

Offprint from  
OXFORD STUDIES  
IN ANCIENT  
PHILOSOPHY

EDITOR: BRAD INWOOD

VOLUME XL

SUMMER 2011

*Essays in Memory of Michael Frede*

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OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2011

# THE PLACE OF ETHICS IN ARISTOTLE'S PHILOSOPHY

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## 1. The issue

DESPITE the wealth of studies on Aristotle's ethics, there has been almost nothing, as far as I know, dedicated to considering the place that ethics occupies in Aristotle's philosophy. This issue does not seem to be interesting to modern students of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> There was, however, a debate and indeed a controversy about this issue in late antiquity, as I shall show in this paper. There are two questions involved here, which are interrelated, and the debate was about both of them. The first concerns the order in which ethics or practical philosophy, more generally, must be studied by the student of Aristotle's philosophy. The second concerns the relative significance of this part of philosophy within the framework of Aristotle's philosophical work.

Both questions arise from remarks that Aristotle himself makes. The second in particular, some might argue, is addressed by Aristotle in various parts of his work. In *Metaphysics E* 1–2, for instance, he famously discusses the relative value of theoretical, practical, and productive sciences. Aristotle there argues explicitly that the theoretical sciences are preferable (*hairetōterai*) to all others, practical

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It is a pleasure to offer this contribution in honour of Michael Frede, who taught me so much.

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Drafts of this paper were presented at Princeton, Oxford, and the Department of Theory and Philosophy of Science, University of Athens. I have benefited from the comments of all these audiences. I am grateful to Ben Morison for a wealth of valuable comments which significantly improved the final version. I also thank James Allen, René Brouwer, and Pantelis Golitsis for queries and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> It is briefly discussed by Jonathan Barnes in his introduction to the Penguin translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J. A. K. Thomson, rev. H. Tredennick, intro. J. Barnes (London, 2004), ix–xli at xvi–xviii.

and productive ones alike (*Metaph. E* 1, 1026<sup>a</sup>22–3), and he comes up with reasons according to which the three theoretical sciences—physics, mathematics, and theology—should be put in a certain hierarchy, with theology at the top. Aristotle evaluates theoretical sciences on the basis of the subject-matter of each one, employing two criteria: the degree of separability from matter, and the degree of stability that characterizes the relevant objects of study. The objects studied by physics, Aristotle argues, are separable from matter but they are subject to change (1026<sup>a</sup>13–14). Mathematics, on the other hand, deals with things that are changeless but not separable from matter, although they are treated as if they were separable from matter (1026<sup>a</sup>7–10, 14–15). Finally, Aristotle argues that theology deals with what is changeless and separable from matter (1026<sup>a</sup>15–17). For Aristotle, theology is the science of what is eternally so, i.e. of stable and eternal beings, for which the causes accounting for them are eternally invariable. The stability and eternity of its subject-matter bear on the method employed by each science. Aristotle considers theology as the most honourable philosophical science (*timiōtatē* [sc. *epistēmē*]), which deserves the title of first philosophy (*prōtē philosophia*) because its subject-matter is changeless and separable from matter, so that what is said about it holds universally, i.e. always and by necessity. In this sense theology is the theoretical science of the *katholou* par excellence, which Aristotle characterizes as most valuable at *Metaph. A* 2, 982<sup>a</sup>4–<sup>b</sup>10.<sup>2</sup> At the opposite end of the spectrum of theoretical sciences is physics, which deals with what is so for the most part (*Metaph. E* 2, 1027<sup>a</sup>20–1).<sup>3</sup>

Other relevant statements of Aristotle include a well-known passage in *Metaphysics a* 1, where he maintains that theoretical philosophy differs in aim from practical philosophy in that the former aims at the truth while the latter at action (993<sup>a</sup>19–21). Aristotle goes on to justify this claim by speaking about the different ways in which the cause is investigated by the different parts of philosophy, and about the demands of the investigation which aims at the knowledge of truth (993<sup>b</sup>21–31). More precisely, he argues that

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Metaph. Γ* 3, 1005<sup>a</sup>32–<sup>b</sup>2.

