Nature and Moral Excellence in the Aristotelian Ethics

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NATURE AND MORAL EXCELLENCE

IN

THE ARISTOTELIAN ETHICS

by

Robert Geis

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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The past three decades have seen an appreciable growth of interest in ethics both here and in Europe, with discussion equally fruitful in both the classical and modern positions. The topics discussed, varied and wide-ranging as the problems they consider, continue to provide appreciation for the complexities that ethics must treat, whether the views set forth have been one's own or that of a major figure.

This thesis is of the latter kind. It centers directly on one theme in Aristotle's ethics, viz., the relation there of Nature and moral excellence. The topic is new, little having been said about it previously. Of course, in one way or another it has made its way into different discussions about the Ethics, but more often than not just in passing and not as a developed topic, which it is here.

This the first chapter should make clear. There the secondary literature is surveyed, showing that it is only recently that Nature in the Ethics has been given any significant consideration at all. Previously, Aristotle's theory of moral goodness was discussed almost exclusively in light of the notion of phronesis. This, however, though instructive, is only one way of regarding the topic. When we approach it in light of his theory of Nature in the Ethics, our view widens.

Accordingly, chapter two locates the relation of
Nature to the morally good. Studying its role in the Protrepticus, the Eudemian Ethics, and the Nichomachean Ethics, we can see that it has a normative role, which is also confirmed in the Politics. And this normative role arises from Aristotle’s general conviction that Nature, which is responsible for the ends of all natural beings, is an agency of good. Their ends, therefore, are their good; and thus man’s end is his good. Human actions conducive to that end are therefore good, and those detractive from it, bad. That is, they are according to or contrary to Nature respectively. And it is with this in mind that the ethician, for Aristotle, assigns a moral value to human actions.

Chapter three is concerned with the moral habits in general and Aristotle’s belief that none of these is ours by nature. Instead, he holds that it is we who bring about our states of character and hence their excellence or vice. Nevertheless, the propensity to virtue is ours by nature and this, accordingly, has also merited discussion here.

These propensities, however, are not virtues in the full sense. True virtue involves reason and this we see in chapter four. Guided by a reason that is right the passions, Aristotle points out, achieve their proper excellencies, their best states. Reason, like Nature then, emerges as an agency of good. And this allows us to draw some parallels between our own good acts and Nature’s operations.
Virtue can now be accurately described as an imitation of Nature. And this is best seen in the contemplative man that the Nichomachean Ethics describes, he who has all the virtues and with it the best of all goods.

The contemplative man, finally, the conclusion suggests, is the best expression of Nature's aspiration for the divine. Summary remarks are offered here too, bringing the thesis to a close.

It should be noted here that this study, though discussing in the first chapter some aspects of the well-known problems of the developmental hypothesis and Aristotle's thought, is not directly concerned with it. Such a discussion arose because the first chapter is an account of the previous literature. And the purpose of that was primarily to show to what extent others had considered the theory of Nature in Aristotle's Ethics.

The approach here, instead, is to detail those themes about Nature that are consistent in the writings where Aristotle treats ethical problems at length. These are the Protrepticus, Eudemian Ethics, Nichomachean Ethics, Politics, and a work traditionally ascribed to the Aristotelian tradition, the Magna Moralia, with occasional references to Aristotle's other writings, when appropriate.

I would, finally, like to thank those who read the thesis along with me: Reverend Theodore Tracy, S.J., of the
University of Illinois, whose own work on the Ethics has added significantly to our appreciation of Aristotle as physiobiologist; Dr. Frank Yartz of Loyola University, whose encouragement and suggestions were always most helpful; and to my director, Reverend Lothar Nurnberger, S.J., also of Loyola University. It is he who first suggested the thesis topic to me when we worked on the Ethics two years ago, and whose instruction and skill were wholly invaluable during the course of my writing. It is, in fact, only on his account that I was willing to explore this topic at all, as well as see it to its successful completion.
VITA

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In September, 1972, he was awarded an assistantship in Philosophy at Loyola University of Chicago; in February, 1976, his Master of Arts in Philosophy.
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CHAPTER I
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The morally good, how it is known and in what it consists, for Aristotle has been variously interpreted during this century, and for the most part only in light of his account of phronesis. The first extensive, and for some time most influential, discussion of it appeared in Werner Jaeger's Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development. Tracing the usage of phronesis in the Protrepticus, Eudemian Ethics, and Nichomachean Ethics, he argued for a development in Aristotle's ethical theory— from a Platonism in the Protrepticus, where phronesis is nourished by the objective reality of the Forms, to a purely subjectivist theory in the Nichomachean Ethics. Here phronesis is reduced to the discernment of means to an end that has been "determined by the moral will". The universal norms of the Protrepticus no longer function as guides for right conduct. The standard now, according to Jaeger, is rather "the autonomous conscience of the ethically educated person".


essence of moral value is now developed out of the subjective self", and thus the "transcendental norm" has become "internalized" and with that voided of its universal validity. "For there is no imperative that is binding on all men equally, except a purely formal generalization devoid of content. Aristotle's aim is to unite the idea of complete obedience to the norm with the greatest individual variety. The moral personality is 'a law to itself'."  

The developmental hypothesis, of course, held great sway, as did Jaeger's reading of the Protrepticus.  The force of both today, though, has greatly diminished, and it is not without interest to recount the change in opinion. It will provide for a clearer understanding of how Nature and the morally good are related for Aristotle, especially since that relationship seems to have been so narrowly construed or simply ignored in the reaction to Jaeger, and which has formed almost the entire bulk of the literature on the Ethics since Jaeger. Five major figures, then, will be matter for discussion here, beginning with Jaeger.

The general preoccupation of Jaeger's Fundamentals is Aristotle's theory of being. Accordingly, (1) Aristotle was first a Platonist for whom being meant the Forms; (2) This

was replaced by a metaphysics heavily dominated by God, and that in turn by a (3) thoroughgoing empiricism. In the Protrepticus then, an early work, Aristotle for Jaeger is a Platonist, a view he arrived at by his analysis of how phronesis (φρόνησις) is used there. Its object, according to Jaeger, are the Platonic Forms, as is clear from the Platonic language in which its object is described, e.g., αὐτὰ τὰ πρῶτα and ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἄχριβῶν. Phronesis, then, is the contemplative knowledge of the Platonic Forms, which at the same time, however, is also directive of conduct. Being and value, which for Plato were one, have not yet become disjoined according to Jaeger, and therefore the Forms nourish both theoretic and practical knowledge.

Hence, phronesis is both theoretic and practical wisdom and is, according to Jaeger, directive of conduct more geometrico. In the Protrepticus, that is, is an "ideal of


7- "In the Protrepticus its meaning is purely Platonic", Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 81. See also ibid., p. 82: "The Protrepticus understands phronesis in the full Platonic sense."

8- "Both the language and the philosophical content of this passage is pure Plato", Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 90. See also ibid., p. 91.


10- Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 86.
geometrical ethics". Ethics, here, is an "exact science" while politics, which Aristotle "considers inseparable from ethics" has "the exact in itself for object." Knowing what is right in the concrete circumstance, therefore, requires reasoning geometrically from the Forms, which are both the "exact" objects for knowledge as well as ethical norms.

Persuasive as this reading of the Protrepticus was in 1923, in our day it has ceased to be so, and on two counts. (1) Von Fritz and Kapp have shown a number of doctrines in the Protrepticus to be clearly present in Aristotle's later writings, thereby rendering tenuous Jaeger's Platonizing of the Protrepticus. E. Frank advanced reasonings which directly questioned the position that Aristotle ever ascribed to the theory of Forms, while S. Mansion has argued for the same, but on different grounds.

11- Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 87. See also ibid., p. 85: "This ideal of mathematical exactness is contrary to everything that Aristotle teaches in his Ethics and Politics about the method of these studies."


13- Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 93.


During has argued against Jaeger's characterization of the Protreptican ethics as proceeding more geometrico, as has J. Donald Monan, whose own reading improved upon and further substantiated During's criticism. In its stead, though, During opted for the autonomous insight of the ἀνήρ as the standard of the morally valuable.

This is only one aspect, however, of his disagreement with Jaeger's Protrepticus. In addition, During rejects the belief in a Platonic Aristotle, and sees in the Protrepticus a marked distinction between theoretic and practical knowledge.

On this last point During was not successful. Using the same procedure by which During came to this position, viz., an analysis of the language in the Protrepticus,


21- I. During, "Aristotle In the Protrepticus", op. cit., pp. 89-90. See, however, S. Mansion, "Contemplation and Action in Aristotle's Protrepticus", op. cit. She offers an alternative view, viz., that moral wisdom is the practical fruit of metaphysical speculation.

