activity of explaining and of seeing how things are, just as art is a dispositional capacity for the human activity of making. Therefore they constitute, when they dispose an agent to do these activities well, virtues, dispositions for correct action in the same way that courage, for example, is a disposition for correct action.

Note the language in which Aristotle characterizes the intellectual states he marks out in book 6. Just as the general account of virtue defines it as a dispositional capacity for reasoned choice, a ἕξις προαιρετική (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6, 1106b36), so understanding (ἐπιστήμη) is characterized by Aristotle as a dispositional capacity for showing how things are, a ἕξις ἀποδοεικτική (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.3, 1139b31–32)

and art (τέχνη) as a dispositional capacity for making things, a ἕξις ποιητική (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.4, 1140a11). Finally, practical wisdom (φρόνησις) is a dispositional capacity for acting, a ἕξις πρακτική (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.5, 1140b7–8). Together, these formal definitions reveal the kinship in Aristotle’s thinking between the ready capacities for cognitive activity and those for moral choice, that is, between virtues of theoretical thought and virtues of character-based and reasoned deliberate choice. That kinship is further revealed by the prominence among these virtues of φρόνησις, the virtue traditionally termed *prudence*, but now more often known, revealingly, as *practical wisdom*. As though it were a hybrid, but nevertheless unified virtue, φρόνησις is the virtue of *knowing* how to *act*: a reasoned capacity for reasoned action.

Notice further the lines of this kinship. It is not mere action that is the cousin of showing how things are and of making things. It is reasoned and deliberate choice. That’s what προαίρησις is the capacity for. Suppose we were to consider not the actual content, but the formal structure of the realizing activity that these several virtues are dispositions for. While for some virtues of thought it would be, for instance, showing how things are, for moral dispositions it would be *choosing* how best to act and how best to be affected. And thus Aristotle: the *Analytics* is centrally about ἀπόδειξις—showing how things are; and when the *Nicomachean Ethics* rolls up its sleeves, it begins, in book 3, with an analysis of προαίρησις—of choice, but a choice immediately revealed to be *reasoned desire*.

But I’m content here to note that there is a kinship. I register that kinship in order to suggest why we should think of the theoretical virtues as virtues. But it may be read in the other direction, reminding us again that deliberation is a form of rational activity, that knowing how to act is a species of knowing what is true, and that virtuous activity is a form of thought. It is, as again the prominence of the virtue of practical wisdom—φρόνησις—reminds us, *thought in action*. Listen to Aristotle again:

What affirmation and negation are in thought, pursuit and avoidance are in desire; so that since ethical virtue is a disposition for choice [ἕξις προαιρετική] and choice is deliberate desire, it follows that reason must be true and desire right, if choice is to be in earnest; what the one asserts the other must pursue. That’s practical thought and truth. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139a21–27)

These two facts together—that moral action is a form of thought, and that thought in turn is a species of human activity—mark basic features of Aristotle’s moral rationalism and naturalism. They remind us of the fact that for Aristotle human well-being calls for the direction of reason, and that reason directs on the grounds of fully embodied deliberation. That deliberation, as I have repeatedly suggested, like reason itself, may ordinarily be evident only in the final shape of rational desire and action, as though the cast of action were achieved by a technique of *raison perdue*, the wax of deliberative reason melted away to reveal what it has achieved: the proper shape of desire and action. Reason here, characteristically and with merely apparent paradox, is present in its absence; for it is analogous to the ἐτερόν τι of *Metaphysics* 7: οὐ στοιχεῖον ἀλλ’ ἀρχή—not an element but a principle.

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So the reason why the intellectual virtues may be called virtues is that they concern actions in which we engage in our cognitive lives. We still of course need to know why these states contribute to the good performance of their actualizations. It’s no harder, however, to grasp why one would think of understanding and insight as desirable than it is to grasp why one would think of knowing how to act properly as desirable. But Aristotle answers this question directly at the beginning of chapter 2 (1139a18–25) when, as we have seen, he informs his reader that there are three things in the soul that control action and truth, likens correct desire to “practical truth”—ἀλήθεια πρακτική—and goes on to say that the good and bad states of the theoretical intellect are truth and falsity.

Francis Bacon put it this way:

the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making, or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature.⁸

Virtues of mind involve the love of truth, and the enjoyment of truth—that is, the pleasures that come from seeing things as they are. Being able to deliberate is, as I have argued, a special case of the ability to see things as they are—that is, to see them correctly; thus all begins in

perception. A virtuous life, to be sure, must go beyond perception, since deliberation must lead to action, or, we should perhaps say, to further action. But both perception and action are figured in what is usually translated as “contemplation”: in θεωρία, that sublime mode of perception that is the activity of consciousness most simple and most pure, the activity of the consciousness called νοῦς, identified in the treatises of first philosophy as divine, and in the *Ethics* as that which makes human life most divine, the consciousness of our lives well lived.

My introductory remarks should now seem prematurely pessimistic. For we have been led in the course of our discussion to discover a unity in book 6, a unity that offers a coherence of interpretation I was too quick to surrender. Such interpretation will depend upon our realizing that good and successful thinking is a form of virtuous praxis and that virtuous praxis is in turn thought in action. The story I have traced may thus be thought to be a tale whose theme is the centrality of the practical, of the activity that is the living of our human lives. But in its stressing the kinship of the theoretical and practical, I hope that it might reveal both facets of that kinship and might make clear how much is contained in the words *virtues of thought*. I hope it may reveal, in other words, why thinking, properly understood as a natural activity of the animals we are, is seen by Aristotle as central to the question of the proper living of those lives.

Notes

Introduction

1. I think of Sir Philip Sidney's remarks, in *An Apology for Poetry* (1583), about Plato's writing: "For all stands upon dialogues; wherein he feigns many honest burgesses of Athens to speak of such matters that, if they had been set on the rack, they would never have confessed them."
2. I have developed these ideas further in two essays not included in this collection, "Silence and Imitation in the Platonic Dialogues," in *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, supplementary volume, ed. Nicholas Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), and "Charmides' First Definition: *Sophrosyne* as Quietness," in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. J. Anton and A. Preuss (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983).