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion of this passage by Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Metaph.* 446. 10–447. 36 Hayduck, and, in modern times, by P. Hadot, ‘Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l’antiquité’ [‘Les divisions’], *Museum Helveticum*, 36 (1979), 201–23 at 202–3; C. Kirwan (trans. and comm.), *Aristotle: Metaphysics Books Γ, Δ, and E*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1993), 183–9; T. Irwin, *Aristotle’s First Principles* (Oxford, 1988), 168–9.

the practical scientist is concerned with the how or the what to do in particular circumstances, while the theoretician seeks the cause itself.<sup>4</sup> This point is amplified in many parts of Aristotle's work.

In *Metaphysics A*, for instance, Aristotle draws a line of demarcation between those who rely on experience (*hoi empeiroi*) and know what and how to do something, and those who know the why (i.e. the causes); in virtue of that knowledge, the latter are wiser (*Metaph. A* 1, 981<sup>a</sup>28–<sup>b</sup>1), a point he elaborates soon afterwards (in *A* 2). And in the *Posterior Analytics* he argues that a practical scientist, such as a physician, is concerned with healing, while the geometer is concerned instead with investigating why something in his field is so.<sup>5</sup>

Similar remarks also occur in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 and 2, where Aristotle speaks about the nature of ethics as practical science, arguing, rather emphatically, that ethics is characterized by limited exactness compared with that achieved in theoretical philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle explains in 1. 3 the lack of exactitude of ethics by appealing to the subject-matter (*hupokeimenē hulē*, 1094<sup>b</sup>12) and the nature of the subject (*hē tou pragmatos phusis*, 1094<sup>b</sup>25), while in *NE* 1. 7, 1098<sup>a</sup>24–<sup>b</sup>4, he argues the same point by appealing to the nature of the enquiry (*methodos*, 1098<sup>a</sup>27–9), and he explains his point with an example. While both the carpenter and the geometer undertake to investigate the subject of right angles, notes Aristotle, they do so in different ways; the former seeks to know about them only in so far as it is useful for the product he is making, while the latter is concerned with what this is, seeking out the truth of the matter (1098<sup>a</sup>29–31).<sup>7</sup>

This passage resonates with *Metaph. A* 1, 981<sup>a</sup>28–9, and *a* 1, 993<sup>b</sup>21–31, bearing in mind that the term 'cause' can be used either

<sup>4</sup> καὶ γὰρ ἂν τὸ πῶς ἔχει σκοπῶσιν, οὐ τὸ αἴτιον καθ' αὐτό, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τι καὶ νῦν θεωροῦσιν οἱ πρακτικοί. οὐκ ἴσμεν δὲ τὸ ἀληθές ἄνευ τῆς αἰτίας. (*Metaph. a* 1, 993<sup>b</sup>21–3). I follow Jaeger in adopting the reading of MS E (οὐ τὸ αἴτιον καθ' αὐτό) against that of A<sup>b</sup> (οὐκ αἰδίων) and Brandis's suggestion οὐ τὸ αἰδίων. *Post. An.* 1. 13, 79<sup>a</sup>13–16 (quoted in n. 5 below) and *NE* 1. 7, 1098<sup>a</sup>30–1 support this reading.

<sup>5</sup> οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἔμπειροι τὸ ὅτι μὲν ἴσασι, διότι δ' οὐκ ἴσασι (*Metaph. A* 1, 981<sup>a</sup>28–9); πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ τῶν μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλας ἐπιστημῶν ἔχουσιν οὕτως, οἷον ἰατρικὴ πρὸς γεωμετρίαν· ὅτι μὲν γὰρ τὰ ἔλκη τὰ περιφερῆ βραδύτερον ὑγιάζεται, τοῦ ἰατροῦ εἰδέναι, διότι δὲ τοῦ γεωμέτρου (*Post. An.* 1. 13, 79<sup>a</sup>13–16).

<sup>6</sup> There are no similar remarks in the *Eudemian Ethics*, the *Magna Moralia*, or the *Politics*, yet in the latter there are passages suggesting the inexactness of the enquiry (e.g. 3. 4, 1276<sup>b</sup>19; 5. 2, 1302<sup>a</sup>19; 6. 8, 1323<sup>a</sup>10).