22- For this kind of analysis in During see his "Aristotle In the Protrepticus", op. cit., p. 89.
E. de Strycher showed that "the language of the Fragments gives us no conclusive evidence" on what the Protrepticus teaches regarding the relation between theoretic and practical knowledge. And while his rejection of Jaeger's Platonic Aristotle is, as we have seen, widely shared, his interpretation of the norm for ethical conduct, viz., the σπουδάζων ἄνήρ, is not.

For Dühring, this theory of moral autonomy is the central feature of Aristotle's ethics, and is consistently held throughout. It is, furthermore, the dominant ethical theme of the Protrepticus, the only ethical treatise in which "there is no mention at all of the mean." Instead, the σπουδάζων ἄνήρ is sovereign, in that he knows what is right and wrong since (1) "his actions are μι-μησις αὐτῶν ἄριστων", and (2) are what "such a man would choose, if his choice followed his knowledge."24

Such a knowledge, however, is not a mos geometricus, nor even a reasoning from established norms. Rather it is an intuition or unrationalizable insight, an ὀρθὸς λόγος enabling the σπουδάζων ἄνήρ "to judge aright in all matters."25

23- E. de Strycher, "On the First Section of Fragment 5a of the Protrepticus" in Aristotle and Plato In the Mid-Fourth Century, op. cit., p. 100.


25- ibid., p. 94.
This theme, being present for Düring in all three ethical tracts, prompted him to deny any difference in outlook between the early and later ethics.

The development does not follow a straight line, which, as Jaeger thought, can be measured in terms of distance from Plato... we should rather think of a boomerang curve, for in the last μῆθωδος of the Nichomachean Ethics, after having made an excursion in the field of empirical sociology, Aristotle returns to his old hunting grounds and comes nearer to the Protrepticus than in any other part of the ethical works.

Whether or not this last observation is correct, the justification for it has recently been questioned by Monan. Though siding with Düring that Jaeger's theory of a mos geometricus in the Protrepticus is unfounded, he criticizes Düring's suggestion that the Protrepticus is "dominated" by the concept of the συνεδαίος ἀνήρ, especially since there is only one text there supporting Düring's position. A further difficulty he cites is that Düring has not elaborated on how this incommunicable knowledge of the morally good finds concrete application in everyday life. The reason, Monan believes, is obvious enough: "the method of moral knowledge employed by Aristotle in the Protrepticus is not adequately described."

26- ibid., pp. 91-2. These three are the Protrepticus, Eudemian Ethics, and Nichomachean Ethics.
27- ibid., pp. 96-7.
28- Monan, Moral Knowledge, p. 26; p. 54.
29- Monan, Moral Knowledge, pp. 11-12; p. 27.
30- Monan, Moral Knowledge, p. 34.
difficulty, Monan modifies the difference Düring found between theoretical and practical in the _Protrepticus_. The _phronimos_, according to Monan, is the only competent judge of the moral good in concrete circumstances, not because of any "creative autonomy" but on account of "his possession of a philosophic wisdom which is to be reduced to practice." 31 This view is characteristic of Monan's general reading of the _Ethics_, as we shall see later when we discuss his views at greater length.

While Düring, then, levelled his criticism primarily against Jaeger's _Protrepticus_, others have done the same to Jaeger's reading of the _Eudemian Ethics_. Using the doctrine of _phronesis_ again as the key to his findings, Jaeger sees it there still as

strictly confined to the contemplation of the divine principle, and without it ethical action is impossible; the only innovation is that the objects of contemplation are no longer Plato's Ideas but the transcendental God of the original _Metaphysics_. . . ethical action is striving towards God. 32

Thus, "in the _Eudemian Ethics_ Aristotle is still expressing the direct relevance of God to moral action, as he had done earlier by means of the Platonic conception of the absolute norm." 33 The only difference now is that God is

31- Monan, _Moral Knowledge_, p. 36.
32- Jaeger, *Fundamentals*, p. 240. See _ibid._, p. 239: "By _phronesis_ the _Eudemian Ethics_ understands like Plato and the _Protrepticus_, the philosophical faculty that beholds the highest real value, God, in transcendental contemplation."
asserted as the absolute value or the highest good. Will and command, then, "arise only when reason or phronesis devotes itself to the contemplation of this being." 34

Contemplation, therefore, is "the standard of will and action" in the Eudemian Ethics, while phronesis remains "both theoretical knowledge of supersensible being and practical moral insight." 35 Moral action, in other words, is judged according to whether or not it conduces to contemplation, in light of a wisdom that is "partly the knowledge of an objective value (θεωρητικόν), and partly the application of this knowledge to human behaviour." 36

All this, however, according to Jaeger, is discarded in the Nichomachean Ethics. "There are no universal norms, there is no measure except the individual living measure of the autonomous ethical person, and phronesis is concerned not with the universal, but the particular." 37 "It is not speculation but deliberation... it is concerned not with the universal but the fleeting details of life, and... therefore does not have the highest and most valuable thing in the universe for object." 38 "Its function is... to discover the right means of attaining the end determined by the moral

35- Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 239.
38- Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 83.
will\textsuperscript{39} which is now grounded in a subjective self.

The Platonism of the Protrepticus, then, collapses into a subjectivist ethics which, for Jaeger, is Aristotle's final view on the matter. And the Eudemian Ethics, the "theonomic ethics... of pure devotion to God" fades. Contemplation becomes little more than an objective if idealized description of the life of the scholar devoted to research, rising at the end to the intuition of the ultimate force that guides the spheres... The strength of the later Ethics lies rather in its parts, with their analysis of concrete moral types, and in its rich and urbane humanity. \textsuperscript{40}

D.J. Allan is perhaps the first to have dismissed this view. In a lively but erudite study he challenged the general consensus of a gradual evolution of Aristotle's thought, \textsuperscript{41} as well as Jaeger's description of phronesis in the Nichomachean Ethics. \textsuperscript{42} There he quite conclusively showed that it has to do with both the means and end of human activity, while Monan has cited texts to contradict Jaeger's picture of phronesis in the Eudemian Ethics. \textsuperscript{43}

In addition, two articles by Allan in 1953 and 1955 continued the dispute, taking into account, however the lit-

\textsuperscript{39} Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 247.

\textsuperscript{40} Jaeger, Fundamentals, p. 243.


\textsuperscript{42} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 180-2.

\textsuperscript{43} Monan, Moral Knowledge, pp. 138-9.
While Teichmüller, Trendelenburg, and Zeller, Allan points out, all held that phronesis in the *Nicomachean Ethics* has to do with both the right end and the right means to it, Julius Walter ascribed the apprehension of the end to moral virtue, limiting phronesis exclusively to deliberation about the means to it. This view, Allan further notes, became Zeller's, and thus Burnet's and, as a result, all of Oxford's.

R. Loening, however, in 1903 disputed Walter's claim, showing that prudence, as right knowledge accompanied by right desire, not only posits the right end, but also is the virtue of right deliberation and choice about the means to that end. Allan's 1953 essay repeats and reinforces Loening's findings with, however, the texts needed to end the dispute. 45

Gauthier, agreeing with Allan's findings, 46 presented


45- "That practical reason formulates the good is the doctrine of the *De Anima*, and appears beyond doubt from the following passages of the *Ethics*: VI, 1139a 21..., VI, 1142b 31 ..., VII, 1152b 1." D.J. Allan, "Aristotle's Account of the Origin of Moral Principles", op. cit., p. 125.

a view of the Ethics far different from Jaeger's. 47 In L'Éthique a Nicomague he argues for the similarity of teaching in the Eudemian Ethics and Nichomachean Ethics, based upon the doctrine of moral knowledge in each. Phronesis in both tracts furnishes objective norms for human praxis and in light of the true end of human activity. Jaeger's distinction, then, of a theonomic ethics in the Eudemian Ethics and the autonomy of the individual conscience in the Nichomachean Ethics is unfounded. 48 Aristotle, on the contrary, had already in the Eudemian Ethics discarded the Platonic theory of phronesis, which he had so ardently espoused in the Protrepticus, 49 and instead began to formulate an ethics built upon his own anthropology. 50 This, in fact, 47 - Not entirely different, however. He sees some merit in Jaeger's position on a mos geometricus in the Protrepticus and thinks the theory of moral knowledge in the Eudemian Ethics to parallel this somewhat. On this see R. Gauthier and J.Y. Jolif, L'Éthique a Nicomague, op. cit., p. 29*, and R. Gauthier, La Morale d'Aristote, op. cit., pp. 18, 44, and 45. 48 - R. Gauthier and J.Y. Jolif, L'Éthique a Nicomague, op. cit., p. 29*. See also R. Gauthier, La Morale d'Aristote, op. cit., p. 95. 49 - Gauthier, in contrast to most of the contemporary readers of the Protrepticus, agrees with Jaeger's theory of the Platonic Protrepticus. See R. Gauthier, La Morale d'Aristote, op. cit., pp. 6-7. 50 - Though he does not elaborate this, Gauthier seems to be saying that in the Eudemian and Nichomachean Ethics Aristotle's ethical theory is now discussed in terms of man as a substantial unity in contrast to the Platonic theory of man in the Protrepticus where soul and body are in conflict. See R. Gauthier and J.Y. Jolif, L'Éthique a Nicomague, op. cit., p. 30*. 
"commande pour une large part la doctrine" while phronesis, though admittedly "practique" and "imprégné de désir" remains primarily "intellectuelle".52