1. Understanding, Explanation, and Insight in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*

1. I discuss this somewhat differently in a later essay, "Necessity and Explanation in Aristotle's *Analytics*," first published in *Biologie, Logique et Métaphysique chez Aristote*, Séminaire CNRS-NSF 1987, ed. Pierre Pelegrin (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1990), and the fifth chapter in this volume.
2. When I wrote this sentence, I had in mind an offhand remark by Anscombe in her splendid essay on Aristotle in G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961). The sentence was silly when I wrote it, and seems even sillier in retrospect.

2. Platonic Love

1. Gregory Vlastos, "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato," in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 4.

2. Ibid., 31.
3. Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love: Plato to Luther* (New York: Random House, 1966), 87.
4. Ibid., 72.
5. Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).
6. Because of its fundamental concern with making means transparent to ends (appearance transparent to being). A discussion in full of how this operates in Plato, which would involve a discussion of the relation between the philosopher and the sophist, would, I think, reveal the heart of Plato's thought.
7. This claim is echoed elsewhere, e.g., *Lysis* 204C2.
8. This point is highlighted by the fact that the description of ἔρωϛ in Socrates's speech is a description of Socrates himself, i.e., of the philosopher. Cf. Diskin Clay, "Socrates' Mulishness and Heroism," *Phronesis* 16, no. 12: 58. In fact, each speaker describes ἔρωϛ as he would wish to see or describe himself.
9. I do not fully exploit this principle here; a full spelling out of the view that I am suggesting in this chapter would demand a careful and detailed study of all the speeches of the *Symposium* and their relation to one another in light of such a principle. Some of the reasoning in favor of this view is in my essay "Silence and Imitation in the Platonic Dialogues," in *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, supplementary volume, ed. Nicholas Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
10. I mean "what" to be a translation of "τί" in "τί ἔστι."
11. Much of the conversation concerning like and unlike takes place in a context in which homosexual love makes problematic the condition of otherness that is seen to be essential to ἔρωϛ. I take it, that is, that a problem for homosexual love is how to constitute the beloved as an *other*. This is, to be sure, no less a *problem* for heterosexual love, in that we are always tempted to devour the other, and to transform heterophilia into homophilia. But homosexual love often finds itself on the promise of escaping that problem, hoping that homosexuality, by erasing a fundamental mode of complementary alienness, will guarantee homophilia and thus avoid the issue of otherness.
12. This is the meaning of Diotima's definition of love as "birth in beauty" (τόκος ἐν καλῶ) at *Symposium* 206B7. Love calling the beloved to his own beauty and virtue is mirrored in the recurrent theme throughout the *Symposium* of love's engendering of αἰσχύνη, shame. The centrality of this theme in the dialogue, first introduced at 178D and interestingly articulated by Alcibiades at 216B, was called to my attention by Sara Ruddick.
13. I mean "taken up" to be the English equivalent of *aufgehoben*.
14. Vlastos, "Individual as an Object of Love," 34.
15. As the love of which I am speaking is fugitive and difficult; Alcibiades is always in the wings.

3. Perceiving That We Perceive

1. Aristotle, *De Anima, Books II and III*, trans. D. W. Hamlyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 121.
2. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 435.
3. Themistius, in *Libros Aristotelis De Anima Paraphrasis*, ed. R. Heinze (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 5.3) (Berlin: Reimer, 1899), 83.15.
4. *Aristotelis De Anima*, Oxford Classical Texts edition, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).
5. Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. (with introduction and commentary) W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). Hamlyn, *De Anima*, 123. Cf. also his “Koine Aisthesis,” *Monist* 52, no. 2 (1968): 201.
6. There are special problems associated with what I have here described, but they are problems associated not with a special kind of perception, but with a special kind of object, one’s own body.
7. Just such a solution to just such a felt difficulty is suggested by F. A. Trendelenburg, *Aristotelis De Anima Libri Tres* (Berlin: W.Weber, 1877), 354.
8. I offer a slightly different and more correct reading of the sense of “without matter” in chapter eight of *The Activity of Being: an Essay on Aristotle’s ontology*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
9. As we shall later see, this is somewhat misleading, since my sight is a function of my entire system, not just of my eye.
10. An apocryphal story about Samuel Johnson, not found in Boswell, but widely repeated: “Dr. Johnson, you smell.” “No, Madam, you smell; I stink.” Smelling may not be the best example for my case; I have chosen it for reasons of rhetorical felicity and niftiness. The argument might be made more convincingly by considering visual images from a lens. Does the wall see the images projected upon it?
11. Though, as I shall argue later, it is an answer very much like “The nose is that sort of thing,” which is Aristotle’s final position on this problem. I am not here suggesting that we need an explanatory or etiological account such as we might get from biology or physiological psychology, but only that we make as replete as we can the formal account of the phenomenon of consciousness.
12. Theaetetus, 184Cff.; Lucretius attacks this view (in what I take to be an Aristotelian manner) in *De Rerum Natura* 3.359ff. Cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.20.46. Sextus Empiricus attributes a similar view to Herodotus and to Strato, *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.129, 350. Cf. also Epicharmus (DK I, B12): νοῦς ὄρη καὶ νοῦς ἀκούει; τᾶλλα κωφὰ καὶ τυφλά.
13. The Oxford Classical Texts edition, Ross, *Aristotelis De Anima* (1956), and the edition with introduction and commentary, Ross, *De Anima* (1961).
14. Adolf Torstrik, *Aristoteles De Anima Libri III* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1862).
15. *Ibid.*, 160–161.
16. Hamlyn, *De Anima, Books II and III*, 125.

17. G. E. Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," *Mind* 12 (1903): 449, 450.
18. Jean-Paul Sartre, *La transcendance de l'ego* (Paris: Vrin, 1966), 23.
19. It is just this view that Sartre argues against.
20. I discuss this in a later essay, included in this volume as chapter 12, "Self-Knowledge and Self-Control in Plato's *Charmides*."
21. C. H. Kahn, "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle's Psychology," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48, Heft I (1966): 73.
22. Thus Arab commentators, and Zabarella following, began book 3 with what we now call 3.3, 427a16.