<sup>7</sup> καὶ γὰρ τέκτων καὶ γεωμέτρης διαφερόντως ἐπιζητοῦσι τὴν ὀρθήν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐφ' ὅσον χρησίμη πρὸς τὸ ἔργον, ὁ δὲ τί ἐστὶν ἢ ποῖόν τι θεατῆς γὰρ τάληθούς.

in the broad sense of ‘what can account for the being of something’ (e.g. *Metaph. A* 1, 981<sup>a</sup>28; *A* 2, 982<sup>b</sup>2, <sup>b</sup>9–10; *Γ* 2, 1003<sup>b</sup>17–19), covering all four causes, or in the narrow sense reserved for the formal cause, the essence of something—which is what the geometer is concerned with in the example of *NE* 1. 7, 1098<sup>a</sup>31 (cf. *Metaph. α* 1, 993<sup>b</sup>29–30).<sup>8</sup> In either sense it is fairly clear, in view of the evidence adduced above, that for Aristotle knowing the cause and knowing the truth amount to the same thing. This is not something that practical sciences aim to know. In practical sciences, such as ethics, medicine, or the art of navigation, the aim rather is the appropriate action given a certain end (*NE* 1. 1, 2. 2), and practical scientists identify this action by considering the particular circumstances, since the things with which they deal have nothing stable about them (*ouden hestēkos echei*, *NE* 2. 2, 1104<sup>a</sup>4). The latter, much-discussed passage,<sup>9</sup> squares with Aristotle’s remarks in *Metaphysics E* regarding the stability of the subject-matter of theoretical sciences and the possibility of making universal statements. Aristotle argues that in practical sciences, such as ethics, the lack of stability and the ensuing inexactness concern the particular cases; what is unclear is not what virtue universally is, but rather whether a particular act is a virtuous act.

As it turns out, Aristotle compares theoretical and practical philosophy in terms of the knowledge they offer and the aims they set. Theoretical philosophy aims to offer knowledge of the causes and thereby to achieve knowledge of truth, whereas practical philosophy seeks to offer knowledge of what to do in the given circumstances, and how to do it: that is, it aims to guide one to act well, so that one attains a practical end—health in medicine and happiness in ethics. The comparison brings to the fore certain criteria of evaluation of the philosophical disciplines with which Aristotle operates: the stability of the object of study, which affects the kind of knowledge that can be reached (*Metaph. E* 1–2; *NE* 2. 2), and, secondly the

<sup>8</sup> See Irwin, *Aristotle’s First Principles*, 153–9.

<sup>9</sup> See D. Devereux, ‘Particular and Universal in Aristotle’s Conception of Practical Knowledge’, *Review of Metaphysics*, 155 (1986), 483–504 at 494–6; G. Anagnostopoulos, *Aristotle on the Goals and Exactness of Ethics* (Berkeley, 1994), 144–51, 291–9; T. Irwin, ‘Ethics as an Inexact Science: Aristotle’s Ambitions for Moral Theory’, in B. Hooker and M. O. Little (eds.), *Moral Particularism* (Oxford, 2000), 100–29 at 115–18; C. C. W. Taylor (trans. and comm.), *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics Books II–IV* (Oxford, 2006), 69–72.

method, i.e. knowledge of the causes or the truth, or acting in the right way in specific circumstances (*Metaph. A* 1, a 1; *NE* 1. 7).

Aristotle also makes remarks concerning the order of study of philosophical matters. In *Physics* 1. 1, for instance, he claims that we are bound to start our explorations from the things more knowable to us, i.e. the things of the natural world, before investigating elements and principles (184<sup>a</sup>16–23).<sup>10</sup> And in *Metaphysics* *Γ* 2 he argues to the effect that there are as many parts of philosophy as there are substances, and among them there is always a primary one (1004<sup>a</sup>2–6).<sup>11</sup> Finally, in *Metaphysics* *Γ* 3 Aristotle seems to suggest that the theoretician must be familiar with syllogistic (1005<sup>b</sup>5–7). With the exception of the last passage, Aristotle is not concerned with the order of philosophical disciplines to be studied; in *Physics* 1 he speaks about how one should proceed within the discipline of physics, while in *Metaphysics* *Γ* 2 his point is that the subject-matter determines which science (e.g. mathematics or physics) or part of science (e.g. geometry or meteorology) should be primary over the others. The order of study of philosophical disciplines will be the concern of later Peripatetics, as will be shown.