These last two conclusions, novel in interpretation and set forth in La Morale d'Aristote, were summarily dismissed by Monan, the last major figure in our survey here. He rightly noted that Gauthier in fact wavers on the difficult problem of determining the nature of phronesis—i.e., deciding whether or not it is intellectual—and was not at all clear on what he meant by an anthropological ethics.53

To this last point we will return in our second chapter, after Monan's views have been discussed.

Monan's work, Moral Knowledge and Its Methodology In Aristotle, is the most significant for our purposes here since, unlike the previous literature, it is the first to discuss the role of Nature in moral goodness for Aristotle at any length. Previous scholarship, being in large a reaction to Jaeger, focused primarily on only one aspect of it, viz., its relation to phronesis. And though Monan's work is also preoccupied with this same issue, in the course of his discussion some pertinent remarks concerning Nature have come up, and these merit discussion.

51- R. Gauthier, La Morale d'Aristote, op. cit., p. 44. See also ibid., p. 17: "Les traités de morale d'Aristote contiennent une anthropologie", and pp. 18, 19, 43, and 44.

52- ibid., pp. 82-4.

53- Monan, Moral Knowledge, pp. 55 and 58. Monan himself (ibid., p. 81) characterizes phronesis as a synthesis of "true reason and right desire".
Nature, according to Monan, grounds correct moral awareness in the *Protrepticus*. But more than a reading of Nature is required to be morally good. There is also the business of applying these principles formulated ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως to the concrete individual situations of practical living. This is accomplished not by a mechanical chain of reasoning *à la* Jaeger, but in accordance with the "essentially imperfect, approximate realizations or verifications of such principle in concrete situations of life." Morality awareness, though derived from principles formulated by a study of Nature, has primarily to do with their "limited realization" in daily living.

In the later *Ethics*, however, Nature loses its importance. "Nowhere in Aristotle's explicit doctrine of moral knowledge is nature mentioned as a pattern from which one could read off the goodness or badness of prospective conduct." "More clearly than the *Protrepticus*, the Nichomachean *Ethics* makes clear that the principles themselves are derived from no pre-existing metaphysically elaborated absolute, but from the concrete situations of life where alone man can realize a value." "Gone is 'reality itself' and 'eternal things'" as the object of moral knowledge "to be replaced by the contingent, individualized *prakton aga-

In the later Ethics, according to Monan, the morally good is known pre-philosophically. It is not arrived at by a speculative study, nor by a philosophic study of man's nature, but rather by actual concrete praxis. To know what is morally good is possible only by doing it, and therefore only in the lived situation. The norm for goodness, then, is grasped in the experiential and can be recognized only by one whose consistent good conduct has furnished him therefore with the awareness of right and wrong, i.e., by the phronimos. It is he, in fact, who becomes the locus of the morally right, the standard of what it is objectively good to do. Virtuous habituation has given him the eye to see immediately, without reflection or deliberation, how the good is to be realized in a particular instance. And it is this intuition, Monan believes, that has replaced the Protreptic contemplation of Nature as the source of our knowledge of right and wrong.

59- Monan, Moral Knowledge, p. 152.

60- This Monan holds is true for both the Eudemian and Nichomachean Ethics; see Monan, Moral Knowledge, pp. 144-6.

61- Monan, Moral Knowledge, p. 80; p. 152.
CHAPTER II

NATURE AND THE MORAL GOOD

A survey of the secondary literature on Aristotle's theory of the morally good, then, shows that the importance of Nature there has only been of late a topic of discussion, and for the most part only in Monan's study. In a work published the same year as Monan's, W.F.R. Hardie's *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 62 it is discussed only very briefly, while J. Owens in a 1969 article sees it for Aristotle as "convincing enough grounds for ethical universality" 63 without, however, any extended discussion as to why. What requires our attention, then, is an examination of how Nature appears in Aristotle's ethical works and to see if it does not take on a role more expansive than the previous literature allowed. Accordingly, we will discuss three themes that emerge from this reading: (1) Nature as an agency of good; (2) the sense, therefore, in which Nature can be considered normative in a study of ethics, and (3) Nature and right action.

As early as the *Protrepticus*, whose Platonic characterization by Jaeger is, as we have seen, no longer so widely held, Aristotle advanced a thesis that was to appear again in a slightly different phrasing in the *Politics*: "that which is contrary to Nature (παρά φύσιν) is bad, and


the opposite of that which is according to Nature (κατά φύσιν )." 64 Things, therefore, generated by Nature, and hence for an end, the Protrepticus continues, come about rightly or well, and also καλῶς. 65 Again, in the Nichomachean Ethics: "In the world of Nature things have a natural tendency to be ordered in the best possible way", 66 a view fully in line with what is said about man's end in the Eudemian Ethics: "by nature (φύσει) the End is always a good... but in contraversion to nature (παρά φύσιν ), and by perversion, not the good but the apparent good is the end." 67 Nature, then, is a cause whose purposes are good, and whatever contravenes that purpose is not right. 68

64- Ingemar Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus: An Attempt at Reconstruction. Göteborg: Eleanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1961, Fragment B 15 (hereafter simply During, Aristotle's Protrepticus, with the Fragment number identified simply by B and then the number); Cf. Politics, VII, 3, 1325b 10-11: οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν παρά φύσιν καλῶν. My reasons for using Düring's edition of the Protrepticus, being somewhat lengthy, have accordingly been set forth in an Appendix (A) at the end of the thesis, rather than in the footnote here.

65- Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus, B 14, B 15.


68- Politics, VII, 3, 1325b 10-11.
could not survive. 74 Each and every being that comes to be by Nature is our proof for this principle then. And it is reasonable to suppose that when we undertake to reason about natural things this should be one of our guiding threads.

Such a principle would seem to have a role in ethics too since there our study is about the end of man who, because a natural being, has come about for an end that is rightly described as his good. In three of his ethical tracts, in fact, Aristotle argues for a final end to human activity precisely in terms of the design of Nature, in each case describing it as his most worthwhile good.

In the *Protrepticus* it is \( \varphi \rho \omicron \nu \varsigma \nu \) that is called his end 75 because this is the excellence of his highest faculty, 76 and Nature seeks the excellence of everything. Reasoning from the purpose of Nature we find that our end resides in the exercise or function ( \( \varepsilon \rho \gamma \omicron \omicron \) ) proper to \( \varphi \omicron \nu \nu \nu \varsigma \iota \varsigma \), viz., \( \varphi \omicron \nu \nu \nu \) or the attainment of truth, 77 because \( \varphi \omicron \nu \nu \nu \varsigma \iota \varsigma \) by nature ( \( \varphi \omicron \sigma \iota \) ) is what last comes to be in man. And that which is last at-

74- *De Anima*, III, 12, 435b 2-7.


77- On the basis of combining B 20 with B 65 I have made this identification of \( \varphi \omicron \nu \nu \nu \) with the attainment of truth.
tained in the order of a being's generation is its end according to Nature (κατά φύσιν). 78 Man's end by nature therefore resides in the exercise of the best part of his soul, since it is this exercise which is the best of all things 79 while all the other excellences of the soul exist for the sake of this end. 80

In the Eudemian Ethics this theme is not so vigorously pursued, but nevertheless natural design fits into the discussion of man's good. Men naturally (φύσει) wish for what is good, and only contrary to nature (παρά φύσιν) do they wish for something bad. By nature (φύσει) the object or end, about whose means for attainment they deliberate, is good; and only contrary to nature (παρά φύσιν) and by perversion will one pursue the apparent, and not real, good. 81

These phrases, however, "contrary to nature" and "according to nature" are not really explained in the Eudemian Ethics. To understand them and why they are used we must go to the Nichomachean Ethics. Here the Protreptican argument about that excellence and ἐργον for which man's soul has been designed by Nature is again set forth, but now with certain precisions. With these the phrases "contrary to nature"

78- Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus, 8 9, 8 17.
79- Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus, 8 20. Here the activity is called φρονεῖν.
80- Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus, 8 23, 8 24; cf. B 68.
81- ε.ε., II, 10, 1227a 20-30.
nature" and "according to nature" as well as what is natural and what is perverse take on definite and technical meaning, and precisely in light of this theory of natural design. Along with this, then, why Aristotle uses such terms also becomes clear.