4. Being Properly Affected

1. See the article on *πάσχω* in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–74), 5:904ff.
2. Compare English *afraid* as originally the passive participle *affrayed*.
3. All this is on the assumption that *πράττειν* is a special case of *ποιεῖν* and not, as Aristotle comes to understand it, vice versa. Compare his uses of *κίνησις* and *ἐνέργεια* for a similar reversal of the common understanding.
4. H. H. Joachim, *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics; A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 85.
5. See the table of the virtues in *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.7, 1107b1ff. and the specific discussions of virtues in books 3 and 4.
6. See W. W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle: Emotion and Moral Virtue," *Arethusa* 2 (1969): 163–185.
7. See G. E. M. Anscombe, "Thought and Action in Aristotle," in *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Renford Bambrough (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

5. Necessity and Explanation in Aristotle's *Analytics*

1. It is discussed by A. Becker, *Die aristotelische Theorie der Möglichkeitsschlüsse* (Berlin: Junker und Dunnhaupt, 1933); by Stoors MacCall, *Aristotle's Modal Syllogisms* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1963); by Nicholas Rescher, "Aristotle's Theory of Modal Syllogisms and Its Interpretation," in *The Critical Approach to Science and Philosophy*, ed. Mario Bunge (Glencoe, IL: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 152–177; by Wolfgang Wieland, "Die aristotelische Theorie der Syllogismen mit modal gemischten Prämissen," *Phronesis* 20 (1975): 77–92; and most recently by Richard Patterson, "The Two Barbaras: Basic Approaches to Aristotle's Modal Logic," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1989) 1–40.
2. Alexander Aphrodesiensis, *In Aristotelis Analyticorum Priorum Librum I Commentarium*, ed. M. Wallies (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 2.1) (Berlin, 1883), 124,8ff.; cf. also 173,32ff. and 119,7ff. John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Analytica Priora commentaria*, ed. M. Wallies (*Commentaria in Aristotelem*

- Graeca* 13.2) (Berlin, 1905), 205,13ff., 123,15ff., 129,16ff.; Ammonius, *In Aristotelis Analyticorum Priorum librum I commentarium*, ed. M. Wallies (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 4.6) (Berlin, 1899), 45,42ff.
3. This is a more complex and in many respects separate issue from the one with which we are here concerned; I have touched upon the issue of whether there is a doctrine of *de re* necessity in Aristotle in *The Activity of Being: an Essay on Aristotle's Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 167–174. The reading of the structure of modal propositions suggested here seems also to be assumed by Aristotle later in his discussion of modal reasoning when, in chapter 17 of book 1, he rejects the conversion of negative universal contingent propositions. I argued for this point in an earlier essay more optimistic about the possibility of an easy coherence in Aristotle's modal logic, "Aristotle on Inconvertible Modal Propositions," *Mind* 79 (1970): 254ff.
 4. Becker, *Die aristoteleische Theorie der Möglichkeitsschlüsse*.
 5. In *Sophistical Refutations* 166a23, for example, where the scholastic distinction between modality *in sensu diviso* and *in sensu composito* seems to have its origin.
 6. Rescher, "Aristotle's Theory of Modal Syllogisms and Its Interpretation."
 7. As I hope we by now have come to recognize: see my essay "Understanding, Explanation, and Insight in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*," chapter 1 in this volume, and M. F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge," in *Aristotle on Science: The Posterior Analytics; Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. Enrico Berti (Padua: Antenore, 1981).
 8. This is why συμπεράσμα sometimes means a term of a syllogism, as at *Prior Analytics* 2.1, 53a17, where Waitz and Bonitz introduce a derivative sense.
 9. See the extended use of this principle by Allan Gotthelf in his essay "First Principles in Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*," in *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology*, ed. A. Gotthelf and J. Lennox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19off.
 10. I think that the relation between these initial explanations and the deeper explanations that, as we will see, they point to, bears an interesting resemblance to the relation between A-type and B-type explanations that James Lennox develops in his essay "Divide and Explain: The *Posterior Analytics* in Practice," in Gotthelf and Lennox, *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology*, 9off. It may indeed be the case that the entire discussion I have here devoted to explanations of the particular qua individual is more appropriate with respect to explanations of the particular qua what is *kata meros* in the sense Lennox explains.
 11. Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 125.
 12. Small wonder that Aristotle was as attractive as he was to those religious traditions in which (one or another form of) hypostatic unity was mythically central.

6. Acting

1. *Poetics* 6, 1450a3; 7, 1450b3, 1450b24; 8, 1451a31; 9, 1451b29, 1452a2; 11, 1452b1; 23, 1459a17.
2. I have discussed this distinction at greater length and tried to sketch its implications for our understanding of Plato in “Platonic Silence and Platonic Mimesis,” in *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues*, ed. James C. Klagge and Nicholas D. Smith, 1992 supplementary volume to *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. There I argue that in fact the Socratic distinction is by no means Plato’s considered view on this issue; mimesis is far more general and far more integral to Plato’s views than the argument of Socrates in this context might lead us to believe. In this respect, Aristotle’s recognition that all modes of poetic discourse, both narrative and dramatic, are mimetic is in keeping with Plato’s deeper intentions. I also argue that the account of *mimêsis* in book 3 of the *Republic* extends into book 10.
3. Gérard Genette, “Discours du récit,” in *Figures III* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), published in English translation as *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 164.
4. Thomas Twining, *Aristotle’s Treatise on Poetry Translated: With Notes on the Translation, and on the Original; and Two Dissertations, on Poetical, and Musical, Imitation* (London, 1789; repr. New York: Garland, 1971), 20f.
5. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 164.
6. The central manifesto of the view under attack is Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1921). It is instructive to compare Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). Booth is cited by Genette as an internal critic of the valuing of mimesis (*Narrative Discourse*, 163); this strikes me as a misreading of Booth’s larger argument, which asks how the rhetorical force of fiction operates in spite of the pervasive fact of mimesis. Booth’s concern is not with the author, but with what he calls the “implied author,” and that is a concept that lives in the field of mimesis.
7. Genette, “Frontières du récit,” in *Figures II* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 153f., published in English translation as “Frontiers of Narrative,” in *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Blackwell, 1982), 31.
8. See for example A. D. Nutall’s plea for a realist aesthetic in *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* (London: Methuen, 1983), 181; “The new mimesis is a new theory, and its essence is the reconciliation of form with veridical or probable representation.”
9. Although we may wish to explain the one in terms of the other, as René Girard for example argues that mimetic desire is the originary principle of structures of signification.
10. “Think, for instance, of a striding statue; imagine the purposeful inclination of the torso, the alert and penetrating gaze of the head and its eyes, the outstretched arm and pointing figure; everything would appear to direct us to-