## 2. The debate about the place of ethics: Aspasius

Aristotle's remarks about the hierarchy of philosophical disciplines and about the order of study of philosophical matters gave rise to an intense debate in late antiquity, and the causes behind this debate lie, as I shall try to show, in developments that occurred in Peripatetic philosophy during late antiquity. Quite characteristic of the debate is Aspasius, the author of the first extant commentary on Aristotle, a commentary devoted to the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>12</sup> Aspasius begins his commentary with an argument regarding the place

<sup>10</sup> Similar remarks occur elsewhere in Aristotle, e.g. *Post. An.* 71<sup>b</sup>29–72<sup>a</sup>7. For more references see W. Charlton (trans. and comm.), *Aristotle: Physics Books I and II*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1992), 51–2.

<sup>11</sup> See Kirwan, *Aristotle: Metaphysics Books Γ, Δ, and E*, 83.

<sup>12</sup> On Aspasius see J. Barnes, 'Aspasius: An Introduction', in A. Alberti (ed.), *The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berlin and New York, 1999), 1–40, and P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias* [*Der Aristotelismus*], 3 vols. (Berlin, 1973–2001), ii. 226–93. The text was edited by G. Heylbut in CAG 19/1 (Berlin, 1889), and has been translated into English by D. Konstan, *Aspasius: On Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics* 1–4, 7–8 (London, 2007).

that ethics occupies in Aristotle's philosophy. This deserves to be quoted in full:

The treatment of ethics and of politics, more especially, is prior to theoretical philosophy in respect of necessity but subsequent in respect of value [*to timion*]. In so far as it is impossible for people to live nobly if they are not temperate, just, and in general well ordered in their character, having the emotions of their souls in some sort of balance, the treatment of politics and ethics would seem necessary and therefore prior (for even if a person would acquire total knowledge and theoretical wisdom, it is of no use if he has not had his character educated). But in so far as wisdom treats the most valuable [*timiōtatōn*] and divine matters and examines the works of nature and also other matters far better and greater than those made by nature, which are the subject-matter of first philosophy,<sup>13</sup> in that respect theoretical philosophy can be said to be prior and more valuable [*timiōtera*]. For as the subjects stand to one another, so do the sciences of these subjects. The matters that wisdom treats are more valuable [*timiōtera*] and greater [*kreittō*] than those that fall under the sciences of politics and ethics, so wisdom is far more valuable than those sciences. For if we were without bodies, there would be no need for our nature to have any other work than theoretical concerns. As it is, however, the nature of the body, which is yoked to bodily pleasures and pains, necessarily makes us concerned with temperance, self-control, and many other such virtues, which god could not plausibly be said to have because he has no share in bodily pleasures and pains. It is because of the necessity [*anankē*] of the body then, it seems, that we take greatest concern for the science of ethics, since even justice and practical wisdom, in which the divine is believed to share, are far inferior to god. We, however, need them because of the injustices and the desire to have more that occur between ourselves, whereas it is plausible that the divine exercises only theoretical justice with regard to us and remains continually in this state. One may understand, then, from these and similar considerations that wisdom is more valuable than political science, while ethics is, as has been said, the most necessary. It is fitting, then, that we practise the latter first, both in word and in deed, as Socrates too required; he did not fail to value knowledge of divine things, neither did he dismiss the science of naturally constituted things as redundant, but he rather believed that concern for character is necessary. The Pythagoreans too educated their adherents both in their characters and in arguments. Aristotle seems to value this teaching [sc. ethics] very highly. He says that it concerns the end of man, which is happiness. (*In EN* 1. 3–2. 13 Heylbut, trans. Konstan, modified)