In the Eudemian Ethics, just as in the Protrepticus and the Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle had identified the good for man by considering what function or exercise (ἐργον) is proper to the human soul. Unlike the doctrine of the Protrepticus and the Nichomachean Ethics, however, he seems to have a somewhat broader understanding of the soul here. Since the function of the soul, according to the Eudemian Ethics, is to give life, and therefore also the function of its best state or excellence, the function of that excellence will be a good life, which is happiness. Happiness, though, is more truly an activity than a state, and therefore will be an activity of perfect life in accordance with complete virtue (ἐνέργεια κατ' ἀρετὴν τελείαν). 82

The key phrase here is ἀρετὴν τελείαν which translates "complete virtue". According to J. Donald Monan this indicates that Aristotle conceives of happiness as inclusive of the whole soul. "In the E.E. τελείαν is synonymous with ὅλη, i.e., perfect in the sense of entire, 82- E.E., II, 1, 1219a 24-38.
composed of a variety of virtues."\(^83\)

For this reason Monan holds that there are two psychologies operant in the Ethics. In both the Protrepticus and the Nichomachean Ethics Aristotle had identified man primarily with νοῦς, but in the Eudeman Ethics "by implication at least, with the broader psyche".\(^84\) The Eudeman Ethics, in other words, is favored with a more "integral psychology... the psychological horizon of the E.E. has broadened beyond the narrow identification of man with his nous."\(^85\)

Though in fact Aristotle does in both the Protrepticus and the Nichomachean Ethics, but not the Eudeman Ethics, speak of man as being νοῦς more than anything else,\(^86\) Monan's conclusion that a different psychology of man is present in the Eudeman Ethics is not really that convincing. For to speak of the excellence of the whole soul as an element in happiness is in no way to suggest that man is not primarily νοῦς. It is rather simply to assert the bas-

\(^83\) Monan, Moral Knowledge, p. 124. Monan's reason for this identification is textual: "In the E.E. a few lines earlier we find: ἐπεὶ δὲ ἢν ἡ εὐδαιμονία τελεόν, καὶ ἔστι, ζωὴ καὶ τελέα καὶ ἀτελής, καὶ ἀρετή οὐσιωθώς (ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὀλη, ἢ δὲ μόριον, and it is the former which figures in the definition of happiness", ibid., p. 124.

\(^84\) Monan, Moral Knowledge, p. 126.

\(^85\) Monan, Moral Knowledge, p. 131.

\(^86\) In the Protrepticus, B 29; the E.N., X, 7, 1178a 7.
ic tenet that complete happiness, and therefore the full excellence of the soul; can come about only when all the powers of the soul have come to their full excellence or realization. No statement about man is involved here, then; simply a condition of his happiness is.

If, however, we want to know that aspect of man that Aristotle holds indispensable to the study of ethics we must know what it is that differentiates him from all other natural beings or, put otherwise, makes him man. For it is man's end that ethics seeks to define, and no other.

Accordingly, having eliminated pleasure, honor, virtue, and the Good of the Platonists as man's end, Aristotle in the Nichomachean Ethics turns to examine what the final end of all human action is, and how it can be attained by man. All properly human acts, acts done knowingly and with purpose, he points out, are done on account of an end that is apprehended as desirable. Some ends, however, are more final than others, some ends really being means to a further end. For example, though the purpose of working is remuneration, this is not an end in itself. Rather, it becomes a means for support and sustenance and is therefore by no means something final. Only what is not a means to something else, but is an end chosen exclusively for its own sake, is absolutely final.

And in the order of human action this end is happi-

87- E.N., I, 3-6, 1095a 1 - 97a 15.
88- E.N., I, 7, 1097a 26-34.
ness, ευδαιμονία, since we always choose it for its own sake, and never as a means to something else. Once it has been attained, desire for anything further ceases. Happiness by itself is alone sufficient to render life desirable, and any effort needed for its attainment worth the while. Thus it is happiness which is the end of all human action, happiness which is man's complete good. 89

Something is completely good, however, only when that function ( ἔργον ) proper to it is exercised. Its perfection lies in more than the mere possession of such a function. For example, the complete good of flute playing, Aristotle points out, consists not merely in the ability to play the flute well, but in the actual good playing of it. Therefore, since happiness is man's complete good, then what the proper function of man is must be determined so that we may find how happiness comes about. And being man's complete good, it too will reside in some sort of exercise, and not just a possession or potency. 90

To locate something's complete good, then, requires that its characteristic function be identified, since its specific good entails the actual exercise of it. And that man has such a function, Aristotle points out, seems clear enough from the fact that each class of man does (e.g., the cobbler's is to make good shoes, the teacher's to instruct well), as do even his bodily parts. We can assume then that

89- N., I, 7, 1097a 34 - b 20.
90- N., I, 7, 1097b 22 - 27.
man has a function unique to him, and for this, Aristotle explicitly says, he has been designed πέφυκεν, by nature.91

And it is reason (λόγος) that is this function since this alone differentiates him and makes him unique from all other organic life, and is alone that in virtue of which human life can be called happy.92 The life proper to man is one which functions according to reason. And hence the good proper to him will be an activity in accord with reason, or more specifically its excellence.

Hence, for Aristotle to show how man’s end is to be attained we must know that characteristic function for which

91- E.N., I, 7, 1097b 30-35. The line of reasoning here is: if Nature has ordained even the most insignificant parts of the human body to do a certain work, a fortiori it has man, for he is far nobler than these. Πέφυκεν, of course, is the key word here. Rackham (p. 31 of his translation of the E.N., op. cit.), J.A.K. Thompson (p. 38 of his, The Ethics of Aristotle. London: Penguin Books, 1959), Ostwald (p. 16 of his, Aristotle: Nichomachean Ethics. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), and Tricot (p. 57, Ethique a Nicomague. Paris: J. Vrin, 1959) give it the force of natural or by nature, while Ross (p. 942 in The Basic Works of Aristotle, R. McKeon (ed.). New York: Random House, 1941) and Dirlmeier (p. 14, Nikomachische Ethik. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956) give it the meaning of being born with. Liddell-Scott (p. 773, Greek Lexicon. London: Oxford, 1974, Abridged Edition) allows for its translating as "the nature" or "naturally", and this is certainly both a permissible and accurate translation here. This is clear from E.E., II, 8, 1224b 32-34: "the two marks by which we define the natural (τὸ φύσει "—which can also translate as "that which is by nature") "—it is that which is found with us as soon as we are born, or that which comes to us if growth is allowed to proceed regularly, e.g., grey hair, old age, and so on." English translation by J. Solomon in The Works of Aristotle Translated Into English, W.D. Ross (ed.). London: Oxford, 1966, Vol. IX. Cf. During, Aristotle’s Protrepticus, 8 16, where Aristotle says man has come into being φύσιν and και ἀντὶ φύσει; and 8 23: man is by nature (φύσει;) composed of body and soul.

92- E.N., I, 7, 1098a 1-20.
he has been designed by nature; for it is in the excellence of this function that his end consists. And for Aristotle we have seen that man has been designed by Nature to live in accordance with reason, and that by so living he brings about his own well-being.

Ethics, then, requires a knowledge of the nature of man; it has an anthropological tenor. The statesman, in fact, is said to need this knowledge since ethics is most properly political in scope, its area of concern being included in and subordinated to politics, the master science. If the lawmaker's task is to make his fellow-citizens good, he must have an understanding of man's soul, since only in this way can he know the end for which Nature has brought him to be. In so understanding the soul, then, he will be able to promote their happiness and well-being, or guide them in that life which arises from reason.

The significance of this line of reasoning emerges far more forcefully in Book X with Aristotle's identification of man with νόσος. It is because man is especially νόσος that τῷ άνθρώπῳ δὴ δ' κατὰ τὸν νόσου βίον, εὖπερ τότῳ μάλιστα άνθρωπος since, as had already been established, τὸ γὰρ οὓς κείτω εκάστῳ τῷ φύσει κράτιστον καὶ ἠδιστὸν ἐστίν εκάστῳ.