ward some goal in front of it. Yet our eye travels only to the finger's end, and not beyond. Though pointing, the finger bids us stay instead, and we journey slowly back along the tension of the arm. In our hearts we know what actually surrounds the statue. The same surrounds every other work of art: empty space and silence." William Gass, "The Concept of Character in Fiction," in *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (Boston: Godine, 1979), 49. The operative word here is "actually"; it must mean "in this, and not the statue's fictional, world." For what surrounds the statue in its fictional space is a world, the world that contains among other things the object of the statue's pointing, the object of its intention. Indeed, it is by the "pointing" of those elements of a work of art common to its world and ours that it reveals to us the existence and nature of that part of its world hidden from us, the world behind the scenes. When a character looks offstage, we know that something is there. But we don't turn around in the theater to search for it, since it isn't *there*; it is just beyond our sight in another world, a world of which we are allowed only a glimpse.

11. Twining, *Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry*, 21. Twining's reference is to Giovanni Gravina, *Della ragion poetica libri due e della tragedia libro uno* (Venice, 1731).
12. The stipulation is important, since an action may be complete without taking any time: *Poetics* 7, 1450b25: ἔστιν γὰρ ὅλον καὶ μηδὲν ἔχον μέγεθος. See Aristotle's explanation at *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.5, 1174a14ff.
13. This requirement is independent of the thorny question of whether Aristotle thought that tragedy must be actually performed onstage.
14. Isaac Casaubon, *De Satyrica Graecorum Poesi et Romanorum satira* (Paris, 1605), chap. 3.
15. For a discussion of these difficulties, see Roselyne Dupont-Roc and Jean Lalot's edition of the *Poetics*, Aristotle, *La Poétique, le text Grec avec une traduction et des notes de lecture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 162. For the last point, witness Aristophanes's *Thesmoporiazusae* 851 in which Mnesilochus's playing the part of Helen is described by the verb μιμήσομαι, or *Plutus* 290, in which Cario leads a rendition of a Cyclops play τὸν Κύκλωπα μιμούμενος—playing the part of the Cyclops.
16. In Andrew Bergman's *The Freshman*, for example, Brando plays a mafioso, Carmine Sabatini; but the character he enacts is the one created by Brando in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*. It isn't so much, then, that Brando plays himself, as that he plays himself playing Vito Corleone. A character in *The Freshman* explains to the Matthew Broderick character that the fictional role of Vito Corleone was based on the real Carmine Sabatini. Real, of course, only in the film.
17. See the various remarks about attitudes toward actors in Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
18. See Maynard Mack's remarks about "act" as *Hamlet's* "radical metaphor" in "The World of *Hamlet*," *Yale Review* 41 (1952): 502–523, and more generally Anne Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962).

19. Ben Jonson, *Timber, or Discoveries*, 1093–1098, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Perry Simpson, vol. 8 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952–1954).
20. Democritus, in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Zurich: Weidmann, 1985), (DK) B39; Stobaeus 3.37.25.
21. Democritus, DK B39, DK B79.
22. Cf. also the Aristotelian *Problems* 29.10, 951a7.
23. The exceptions are these: in the *Meteorology* 4, 381b6, the fact that cooking helps digestion is described as an instance of art imitating nature; the mimetic powers of parrots and similar birds are mentioned in the *History of Animals* 8.12, 597b24ff., while the ape's palm is said to imitate a heel in 2.8, 502b9; at *Politics* 2.10, 1271b22, the Spartan constitution is said to imitate the Cretan.
24. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, chap. 22.
25. Think of Max Gluckman's theories of rituals of rebellion: *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954).
26. A similar view is suggested by Jonathan Lear, "Κάθαρσις" *Phronesis* 33 (1988): 297–326.
27. In the article noted above, Lear suggests that it is an important element in the Aristotelian view of tragedy that an audience should believe in its susceptibility to the events shown onstage. "A normal, educated audience," he writes, "going to a performance of a good tragedy, believes that the terrible events portrayed—infanticide, parricide, matricide, the tearing apart of the most primordial bonds of family and society—could happen to them" (321). I find this suggestion both correct and misleading. Aristotle indeed expects the audience of a tragedy to believe in its susceptibility to the events mimetically represented in tragedy, but not, as I shall suggest, qua those specific events.
28. See Donald Davidson, e.g., "Agency," in *Agent, Action, and Reason*, ed. R. Binkley, R. Bronaugh, and A. Marras (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), and "The Logical Form of Action Sentences," in *The Logic of Decision and Action*, ed. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967). Both are reprinted in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 43–61 and 105–122. In a sense, the argument I am here proposing about tragedy is a meditation on Davidson's outrageous claim in the former essay (59) that "we never do more than move our bodies: the rest is up to nature."
29. This fact follows from the very possibility of mimetic representation and from the question of how an action is to be mimetically represented; as Paul Ricoeur puts it: "If human action can be recounted and poeticized, in other words, it is due to the fact that it is always articulated by signs, rules, and norms. To use a phrase from Clifford Geertz, human action is always symbolically mediated." "Mimesis and Representation," *Annals of Scholarship* 2 (1981): 19.
30. See Albin Lesky, "Decision and Responsibility in the Tragedy of Aeschylus," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 86 (1966): 78–86, repr. in *Greek Tragedy: Modern Es-*