There are several interesting features in this text. The first thing to

<sup>13</sup> I follow Konstan in deleting θεωρητική (1. 11 Heylbut) as redundant.

notice is the tone and style of the passage. Aspasius does not specify the question or issue that he is addressing. Rather, he states his position in an aphoristic manner and goes on to argue, in an almost apologetic tone, that one needs to study ethics. This approach is striking. Later commentators on Aristotle typically specify the question they are addressing, which makes sense given the didactic purposes of the ancient philosophical commentary.<sup>14</sup> One might think that Aspasius begins like this because he wants to justify his own commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But the reader turning to a commentary such as that of Aspasius would already be convinced of the need to study this subject-matter, and would also be convinced that Aristotle's ethics is a good guide to that. A further striking feature is that Aspasius does not simply argue for the need to study ethics, but makes a fairly elaborate assessment of political or practical philosophy in relation to theoretical philosophy.

This assessment leads Aspasius to take care to distinguish the question of pedagogical order, i.e. the order in which one should study political philosophy, from that of value (*to timion*), and yet he discusses them jointly. Practical philosophy, he suggests, is necessary before theoretical philosophy because of the bodily nature of humans. He argues that it is impossible to lead a good life without a certain education of our character, which is what political philosophy offers, because human beings need temperance and related virtues of character in order to control their affections of the soul (*ta tēs psuchēs pathē*), which arise from their bodily nature and guide them to act non-rationally. This is the way for humans to be just, which is necessary for living a good life as a human being, while gods, being without body, do not have such a need. Political philosophy is necessary, then, to the extent to which it covers the need to help humans form a character that can bring the affections of the soul in balance and make them judge well. By the same token, however, Aspasius suggests, political philosophy is less valuable than theoretical philosophy because the latter deals with more sublime matters than the affections of the soul, such as nature

<sup>14</sup> Later commentators address a series of questions preliminary to the study of an Aristotelian work. On their arrangement of material see P. Hoffmann, 'What was Commentary in Late Antiquity? The Example of the Neoplatonic Commentators', in M. L. Gill and P. Pellegrin (eds.), *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford, 2006), 597–622 at 607–13, and I. Hadot, 'La division néoplatonicienne des écrits d'Aristote', in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles: Werk und Wirkung*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1985–7), ii. 249–85.



and god, which are subjects of physics and theology respectively. The superiority of theoretical philosophy lies in the superiority of its subject-matters, which are the object of wisdom (*sophia*), while the subject-matters of political philosophy, which are the objects of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), are less valuable.

Aspasius does not explain why this is so. He does not give any argument to show why the subject-matters of theoretical philosophy are more valuable than those of practical philosophy. This is another interesting feature of Aspasius' discussion. He is not concerned here to argue for the superiority of theoretical to practical philosophy, but simply takes this for granted. Apparently he is confident that the reader of his commentary will be familiar with passages of Aristotle's work which in different ways make this point, such as *Metaphysics A* 2–3, *Γ* 1–3, *E* 1–2, or *Nicomachean Ethics* 1. 1, 2. 2, 10. 7–9, from which both the terminology<sup>15</sup> and the remarks he makes draw their inspiration. Aspasius is rather concerned to show in what sense practical philosophy is important given the superiority of theoretical philosophy over it. And he does that by stressing the necessity of studying practical philosophy, which he justifies first by arguing that it contributes to controlling our emotions and helps us judge well, which is essential for leading a good life in a political community, and second by maintaining that theoretical wisdom is rendered useless without it (*ouden amuei*, *In EN* 1. 7 Heylbut). The first argument, however, can only demonstrate the necessity of studying ethics, not the necessity of studying ethics first (*protera*, *prōtōs*, *In EN* 1. 4, 2. 6 Heylbut), which is what Aspasius means to show. As for the second argument, Aspasius does not say why practical philosophy is needed for a proper appreciation of theoretical philosophy. He may be assuming that practical philosophy teaches us how to make good use of theoretical knowledge, an idea found in later commentators.<sup>16</sup> Aspasius may also be assuming the priority of practical philosophy because he thinks that the latter leads to happiness, which is man's final end, a point that Aspasius implicitly makes later on in his commentary.<sup>17</sup>