93- E.N., I, 2-4, 1094a 18 - 95b 11.
94- E.N., I, 13, 1102a 7-24.
95- E.N., X, 7, 1178a 5-8. English translation (Rackham): first part—"the life of the intellect is the best and most pleasant for man"; second part—"that which is best and most pleasant for each creature is that which is proper to the nature of each."
Human happiness therefore, properly speaking, consists in
the best activity of the intellect, and thus that which is
the excellence of the best part in us.

It is for this reason that Aristotle has shifted the
first book's emphasis from λόγος as man's specific differ-
ence to νοῦς now in Book X. Νοῦς, as that which is
best in man, is what identifies him most truly since each
thing is defined by its end and that which is best in a
thing is most truly its end. Ευδαιμονία, then, will only
come about through the excellence of that which is best in
man, viz., νοῦς. And as that activity in accord with
such excellence it will be his best good.

Νοῦς, however, as being man's best end, is so by
nature since in the generation of natural beings the end is
by nature. Therefore that good which is best for man,
viz., Ευδαιμονία, is by natural design. And as that for
which all human action takes place, Ευδαιμονία is most sat-
isfying when the intellect has reached its excellence, viz.,
contemplative activity. This is most truly its good, as
well as our most pleasant state.

Thus, for Aristotle, "in man rational principle
( λόγος ) and mind ( νοῦς ) are the end towards which nat-
ure strives ( της φύσεως τέλος )", the excellence of

96- E.N., III, 7, 1115b 23.
97- On this see Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus, 8 13,
B 15.
98- Politics, VII, 15, 1334b 14-16. English translation by
which brings about happiness, our best good. Anything de-
tracting from this end or good, therefore, goes contrary to
Nature; anything contributing to it is in accordance with
Nature.

We have then the reason for and meanings of what Ar-
istotle understands by the natural and unnatural in regard
to human conduct. If our end is something good and attain-
able through our own agency, then whatever choice-motivated
conduct befits that end is morally good, while what does not
is morally bad. The end and good of man, however, is by
natural design. And therefore the morally good turns out
to be what is according to Nature, while the morally bad is
what perverts or contravenes Nature.

To be morally good for Aristotle, then, is to fit into
the design of Nature, to act in accordance with its plan.
Things that are done rightly, therefore, are done according
to Nature, while the "wicked man is contrary to nature
(παρὰ φύσιν )."99 Accordingly, moral goodness and man's
end by nature converge: whatever is morally good accords
with it, while whatever accords with that end is morally
good.

Such is the sense and significance of natural and un-
natural in Aristotle's ethical terminology. Convinced of the
goodness of the natural design and thus of the goodness of
man's end he is therefore able to ascribe value to human

Rackham in Aristotle: The Athenian Constitution, The Eudem-
ian Ethics, On Virtues and Vices, op. cit.
acts in light of that design. Clearly, then, Nature has significance in the study of human conduct for Aristotle. As that which has fashioned man's end, its design is therefore for him the criterion and norm by which the ethician can speak of the goodness and badness of human acts.

And it is only in this sense that it is normative. Natural design does not serve as a landmark for the man immersed in daily living. He does not look "with an eye to Nature" to see whether and how he should or should not act in a certain circumstance. Rather, experience will provide the eye and, as such, to the good man for seeing what the good to be done in such matters is, an experience, however, based on habituation to good action.\(^{100}\) For the good man this habituation is the fabric of moral knowledge. It is the habituation of choosing rightly by one reared in virtuous conduct and correct instruction, and who has thereby come to grasp the principles of right and wrong,\(^{101}\) as well as what the true good of human action is.\(^{102}\)

This, in other terms, is the phronimos. He has acquired the excellence of practical reasoning, that good

\(^{100}\) E.N., VI, 12, 1144a 29-31.

\(^{101}\) E.N., I, 4, 1095b 4-13; II, 1, 1103a 14-16; X, 9, 1179b 21-27; VII, 8, 1151a 15-19. Aristotle speaks of the apprehension of these particulars as coming by way of induction from particular situations, and thus culminating in an immediate intuitive grasp; cf. E.N., I, 7, 1096b 2-4; VI, 3, 1139b 26-31; VI, 11, 1143b 3-5, and Analytica Posteriora, II, 19.

\(^{102}\) E.N., VI, 11, 1143a 33-35.
moral reasoning which concludes in right action, \(^{103}\) and is set forth by Aristotle as our canon for good living. \(^{104}\) His virtue, being the mark of right reason, \(^{105}\) is the test of all human actions as to their goodness or badness.

Nevertheless, even here we may say that Nature is operant, if only in the background, for Aristotle. That which is right, we have seen, is what accords with Nature. A reason that is right, then, will be one that accords with Nature, i.e., one whose aims and directives parallel Nature.

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\(^{103}\) We must be very clear on this point. For Aristotle, the practical syllogism does not precede action; rather, it culminates in it. "In a practical syllogism the major premise is an opinion, while the minor premise deal with particular things, which are the province of perception. Now when the two premises are combined, just as in theoretic reasoning the mind is compelled to affirm the resulting conclusion, so in the case of practical premises you are forced to do it. For example, given the premises 'All sweet things ought to be tasted' and 'Yonder thing is sweet'—a particular instance of the general class, you are bound, if able and not prevented, immediately ( \( δύναμις \)) to taste the thing", E.N., VIII, 3, 1147a 25-32. English translation by H. Rackham in Aristotle: The Nichomachean Ethics, op. cit. Cf. De Anima, III, 11, 434a 16-21; and De Motu Animalium, I, 6-7. Here Aristotle tells us that in regard to reasoning about things to be done our "two premises result in a conclusion which is an action... it is clear that the action is a conclusion." English translation by A.S.L. Farquharson in The Works of Aristotle Translated Into English, op. cit., 1912, Vol. 5. Also, E.N., VII, 9, 1152a 7-10: "Prudence does not consist only in knowing what is right, but also in doing it". English translation by H. Rackham in Aristotle: The Nichomachean Ethics, op. cit.

\(^{104}\) Actually, Aristotle says the good man is "as it were" ( \( ἀντικεῖον \) ) the standard of the noble and pleasant, E.N., III, 4, 1113a 32-35. But in the Protrepticus (During, Aristotle's Protrepticus, B 39) he is called the \( χαλεπυ \) of what is good since when his choice follows his knowledge the things that he chooses are good, and their contraries evil. Presumably, though not stated here, this knowledge (here, \( ἐπιστήμη \)) is both of Nature and things eternal.

\(^{105}\) E.N., VI, 13, 1144b 24-25.
Phronesis, then, as the virtue of acting rightly from a reason that is right, is how human action best parallels Nature. And since it is the virtue of the good man, the good man in acting rightly and doing what is good can quite accurately be described for Aristotle as one who acts as Nature does. More to the point, in doing what is good and thus sustaining his own well-being, he is co-operating with Nature for it is at such a good that Nature has aimed for man.

Curiously enough, however, Aristotle obliges rulers and statesmen to pay heed to Nature, not to the phronimos, in their ruling of men. In the Protrepticus it is held that the statesman must have certain landmarks taken from Nature and truth itself (ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας) by reference to which he will judge what is just, what is good, and what is expedient... the best νόμος is that which is planted in the greatest possible conformity with Nature (κατὰ φύσιν). 106

And in the Nichomachean Ethics, as we saw, the statesman must have a knowledge of man's soul and the end for which he has been designed by Nature, since his duty is to effect the excellence and well-being of the populace.