- says in Criticism*, ed. Erich Segal (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 13–23: “Many human actions have a double aspect—this holds true if not for all human actions, at least for all those which presuppose a decision. To protect the suppliants means disregarding the interests of the city; by giving preference to these, the king would prove his sense of responsibility towards the Polis, and yet he would gravely sin against Zeus, who protects the fugitives” (16); “Thus, the deed of Eteokles, too, reveals the twofold aspect of human action; the king’s defense of Thebes, which proves his heroism, becomes at the same time the terrible crime of fratricide” (20). See also Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 25ff.
31. Lesky, “Decision and Responsibility,” 22. Both Lesky and Nussbaum take these plays as paradigmatic.
 32. Such a view is in Lear, “Κάθαρσις”, who takes Aristotle to offer a view of tragedy as recuperative cosmicity. “In Aristotle’s conception of tragedy, the individual actor takes on the burden of badness, the world as a whole is absolved” (325); “Even in tragedy, perhaps especially in tragedy, the fundamental goodness of man and world are reaffirmed” (326).
 33. See Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and the Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, trans. W. B. Hillis (London: Routledge, 1925), 294ff.
 34. Witness the pervasive presence of this sense of κάθαρσις in the argument of the *Phaedo*, as also in the *Laws*, 831A inter alia. The characteristically Platonic extension of κάθαρσις at *Phaedrus* 243A to deal not simply with mistaken action but with mistaken mythological belief is connected with a much larger view of the philosopher’s office as one of cleansing the city of the impurities of ignorance and error. See the beginning of the *Euthyphro*, where ἀφωσίωσις is analogous to κάθαρσις; and note the strong resemblances between the situation there and the situation at the beginning of *Oedipus Rex*. For the analogy between ὄσιον and καθαρότης see Rohde, *Psyche*, 233.
 35. That is, whether in the audience, or on the stage as according to the now unpopular theory of G. R. Else, *Aristotle’s Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge: Brill, 1957). See also Leon Golden, “Catharsis,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 93 (1962): 51–60.
 36. Lear, who finds Else’s view “highly implausible,” presents what is to me a very convincing argument for its plausibility in the distinction he draws between objective and subjective κάθαρσις; Lear, “Κάθαρσις,” 319, note 79.
 37. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catarches* 2.5, in *St. Cyril of Jerusalem’s Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, ed. F. L. Cross (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 20.
 38. It would be fruitful here to consider further the relation between ἦθος and δαίμων, character and destiny, in relation to Aristotle’s project of so refining character as to lead to a life that is well-daimoned. Think of Heraclitus’s enigmatic remark (DK B119) that ἦθος ἀνθρώπων δαίμων—character is destiny—and R. P. Winnington-Ingram’s comments upon its “syntactic reversibility” in “Tragedy and Greek Archaic Thought,” *Classical Drama and Its*

Influence, ed. M. J. Anderson (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), 37, 47; see also J.-P. Vernant, “Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy,” in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone, 1988), 35ff.

7. What Does the Maker Mind Make?

1. To say that the problematic νοῦς of *De Anima* 3.5 is called νοῦς ποιητικός is true, of course, only if we mean *called by later commentators*; any interpretation of the phrase νοῦς ποιητικός must take account of the fact that it is not Aristotle’s phrase. Every inquiry into the nature of such mind thus depends on an act of creative inscription: the writing into Aristotle’s text of a concept that is present only implicitly and allusively. The νοῦς ποιητικός is in a sense a construction of the Aristotelian hermeneutical tradition, successful insofar as the conceptual pattern that it actualizes in construing Aristotle’s laconic text is actually potentially present in that text.
2. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 499.
3. *Ibid.*, 499–501.
4. Alexander Aphrodisiensis, *De Anima liber cum Mantissa*, ed. Ivo Bruns (*Supplementum Aristotelem to Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 2.1) (Berlin: Reimer, 1887), 107.31. Compare Charles Kahn, “The Role of *Nous* in the Cognition of First Principles in *Posterior Analytics* II, 19,” in *Aristotle on Science: The “Posterior Analytics,”* ed. Enrico Berti (Padua: Antenore, 1981), 400: “What is regarded as problematic and requiring explanation [by νοῦς ποιητικός] is the acquisition, not the exercise, of νοῦς as ἐξις. This is clearest in *De Anima*, 3.4, where potential intellect is compared to a blank tablet on which nothing is written, and this mode of potentiality (‘before it has learned or discovered anything’) is contrasted with the potency of an intellect which ‘has become all things, like someone actually in possession of science (ἐπιστήμων)’: It is the transition from the former to the latter stage of potentiality that Aristotle attempts to explain, and it is for this explanation that he requires the agent intellect.”
5. Two of the manuscripts do have οὐχ ὁρατά, but the better reading, and the one that the commentators clearly had before them, is οὐχ ὁραται. It may be that ὁρατά was the result of someone being perplexed by just what is now perplexing us. This perplexity may explain the fact that in Philoponus’s commentary on the first half of this passage we find ὁραται in the body of the commentary, but ὁρατά in the lemma. John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis De Anima Libros Commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 15) (Berlin: Reimer, 1897), 348.9ff.).
6. In the first line, I have read with Proclus καὶ τὸ ἄμμο τῆς ψυχῆς.
7. Insofar as readers have thought this way, the doctrine of *nous* has often seemed to them an unnatural grafting of an alien teaching onto Aristotle’s considered empiricism. This has usually been part of that morality play about

Platonism and Aristotelianism that still, even against our better judgment, repeatedly captures our imagination.