Perhaps the underlying reason here is that if in the community of Nature things, unless prevented, are always brought naturally to their good and are ordered in the best possible way, the statesman has much to gain from the study of Nature in his attempt to do the same for society. If so, 106- Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus, 8 47. See also ibid., 8 46: "Good lawmakers too must have a general knowledge of nature (τῆς φύσεως)."
then Nature becomes more than a criterion for the moral value of human acts. It is now a source of enlightenment for the correct and good direction of the state as well.
CHAPTER III
NATURE AND MORAL HABIT

In Nature then, according to Aristotle, whatever comes to be does so for its own characteristic good, and by natural design. Nature's workmanship is throughout teleological, ordering all things to their proper completion and fulfillment. On different levels, however, this is accomplished in different ways. In those things lacking knowledge and hence awareness of their end we are wont to attribute the attainment of their end, Aristotle points out, exclusively to the agency of Nature. The seed becomes a plant, the fawn a deer, "the swallow makes its nest and the spider its web"—all instances of the teleological direction of natural processes, all of which, however, occur without any deliberation or conscious seeking. It is by Nature that this occurs, Nature which is the cause. 107

The relation of man, however, to his end differs. It is nobler than those on the levels of life below him for it involves a life according to reason. With man action for an end involves the knowledge that it is good, the subsequent wishing for it, and the conscious deliberation about the means to attain it. Comparing and evaluating the means or actions possible for a given end he can then decide as to their suitability and choose accordingly—all of which

107- Physics, II, 8, 199a 20–30.
is absent in the leaves of life below him. 109

Thus, in man while some processes are solely under natural control, e.g., aging and dying, 110 others are not. These are the actions which his choice initiates—actions over which he has control, 111 of which he is the efficient and conscious final cause, 112 and hence for which he is held responsible. They are done knowingly and from purpose for an attainable end after deliberation has shown the course of action best suited to that end, and with full awareness of all the circumstances involved. These being the conditions for ascribing responsibility for an action are also, therefore, the conditions for praise and blame. 113 They thereby also merit the attribution of virtuous and vicious, when such actions have become a matter of habit, since the excellence or depravity of one's character are objects of praise or blame. 114


110- E.N., V, 8, 1135a 34 - b 1.


113- E.N., III, 1-5, 1109b 30 - 1114b 25.

Virtue and vice, then, are a matter of choice; it is through our own agency that they come about. Thus moral virtue or vice, the habits of our appetitive powers, is something that is our own responsibility.

On this point Aristotle is clear. Of themselves the appetitive powers are morally neutral. It is only by habituation, repeatedly choosing or acting in the same way, that they take on a moral value and become states of character. No one therefore can be born morally virtuous or vicious; rather man is by nature pre-moral.

That this is the case Aristotle makes clear in the *Nichomachean Ethics* by contrasting Nature and habit. (1) Whatever is by Nature cannot be altered while the appetitive powers can be, depending on their degree of habituation as well as that towards which they have been habituated.

(2) The faculties, which are in us by Nature, do not arise from habituation. For example, it is not through repeated


117- *E.N.*, II, 1, 1103a 14 - 1103b 22; cf. *Magna Moralia* (hereafter *M.M.*), I, 6, 1186a 3-8. We should note that though the authorship of the *M.M.* is debated, we will nevertheless refer to it. For our topic covers the Aristotelian ethics, and the *M.M.* has always been allowed a place in the Aristotelian corpus.
acts of seeing that one has the faculty of sight; rather, first one has the faculty and then sees because of it. (3) The appetitive powers, finally, can admit of contrary habits, viz., virtue or vice, while that which is by Nature is incapable of contraries.\textsuperscript{118}

Our moral habits, then, are not in us by nature; by nature we are indifferently disposed towards them. These states of character, according to Aristotle, come about only through repeated acts and practice,\textsuperscript{119} and are strictly the results of human agency.

Instruction, however, is also essential here. For example, in the case of moral virtue it would seem, Aristotle suggests, to require the instruction of one who already knows from experience what the correct and excellent thing to do is.\textsuperscript{120} For just as it is unlikely that one could get to a certain destination without first knowing where it is, so also it would seem unlikely that one would do the right thing without first knowing what it is.

Of equal importance is Aristotle's tenet that to be morally virtuous requires practice. Here virtue is likened

\textsuperscript{118} For these contrasts see \textit{E.N.}, II, 1, 1103a 19 - b 22; cf. \textit{E.E.}, VII, 14, 1247a 31-33; II, 2, 1230b 3-4; VII, 2, 1238a 10-11. The argument also appears, but in a less precise form, in the \textit{M.M.}, I, 6, 1186a 2-8.

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Politics}, VIII, 1, 1337a 19-20 and \textit{E.N.}, II, 1, 1103b 14-18. See too \textit{Rhetoric}, I, 11, 1370a 6-7 where Aristotle says that whatever has been habituated becomes, as it were, natural; also \textit{On Memory} and \textit{Reminiscence}, 2, 452a 30 and \textit{E.N.}, X, 9, 1180a 1.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{E.N.}, II, 1, 1103b 2-18.
to excellence in a craft. As the cobbler, for instance, gains ease with and becomes better at his craft through practice, so also repetition in doing what is right makes it easier to do and one more virtuous. Just as one learns a craft by actually working at it, e.g., men become builders by building houses, so one becomes virtuous by actually doing virtuous acts.121

Unlike the crafts, however, where the good done lies in the product and not the agent, the excellence that virtuous habituation brings about remains in the agent.122 The virtues, in other words, are principles of action perfective of the agent such that the good of a virtuous action is identical with the agent himself.

Hence, that an act be virtuous, it is not enough that it be performed virtuously. The agent himself must be virtuous. (In addition to instruction and practice, then, virtue requires that its agent have knowledge of what is right and what he is doing. And that what he does be done from a permanent state of character, out of deliberate choice, and for its own sake.) An action then, though it may appear virtuous, is so only when the one performing it is. And this is not possible unless all the conditions for virtue have been met.123

123- E.N., II, 4, 1105a 28-34.
The moral habits, therefore, according to Aristotle are not in us by Nature. They come about through the agency of our choice, on how we have chosen to habituate ourselves, and in light of how we have been trained and instructed. What is ours by Nature in this case are those powers that are to be habituated to right or wrong, as well as the natural propensities we might have to some virtues or vices which could make this habituation more or less easy. In the case of propensities towards vice, however, this would more accurately be characterized as defects in nature, rather than the result of it. Thus, e.g., Aristotle characterizes the tendency to be frightened by everything, "even the sound of a mouse", as beneath the human, and the enjoyment of unnatural pleasures, whether by habit or natural depravity, as bestial.

The propensity towards good habituation, on the other hand, is characterized as a natural virtue (φυσικὴ ἀ- ρετή), and is a division of virtue that appears in the Eudemian Ethics, Nichomachean Ethics, and Magna Moralia.

124- E.N., VI, 1, 1139a 31-32.
125- E.N., II, 1, 1103a 24-25.
126- See E.N., VII, 5, 1149a 8-9 and VII, 5, 1148b 17-24; also VII, 5, 1149a 10-11.
128- In the M.M. at I, 34, 1197b 36 - 1198a 21 and II, 3, 1199b 37 - 1200a 5; the E.E., II, 1, 1220a 10-11, III, 7, 1234a 24-32; the E.N., VI, 13, 1144b 2-17 and VI, 13, 1144b 33 - 1145a 2.
The theory that is set forth in these is that a natural virtue is a disposition for a certain virtue, but exists apart from reason and choice. It is not something that we have by our own effort but rather by nature. Such propensities, then, are not virtues in the true or full sense, but rather capacities that, when under the right guidance and correct habituation, become principles of action that are chosen in accord with reason. They are, Aristotle points out, related to the true virtues in the same way cleverness is to prudence. Cleverness is the natural ability of sizing things up quickly for one's advantage and acting accordingly. Prudence, too, is acting in accord with this immediate grasp of a situation, but now in line with the good that is directly perceived there. Here one's motivation is not personal advantage but the right to be done. And this because in prudence reason is right and the directive of what is good. The formation of this reason, however, requires proper instruction and experience, while cleverness requires neither. If one is possessed of it, however, with proper instruction and habituation acquiring this reason comes about much more easily and quickly.129

Thus there are natural tendencies in us to certain virtues. Some are friendlier or more temperate in nature than others, while others seem able to endure more hardship or pain. These good natural qualities, however, are merely starts in the right direction. They become habits of excel-
lence only through practice and choice, after proper guid-
ance.

Though we may be naturally endowed, then, with certain
good qualities, if we are to be virtuous it is our business
to choose in accordance with the good instruction given us
so that these qualities can be fully perfected. Only by so
choosing can we become grounded in good ways of acting such
that they become part and parcel of our makeup. By always
acting in accord with this right choice, desiring only what
is right because our knowledge tells us it is so, we forge
a personality and character that is praised for its virtue.
Our natural good qualities develop into permanent states of
right character, states whose excellence we ourselves have
brought about.

Thus, though we be naturally endowed with these good
qualities, this does not suffice to make us good. For Arist-
otle a truly virtuous character also requires the individual's
own intention to be good, and rightly acting so that he does
become good. Habituation to what is right, therefore, be-
comes all-important in character building. Only in this way
can one appreciate what is good and become readily adept at
doing it.

What we have then by nature are certain potencies, cer-
tain inborn capacities, for moral excellence that become
virtuous states through choice and habit. Of themselves,
therefore, the natural virtues are incomplete. Virtue in
the true sense is a fixed disposition for doing what is good,
and not merely an inclination or propensity for it. Virtue in the true sense, therefore, completes natural virtue, brings to completion what is at first only an aptitude for excellence. The good development of these propensities for Aristotle calls for the individual's decision who, if schooled and trained in the right way, will much more readily discover the good sense of his decision than one who has not had these benefits.