8. I find Kahn's reasoning here exactly backward: "If the transition from $\xi\xi\iota\varsigma$ to exercise does not require separate attention, that is perhaps because Aristotle does not think of it as constituting a distinct problem. It is, after all, only by repeated acts of νόησις that we acquire the $\xi\xi\iota\varsigma$ of νοῦς" (Kahn, "Role of *Nous*," 400).
9. Philoponus innocently explains (*In Aristotelis De Anima Libros Commentaria* 523.2), "To rule for Anaxagoras is to know for Aristotle."
10. For the translation of ἐπιστήμη θεωρητική as *actual understanding*, see Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus* 328a54–5, "θεωρεῖν ab ἐπιστήμη perinde distinguitur atque ἐνέργεια a δυνάμει."
11. Philoponus, *In Aristotelis De Anima Libros Commentaria*, 528.1.
12. Hicks, *De Anima* (1907), 497; Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 295.
13. Does "it" (ἐκείνω) in the final sentence refer to mind, or to each of the things potentially thought? Both readings give a reasonable sense to the passage. The latter, according to which Aristotle is stressing that although not everything that is thought is mind, mind is nevertheless among the things thought, is the common understanding. The variant reading in one manuscript and in Simplicius of ἐκείνοις for ἐκείνω perhaps supports the latter reading and therefore the interpretation that follows, though it is not one Simplicius agrees with.
14. See the third chapter in this volume: "Perceiving That We Perceive," in which I argue for this view.
15. I use the term θεωρία here in the marked sense it often has for Aristotle as second-actuality ἐνέργεια in contrast to first-actually structures of cognitive capacity. Three central examples of this usage are *De Anima* 2.1, 412a10f., *De Anima* 2.5, 417a28, and *Metaphysics* 9.5, 1048a33. See (again) Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus* 328a54–5, "θεωρεῖν ab ἐπιστήμη perinde distinguitur atque ἐνέργεια a δυνάμει."
16. In *The Activity of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), chaps. 7 and 8.

8. Saving the Phenomena

1. Simplicius, *In Aristotelis quattuor libros de caelo commentaria (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 7)* (Berlin: Reimer, 1894), 488.
2. G. E. L. Owen, "Aristotle: Method, Physics and Cosmology," in *Logic, Science, and Dialectic*, ed. M. Nussbaum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 155.
3. This paragraph and the next several paragraphs present a reading more extensively argued for in the first essay of this volume, "Understanding, Explanation, and Insight in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*."

4. The history is carefully chronicled in Pierre Duhem's *Sozein ta phainomena: Essai sur la notion de théorie physique de Platon à Galilée* (Paris: A. Herman, 1908).
5. See for example the discussion of John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis analytica posterioria commentaria*, ed. Maximilian Wallies, (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 13.3) (Berlin: Reimer, 1909), 29, and *In Aristotelis physicorum libros tres priores commentaria* (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 16) (Berlin: Reimer, 1887), 9.
6. Averroes, *Aristotelis de physico . . . cum Averrois cordubensis . . . commentariis* (Venice, 1562), 6v.
7. *Ibid.*, 7r. See also *Aristotelis . . . Posteriorum resolutionum . . . cum Averrois . . . commentariis*, 35vff.
8. Themistius, *In Aristotelis Physica paraphrasis*, ed. Henry Schenkl, (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 5.2) (Berlin: Reimer, 1900), 1.

9. Aristotle on the Desirability of Friends

1. For instance, John Cooper in his essay "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle," *Philosophical Review* 86 (1977): 291, reprinted in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
2. For a general statement of this view and its application to the *Eudemian Ethics*, see Suzanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), particularly chaps. 2 and 6.
3. For a discussion of this argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Cooper, "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle."
4. I argue for this view in "Perceiving That We Perceive" (Chap. 3 of this volume) and in *The Activity of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 224–232.
5. Reading with the manuscripts αἰσθανόμεθ' ἄν ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα καὶ νοοῦμεν ὅτι νοοῦμεν rather than following Bywater's emendation.
6. I have discussed this figuring and how easily it can be misread (Kosman, *Activity of Being*, 224–232).
7. Compare *De Anima* 3.4, 429a24: οὐθέν ἐστιν ἐνεργεῖα τῶν ὄντων πρὶν νοεῖν.
8. For an example of taking it as a solution, see Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*.
9. Reading with Ross τὸ.
10. The actual wording here, ἄλλος οὗτος Ἡρακλῆς, may suggest an older version of the saying that would explain the mss. at *Eudemian Ethics* 7.12, 1245a30, where we read that "a friend is, as the saying goes, ἄλλος Ἡρακλῆς ἄλλος οὗτος, rather than ἄλλος αὐτός as emended to agree with the Latin translator's *ipse* and with *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.4, 1166a31 and 9.9, 1170b7. Compare the language of *Magna Moralia* 2.15, 1213a12.
11. For the history of the term, see R. A. Gauthier and J. Y. Jolif, *Aristote: L'Éthique à Nicomaque* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1970).

12. Robert South, *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1842), 1:303
13. Here are three: (1) it treats the phrase τοῦ φίλου as an attributive possessive modifying the articular infinitive, (2) it defeats our expectations that τοῦ φίλου is a standard genitive object of αἰσθάνεσθαι, and (3) it demands a differential treatment of the genitive of the first half and the accusative of the second half of the concluding phrase.
14. This view has been well discussed, particularly by Cooper, “Friendship and the Good in Aristotle,” and by A. W. Price in *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

10. Justice and Virtue

1. See Harold Tarrant, *Plato’s First Interpreters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).
2. Olympiodorus, *Commentaria in Platonis Georgiam*, ed. W. Norvin (Leipzig: Teubner, 1936), 3.
3. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 3.
4. Compare the more recent remarks of James Adam in his commentary *The Republic of Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 1:12: “By [justice], it should be noted, is here meant man’s whole duty to his fellows, as [piety] is right conduct in relation to the gods. In this wide sense the word was commonly understood by the Greeks; and even in the scientific study of ethics, the word still retained the same wider connotation, side by side with its more specific meanings.”
5. John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,” *Monist* 62 (1979): 332.
6. This problem was most famously addressed in recent literature by David Sachs in his essay “A Fallacy in Plato’s *Republic*,” *Philosophical Review* 72 (1963): 141–158. For other discussions, see Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 169.
7. The problem is notably set by Bernard Williams in his classic essay, “The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato’s *Republic*,” in *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos*, ed. E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos, and R. M. Rorty (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), 196–206. See also Jonathan Lear, “Inside and Outside the *Republic*,” in *Phronesis* 37 (1992): 184–215.
8. Anaximander, DK 12, B1.
9. Heraclitus, DK 22, B80.
10. The books are Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002), and Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
11. In the course of remarks on the *Statesman* in a companion to this essay entitled “The Faces of Justice: Difference, Equality, and Integrity in Plato’s

Republic,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 20 (2004).

11. Male and Female in Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals*

1. See also *De Anima* 2.4, 415a28; for an earlier expression of this view, see Plato’s *Symposium*, 208 A–B.
2. Compare the more ambiguous speech of Orestes in Euripides’s *Orestes* (552).
3. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 44.
4. Ruth Bleier, *Science and Gender: A Critique of Biology and Its Theories on Women* (New York: Pergamon, 1984), 3.
5. In *The Female in Aristotle’s Biology: Reason or Rationalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Robert Mayhew provides a more extensive sampling of readings such as those I have quoted, and on a number of topics of which embryology is only one. Mayhew exposes with care and thoughtfulness how easy it is to misread Aristotle when other agendas are operative. He offers a treatment of the issues in animal generation that is somewhat different from what I here propose.
6. Alexander, in *Aristotelis Metaphysica Commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck (*Commentaria in Aristotele Graeca* 5.1) (Berlin: Reimer, 1891), 580.3ff.
7. I give a more thorough argument for this view in *The Activity of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 77–79.
8. The complexity of this issue is brought out in Marguerite Deslauriers’s thoughtful essay “Sex and Essence in Aristotle’s Metaphysics and Biology,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle*, ed. Cynthia Freeland (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 138–167.
9. Claude A. Vilee and Vincent G. Dethier, *Biological Principles and Processes* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1971), 815.
10. *Ibid.*, 822.
11. *Ibid.*, 232.
12. J. D. Watson, *Molecular Biology of the Gene* (New York: W. A. Benjamin, 1970), 10–11.
13. Vilee and Dethier, *Biological Principles*, 822.
14. The first view is the suggestion of Cynthia Freeland in her essay “Aristotle on Bodies, Matter, and Potentiality,” in *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle’s Biology*, ed. Allan Gotthelf and James G. Lennox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 392–407.

12. Self-Knowledge and Self-Control in Plato’s *Charmides*

1. J. David Velleman, *Self to Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

2. I use the term “objective intentionality” rather than simply “intentionality” precisely because I mean to direct attention away from the formal features of an intentional state to what is true of it by virtue simply of its having an object, and thus to bring out the dependence of intentional states upon their intended objects. Descartes is the modern philosopher who perhaps most famously uses this notion of the *objective*, which he inherits from its highly developed medieval usage. In the preface to the *Meditations* he points out to the reader that the term *idea* is equivocal, for, as he puts it, it can be understood *materialiter*, in a material sense, for any act of the intellect, or *objective*, in an objective sense, for the thing that that act represents, that is, the thing that the idea is an idea *of*; a thing that may or may not, as he immediately points out, exist outside the intellect. Ideas are by their nature objective, that is, they are *of* something. In the Third Meditation, this fact is critical to Descartes’s exploration of our understanding of God, and therefore critical to his account of our subjective experience of the world. See also G. E. M. Anscombe, “The Intentionality of Sensation—a Grammatical Feature,” in *Analytic Philosophy Second Series*, ed. R. J. Butler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965).
3. The term “Pauline Predication” is usually associated with Gregory Vlastos, but is in fact the invention of Sandra Peterson Wallace; see Vlastos, “The Unity of the Virtues,” in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 257 fn.
4. Michael McGhee, “Moral Sentiments, Social Exclusion, Aesthetic Education,” *Philosophy* 74 (1999): 85–103.
5. Maimonides, *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics*, Shemonah Perakim, trans. and ed. Joseph Gorfinkle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912).
6. “Charmides’ First Definition: *Sophrosyne* as Quietness,” in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. J. Anton and A. Preuss (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983).
7. The two texts are these: (a) αἰσθανόμεθα ὅτι ὀρώμεν καὶ ἀκούομεν, *De Anima* 3.2, 425b13, and (b) καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις, *Metaphysics* 12.9, 1074b28–34. I have discussed these elsewhere, the former in “Perceiving That We Perceive: *On the Soul* 3.2,” the third chapter in this volume; the latter in *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 224–232.
8. I have argued for this view in some detail in *The Activity of Being*, 224–232.
9. I realize that this phrase may be misleading in suggesting that locutions are either reflexive or not. But think of how varied are the uses of the standard English “reflexive” form of a noun with the prefix *self*-. Some instances of *self*-x may obviously involve the self as reflexive object, that is, a subject x-ing herself: so for example *self-criticism*, *self-abuse*, *self-love*. In other cases the relation to subject may reveal a more indirect reflexivity; think of *self-righteousness*, in which the subject *takes herself to be* righteous, or *self-confidence*, in which the subject is confident *of* herself. In yet other cases, the relation is more subtle; how is the subject related to herself in cases of *self-realization*? Or, as I have suggested, in instances of someone *self-taught*? Yet others, as I have been

suggesting, appear to involve reflexive action, but present such difficulties when thought of this way as to lead us to question whether such an understanding is appropriate: notable here besides the cases we have been considering is the phenomenon of *self-deception*. See William Ruddick, “Social Self-Deceptions,” in *Perspectives on Self-Deception*, ed. Brian P. McLaughlin and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 180ff.

10. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1989).

13. Beauty and the Good

1. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Divine Names* 4.7, in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1857), 3, 701.
2. Jan Aersten, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 341.
3. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Viking, 1965), 185.
4. The references are to the “fleshly poet” Reginald Bunthorne in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride*. W. S. Gilbert, *The Savoy Operas* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 164–165. I'm not suggesting that Bunthorne or Gilbert would have in fact held to the views about morality I am here criticizing; my thought is simply that someone who in fact did hold those views would have a worrisome position to answer for.
5. Though this is somewhat like Tevye's wisdom: “A man is like a carpenter. A carpenter lives and lives and then dies, and a man lives and dies.” Sholom Aleichem, “The Soap Bubble,” in *Shalom Aleykhem's Tevye the Dairman*, translated by Miriam Katz (Malibu, California: Pangloss Press, 1994), 39.
6. Here I'm reminded of an older and wonderfully rich essay: Stuart Hampshire, “Logic and Appreciation,” in *Aesthetics and Language*, ed. William Elton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959), 161–169.
7. I think here of Walter Benjamin's characterization of fascism as politics rendered aesthetic. For example, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 41.
8. Gabriel Richardson Lear, “Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato's *Symposium*,” in *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*, ed. J. H. Leshner, Debra Nails, and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2006), and “Aristotle on Moral Virtue and the Fine,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"*, ed. Richard Kraut (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).
9. Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
10. This question was generated, I must confess, by being shown a translation by Andrew Wilson of a J. K. Rowling novel entitled *ΑΡΕΙΟΣ ΠΟΤΗΡ και η του*

φιλοσόφου λίθος; *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (Ancient Greek Edition)*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004).