We see then that for Aristotle the development of good capacities is not so simple a task. Required for its success are Nature, the discipline and instruction of one already well-practiced in virtue, the habituation, then, in line with what is right, and the receptivity and willingness to learn of the one being trained. All four must be present and in harmony with one another before any positive result can come about.130

Thus, in his theory of moral habits Aristotle has seen reason to discuss Nature from two points of view. Moral virtue and vice are not inborn; we do not have them by nature, but rather through our own agency. Virtue and vice are things within our power and become permanent dispositions of the soul through our repeated choice. Where choice is in accord with the right rule virtue comes about; when in conflict, vice.

A corollary to this, then, is that happiness is not ours by nature. For this consists in excellence of soul,

130- Politics, VII, 13, 1332a 40 - b 7.
and that "depends on the individual and his personal acts
being of a certain character." 131

What we do have, though, by way of natural endowment
are certain givens—certain capacities waiting to be tapped
and brought to their proper excellence by the presence and
co-operation of our other three conditions mentioned above.
They are starts in the right direction, and this accounts
for their importance in good character formation. Like our
other three conditions, if these capacities are not there,
it is difficult to see how one could become morally good.
They seem well-nigh indispensable, in fact, which is evidence
enough again to show the significance of Nature in Arist-
otle's ethical theory.

131- E.E., I, 3, 1215a 15-17. English translation by J.
Solomon in The Works of Aristotle Translated Into English,
op. cit.
CHAPTER IV

VIRTUE AS AN IMITATION OF NATURE

True virtue for Aristotle is, we have seen, a perfection of the individual agent. In the moral sphere it is that state in which the passions are moderated through the directive of reason, disposing the agent therefore to act in the best possible way with regard to them.\textsuperscript{132} Reason, as Aristotle insists, is inherent to moral virtue, then, since it is only through reason that we can choose what is right, the distinguishing mark of all moral virtue. It is by this rectitude of choice that moral virtues arise, at the same time sustaining and sharpening reason's perception of what is right as well as perfecting the desire for what is good.

It is such qualities of soul that are the characteristics of virtuous men, and by which life is maintained in the best possible way. The benefit of reason upon the passions, in other words, is that its directives there provide for our overall well-being. As the rule by which we avoid the harms that excess and defect bring its observance, e.g., keeps us in sound physical condition, as in the case of temperance and good temper or, in the case of courage, correctly aware of what it is right to endure for the sake of the noble.\textsuperscript{133} In all elements of the moral sphere it is


\textsuperscript{133} See E.N., II, 2, 1104a 12-20; II, 3, 1104b 27-36; II, 6, 1106b 18-27; IV, 5, 1125b 26 - 1126a 31, and III, 6, 1115a 7 - 1116a 15.
the reasonable, that which is right, that advances what is best\(^{134}\) and, as Aristotle notes, what evokes the admiration and encouragement of others.

Living well, then, is secured through a reason that is open to and appreciative of what is inherently good. It is the gauge for what is right in each circumstance, the right rule for good living. In fact, through good living Aristotle holds such a rule becomes a habit of mind,\(^ {135}\) the skill of perceiving directly the right thing to be done in a given circumstance. Such acuity of thought is the excellence of practical reasoning, the fixed disposition of intellect by which actions productive of our well-being are brought about.\(^ {136}\) It is knowledge infallibly directive of the good to be done,\(^ {137}\) and precisely because this is what it is right to do.

We have here, then, some parallels to Nature's operations. Nature, as we saw, is for Aristotle an agency of

\(^ {134}\) E.E., II, 5, 1222a 6-10: "Virtue is that sort of habit from which men have a tendency to do the best actions, and through which they are in the best disposition towards what is best; and the best is what is in accordance with right reason, and this is the mean between excess and defect relative to us." English translation by J. Solomon in The Works of Aristotle Translated Into English, op. cit.

\(^ {135}\) This is a clear enough inference from the fact that for Aristotle "practical wisdom is a right rule" about things to be done in human conduct (E.N., VI, 13, 1144b 26-29) and, as we have seen, arises through habits rightly formed.

\(^ {136}\) E.N., VI, 5, 1140a 24-28; VI, 5, 1140b 8-10.

\(^ {137}\) E.N., VI, 6, 1141a 3-5.
It always brings the best to pass, prescribing ends such that things are ordered in the best possible way. These ends, furthermore, are the proper good of natural things and the perfection of their coming to be. It is Nature which provides in this coming to be for the harmony and good organization of all bodily parts and functions, as well as the balance and regularity needed to preserve the various levels of life at large.

In the moral sphere, however, we saw that it is reason, the rational principle, that accounts for the good disposition of the passions. By bringing them in line with what is good, it effects an equilibrium among them in much the same way Nature does among the bodily parts. And as this equilibrium that Nature ordains advances and sustains the organism's well-being, so also does the directive of reason. Each of the passions brought to its proper good contributes to the general well-being of the whole man.

Right reason, then, is for Aristotle an agency of good. Like Nature it "is on the lookout for what is best", urging us "aright and towards the best objects". And as a habit of mind it is a permanent disposition towards such things, just as Nature is a permanent principle of good in

138- De Generatione Animalium, II, 4, 740b 26 - 741a 3.


140- See M.M., II, 2, 1199a 10-11 and E.N., I, 13, 1102b 16-17.
the world. This permanent disposition, however, is the virtue of the morally good man, making obvious the analogy: what Nature accomplishes on a large scale, the good man accomplishes on the small scale in his own life. He, therefore, will act rightly, for "nothing contrary to Nature is right", do what is best since this is what Nature does, and thereby promote his own well-being, which is in line with the design of Nature.

The morally good man, though, the one wise in practical matters, has all the other moral virtues. Because he habitually acts rightly, in each circumstance he will therefore display the appropriate moral virtue. This, however, he can do only if he acts from a knowledge that is right, is, in other words, possessed of practical wisdom. Practical wisdom and the other moral virtues go hand in hand, the presence of one implying that of the other.

These virtues, however, whose full integration signifies complete excellence of character, are all the best states of the appropriate powers of the soul. They bring these into good condition and enable each faculty, thereby, to do its work well. That function, in other words, for which each power has been designed is best accomplished only when that power has been perfected.

Virtuous states, then, as the best conditions of the

141- E.N., VI, 13, 1145a 1-2.
142- E.N., VI, 1, 1139a 15-16; M.m., I, 4, 1185a 36-39.
143- E.N., II, 6, 1106a 15-20.
soul are really states that accord with Nature. For only what is best can accord with Nature, and clearly these states are what is best in man. The moral virtues, therefore, accord with man's end, for this is by Nature. Man, therefore, in being morally virtuous is following the design of Nature. Put otherwise, to be good is natural to man; is that towards which his nature inclines, and is that which completes his nature when he has become fully virtuous.

This fullness of virtue, however, goes beyond simply excellence of character. As the appetitive powers have their perfections, so also, Aristotle holds, do the intellectual. We have already seen this in the case of phronesis, that true and reasoned capacity, infused with right desire, about the things that are good and bad for man. Correspondingly, the excellence of the scientific faculty is truth about things necessary, eternal, and which cannot be otherwise. Art reasons truly about things to be made, and makes them well. Νόος is the excellence of grasping the indemonstrable principles of science, while philosophy is the union of νοος and science, i.e., the knowledge of first principles and what necessarily follows from them

144- E.N., VI, 5, 1140b 1-6 and VI, 5, 1140b 20-21; also VI, 2, 1139a 29-31.
in demonstrations. 145

Each one of these excellences is a fixed disposition of soul, a perfected habit of mind, that has been effected either by instruction 146 or, in the case of νόσημα, experience. None of these habits, though, Aristotle holds, could have arisen unless the passions had in some degree already been moderated. 147 Left to excess or defect, they would do violence to both body and soul, causing all forms of conflict and stress. It is only when they are in a good condition that the higher functions of the soul can be carried out, making their excellence indispensable to intellective activity.

The highest of our intellective activities, however, is contemplation. It is what is most proper to us, and

145- For this classification of the excellences of the soul's cognitive powers see E.N., VI, 2-7, 1139a 26 - 1141a 19. We should note, too, the parallel function of νόσημα in the strictly theoretical sphere to its function in the practical sphere. In both cases Aristotle assigns to it the role of immediate, non-discursive, apprehension— it therefore serving as the starting-point of both theoretical and practical reasoning. On this also see footnote 101, page 29, of this thesis.