11. This description makes things sound much simpler than they really are. The distinction between meanings that are accidentally and metonymically linked and those that are conceptually or etymologically linked is often difficult to make out.
12. The key technical term καθ' αὐτό, for example, is characteristically rendered by a bewildering array of words and expressions, all of which confront the reader of the *Metaphysics* with no clue that there is a single Greek phrase that lies behind these terms; *per se, essential, in itself, necessary, intrinsic*: all appear in one place or another as translations of καθ' αὐτό. I write about this issue in the following chapter of this volume, “Translating *Ousia*.”
13. It is for this reason that the scientific unit of the measurement of beauty, as defined by the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures, is the *millibelen*, the amount of beauty sufficient to launch exactly one ship.
14. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translation, glossary, and introductory essay by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002).
15. *Ibid.*, introductory essay, xxi.
16. *Ibid.*, xii.
17. I say that in spite of, or perhaps I should say as is strikingly revealed by, the efforts of many people, chronicled for example by Arthur Danto, to divorce beauty from products of artistic activity.
18. I owe this observation to my colleague Bret Mulligan.
19. This essay was originally part of a symposium, and in a commentary on my contribution Gabriel Richardson Lear properly took me to task for having drawn this distinction with such bold strokes that I overdrew, as a consequence, the differences between τὸ καλόν and *beauty*. In her comments, Lear cited a line from Gerard Manley Hopkins, and in thinking about the line that follows, I was struck and continue to be struck by Hopkins's use of beauty as a predicate of God: “He fathers-forth whose *beauty* is past change.” *Beauty* in that line represents exactly the kind of metonymy of which I speak disparagingly, the metonymy that allows *beauty* to characterize God, persons' characters, and perhaps even things like wisdom. My parsimonious account endangers that kind of metonymy; in her remarks, Lear was much more generous about those extended uses, and I think she is right. It would be wrong not to recognize how ample our understanding of the beautiful is. My stinginess here is purely tactical; I hope by a kind of semantic frugality to make possible a clearer view of where the centers of these concepts lie.
20. I could indeed indicate the central argument of this essay by the tempting though oversimplified syllogism: καλός and αἰσχρός are opposites, αἰσχρός means *ugly-cum-shameful*, so καλός as its opposite means something like *beautiful-cum-admirable*.
21. It is a separate although related question why we take pleasure in the consideration of appearance as such, why the project of capturing, say, the *look* of

things delights us, as does our ability to explore the forms and limits of its plasticity. Thinking thus of art as the production and systematic refiguring of appearance may help explain its connection to beauty.

22. Alexander Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 19.

14. Translating *Ousia*

1. “Letter to a Translator, Jenő Tamás Gömöri, Hungarian translator of Mann,” trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston, *Delos* 3 (1969): 210.
2. Thus Mann writes to Gömöri: “It is generally known that lyric poetry cannot really be translated. That this is also the case with more refined prose is known only to a few.” See J. Thirlwall, *In Another Language: A Record of the Thirty-Year Relationship between Thomas Mann and His English Translator* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 51, 197.
3. As for example, at *Euthyphro* 11A, *Phaedrus* 245E, *Theaetetus*, 186D, *Republic* 6.509B, 7.534B, *Timaeus* 29C.
4. I have elided one complication here, which might make this a simpler story—that is the fact that the first of the categories is frequently given as what we call essence: τὸ τί ἔστί. I discuss this in *The Activity of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 128–132.
5. That is to say, into Latin medieval philosophy and then into early modern thinkers, as Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* 1.51, and Spinoza, *Ethics* 1, Definition 3. I found most useful here Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1951), 65–75; Étienne Gilson, “Notes sur le vocabulaire de l’être,” *Mediaeval Studies* 8 (1946): 152–155; C. Arpe, “Substantia,” *Philologus* 94 (1940): 65–78.
6. Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), *De Mundo* 4,, 395a29–32.
7. Aristotle, *On the Cosmos*, trans. D. J. Furley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 371.
8. Owens, *Doctrine of Being*, 65–75.
9. Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, chap. 1.
10. I’ve discussed this feature of Aristotle’s ontology and its relation to Heidegger in “Ontological Differences: *Being* and *Substance* in Book V of the *Metaphysics*,” *Epoche: A Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (2007), 421–434.
11. I deal with this question again in “Beauty and the Good: Situating the *Kalon*,” which appears as the previous chapter in this volume.

15. Aristotle on the Virtues of Thought

1. J. A. Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 2.1–2.2; cf. also Hermann Rassow, *Forschungen über die Nikomachische Ethik des Aristoteles* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1874), 19–21.

2. Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.3.
3. *Ibid.*, 2.4.
4. This is the burden of the first essay in this volume, “Understanding, Explanation, and Insight in Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*.”
5. There is indeed a persuasive argument that the incontinent person does not act with reasoned choice; supposing that his deliberation results in reasoned choice results from our thinking of that deliberation apart from the whole context of the moral agent’s life, plans, long-term goals, etc. For example, G. E. M. Anscombe, “Thought and Action in Aristotle,” in *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, ed. R. Bambrough (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).
6. A recent example of such thinking is Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly, *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age* (New York: Free Press, 2011).
7. It is one of the oldest philosophical stories. If the syllable SO requires not merely its elements, S and O, but something else as well, C, which is the principle of their combination, then if that something is another element, another letter, we will need yet something *else* to explain the unity of the new combination SO and C. Aliter: if there must be something that relates us for us to be related, then there must be something that relates each of us to that something, and before you can say Jack Robinson, there will be a teeming multitude of intermediaries. “The only thing that stood between us was our relationship.”
8. Frances Bacon, “Of Truth,” in *The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral*, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, edited by James Spedding, Robert Ellis, and Douglas Heath (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1900) Volume 12, 82.

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