146- E.N., II, 1, 1103a 15-16.

147- This is either implicit in or directly expressed at E.N., III, 11, 1118b 22 - 1119a 18; VII, 9, 1151b 4-11; VII, 7, 1150a 9-13; VII, 10, 1152a 15-16; VII, 8, 1151a 20-28; II, 6, 1106b 17-22; and M.M., II, 10, 1208a 9-21. Here Aristotle holds that "to act... in accordance with right reason (κατά τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν λόγον... ) is when the irrational part of the soul does not prevent the rational part from displaying its own activity", i.e., "when... the passions do not hinder the mind from performing its own work, then you will have what is done in accordance with right reason." English translation by St. George Stock in The Works of Aristotle Translated Into English, op. cit., 1966, Vol. IX.
whose continuous activity constitutes our best good. Its merits are large, being the most pleasant of all things, fully self-sufficient, complete in itself, and most like divine life. It makes the virtuous attainment of all the other faculties of soul well worthwhile, and can come about only when their excellences have been achieved. Contemplation, then, is a rare good and thus its possession highly prized. 148

For those, however, who have achieved all the other excellences of soul contemplation can be realized and, when realized, so also their complete perfection. With contemplation every power of soul is in its best state, and the life of virtue therefore complete.

But, we have seen, such perfection is precisely what Nature had intended for man. It has ordained him for only what is best, which in man is a completely virtuous life. Inasmuch, then, as man is virtuous he imitates Nature, for through virtue he attains and does what is best. Virtue emerges then as man's completed natural state; and in this sense, therefore, we can say that for Aristotle a completely good life would be a life complete in accord with Nature.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Life according to Nature, then, is what brings about man's best good. Good habituation and instruction accompanied by reason all serve to bring about that for which Nature has designed us. Natural propensities, too, are an aid in this, completing our enumeration of those factors essential to the fully virtuous life.

Contemplation, however, as that for which man has been designed by Nature is, for Aristotle, the closest natural beings come to imitating divine life.\textsuperscript{149} The contemplative man, therefore, is the finest expression of that aspiration to the divine which Aristotle sees in Nature and identifies in terms of final causality.\textsuperscript{150} In the completely virtuous man, then, Nature comes closest to a share in divine life, inasmuch as he has achieved the highest excellence possible to a natural being.

With this our survey of Nature as it pertains to moral excellence in Aristotle is complete. He clearly sees a large role for Nature in such excellence and finds it essential to any study of ethics. What the thesis claimed at the start then has been borne out. And a summary of that here will enable us now to see it more quickly.

In the first chapter, recounting the literature of this

\textsuperscript{149} See \textit{E.N.}, X, 8, 1178b 22-29; cf. \textit{Metaphysics}, XII, 7, 1072b 13-15 and XII, 7, 1072b 23-25.

\textsuperscript{150} That all natural beings strive for the divine is unambiguously stated at \textit{De Anima} II, 4, 415a 27 - 415b 8. For the account of final causality see \textit{Metaphysics} XII, 7, especially 1072b 3-4.
century made it clear that Nature's importance in Aristotle's ethical theory had not been given due consideration there. Jaeger's 1923 reading of the Protrepticus and the reaction to it, as well as to his remarks on the Eudemian and Nichomachean Ethics, centered on Aristotle's Platonism or independence thereof, i.e., how steadfast, if ever, was Aristotle's allegiance to the Forms and, in turn, how convinced was he of their use in moral knowledge. Equally an issue was how the knowledge of the morally good found realization in practice, either more geometrico or by prudential insight.

While we found for Aristotle that it is in fact through the unrationalizable insight acquired through good living that the morally good becomes known, Aristotle enlarged upon this by describing such good living as being according to nature—i.e., as natural. This we saw in chapter two. Confident of Nature as a pervasive and unalterable agency of good, Aristotle set it forth as a model or pattern for the student of ethics in judging moral actions: to judge an action good or bad is likewise to judge it as according or contrary to Nature; also to our nature. What advances or sustains our being is good, and so in line with Nature; whereas whatever is demeaning to it is opposed to the fullness of our nature, viz., well-being.

151—See Politics, II, 2, 1261b 9-10. Here Aristotle gives us a definition of the good that is rarely ever brought out in discussion on him: "the good of things must be that which preserves them". English translation by B. Jowett in the Basic Works of Aristotle, op. cit.
This well-being, though, as our fully natural state, is the work and function of virtuous activity, and is a lifetime task. Such activity, however, as chapter three discussed, is not in man by nature; nor is its contrary. These are alterable states, virtue and vice, whereas whatever is by nature is unalterable. The attainment or non-attainment of our well-being, therefore, is not due to Nature; it is due, rather, to us. It is we who are responsible for our well-being, and thus we who bring it about.

But, chapter four suggests, in so doing we are really imitating Nature's own workmanship. If Nature seeks the good of everything, and virtue in man is precisely this striving after what is good, to be virtuous is to be like Nature. As Nature brings about only what is good, the virtuous man, inasmuch as he brings about his own good, does for himself what Nature does at large. And this he does through reason, whose excellence in practical matters therefore can be likened to Nature, inasmuch as both bring about only what is good.

Aristotle's ethical theory, then, includes within it a significant role for Nature, and it was this that merited our attention here. Simply stated, Aristotle has suggested that in Nature we may find something worthy of our consideration for understanding of human conduct and then why human action, at its best, is fully natural.
Three definitive studies on the Protrepticus have appeared since D.J. Allan's remark in his 1956 review of Ross' Fragmenta Selecta (see Classical Review, VI (1956), 224-5) that no one who had hitherto edited the Fragments sought to discern their proper sequence or general argument: W.G. Rabinowitz, Aristotle's Protrepticus and the Sources of Its Reconstruction. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957; Ingemar Düring, Aristotle's Protrepticus: An Attempt At Reconstruction. Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1961; and A.-H. Chroust, Aristotle: Protrepticus, A Reconstruction. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964. Of these three I have chosen Düring's edition since (A) Chroust's "has freely drawn upon" it, as well as widely utilize Düring's selection and arrangement of the fragments" (p. v, Chroust). Further, Chroust himself recommends that for "a more penetrating treatment and study of the Protrepticus" we go to Düring (p. v, Chroust).

(B) Rabinowitz' belief that there is little anyone can say positively about the Protrepticus (p. 95, Rabinowitz) has been well-disposed of by Düring with four arguments.

(1) Rabinowitz held that it was impossible to have any positive evidence for a reconstruction of the Protrepticus and along with this, then, teaching there which we could ascribe to Aristotle since no ancient authorities had ever mentioned the Protrepticus and Aristotle's name together (p. 21, Rabinowitz). But on this principle, Düring remarks, many of the Pre-socratic fragments now accepted as genuine would have to
be rejected as spurious while, conversely, many texts (and even whole works) that have been conclusively proven to be spurious would have to be declared genuine (pp. 13-14, Düring).

(C) Düring has shown the Protrepticus as he reconstructs it to be Aristotle's through an examination of its language: (a) only five per cent of the language does not agree entirely with Aristotle's usage; the rest is "written in Aristotle's language and style", a style "known to us from writings of undisputed authenticity"; (b) Only twelve words of its seven hundred word index do not appear in Bonitz. "These twelve are all words of the period; we find them in Plato's dialogues or the Attic orators"; (c) "The fact that the vocabulary is so unambiguously Aristotelian is the first result of the linguistic analysis that we can book. It shows that Iamblichus has not tampered much with the text."

(3) Style: "Every phrase has been carefully examined and compared with the Academic-Aristotelian usage; the result is reported in the commentray. Stylistically the language is remarkably pure, often with an unmistakably Aristotelian ring."

(4) "The inner structure, the manner in which the author builds up a series of arguments"; this, indeed, I would suggest, conclusively proves Düring's point. His discussion on this, however, is not susceptible to summary; it is already in its tersest form. For his argu-
ment (here, #4), then, see pages 18-19 of his "reconstruction". For his overall three points (nn. 2, 3, and 4 here) see pages 17-19. In addition, his introduction ("The Problem", pp. 9-39) is quite invaluable; and his reconstruction, appearing as Fragments 87-110, a most noteworthy achievement.
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II. Secondary Literature Cited In and/or Consulted For the Thesis.


The thesis submitted by Robert Geis has been read and approved by the following Committee:

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Associate Professor, Philosophy, Loyola

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Assistant Professor, Philosophy, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date: Jan 9, 76

Director's Signature: Rev. L. L. Nurnberger, S.J.