Instead of justifying the priority of practical philosophy, Aspasius goes on to argue that Socrates and the Pythagoreans also

<sup>15</sup> e.g. *τιμιώτερα, τιμιώτατα* (*In EN* 1. 8, 11, 14; 2. 4 Heylbut; *Metaph.* 1026<sup>a</sup>21; *NE* 1141<sup>b</sup>3), *περὶ τὰ ἥθη ἐπιμέλειαν* (*In EN* 1. 20; 2. 9 Heylbut; *NE* 1099<sup>b</sup>30).

<sup>16</sup> e.g. *Simpl. In Cat.* 5. 16–6. 5 Kalbfleisch, discussed below, pp. 146–9.

<sup>17</sup> *In EN* 8. 17–9. 2 Heylbut, discussed below, pp. 142–3.

shared this view, and he ends his comment, rather abruptly, by adding that Aristotle attached such great importance to this area of teaching because it is about the end of human life, viz. happiness. The reference to Socrates and the Pythagoreans is another remarkable feature of the text.<sup>18</sup> Aspasius apparently considers Aristotle to be aligned with Socrates and the Pythagoreans regarding the priority of practical over theoretical philosophy. We should not take Socrates' insistence on the priority of ethics to be a sign of neglect for physics and theology, Aspasius argues; rather he, like Aristotle, considers education of character to be of first priority. This is an interesting claim to make at this point in history: first, because Aristotle and Peripatetics such as Aspasius are here implied to be following the Socratic tradition,<sup>19</sup> not the Platonic one, as Antiochus argued (*Cic. Acad.* 1. 17–18; 2. 15); second, because it is implied that Socrates was the pioneer in philosophy by being responsible for the division of philosophy into parts, a division often attributed to Plato by contemporary Platonists;<sup>20</sup> third, because apparently Aspasius does not distinguish between the allegedly historical Socrates of the early dialogues and the character of Plato's later dialogues, in the way Antiochus had suggested (*Cic. Acad.* 1. 15–17). The reference to the Pythagoreans is more modest; it is not implied that Aristotle followed them or that they divided philosophy into parts. It is only pointed out that they placed emphasis on the priority of education of character.

What Aspasius tries to do here is to ground his argument in the history of philosophy, which was common practice at this time. Antiochus, for example, argues against the sceptical Academics that Plato is a dogmatic philosopher, invoking the testimony of the early Academics and Aristotle. The Peripatetic Aristocles (first century AD?) argues against various epistemological theories, including the sceptical ones, appealing to the history of philosophy in order to show what he calls the 'sound way of philosophizing' (fr. 4. 30 Chiesara), which includes a reference to the philosophy of Socrates and Plato.<sup>21</sup> And Platonists, such as Plutarch and Numenius, justify their different ideas about Plato's meta-

<sup>18</sup> On this see Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, ii. 262–3.

<sup>19</sup> This is conveyed by the phrase ὡσπερ καὶ Σωκράτης ἡξίου (Aspas. *In EN* 2. 7 Heylbut).

<sup>20</sup> e.g. *Cic. Acad.* 1. 15–16 (Antiochus); Atticus fr. 1 Des Places; Apul. *De Platone* 1. 3; D.L. 3. 56. See also the evidence of Aristocles below.

<sup>21</sup> On Aristocles see M. L. Chiesara (ed.), *Aristocles of Messene: Testimonies and*

physics and epistemology by claiming to draw them from what they regard as Plato's intellectual roots, Socrates and Pythagoras respectively.

Aspasius did not say all he wanted to say about the issue of the relation between practical and theoretical philosophy. As I pointed out above, he stopped his comment rather abruptly. Later on in his commentary he comes back to the topic, this time on the occasion of Aristotle's remark about the audience of his treatise (*NE* 1095<sup>a</sup>2–11). Aristotle argues there that the aim of the treatise is not theory but practice, and for this reason one needs to be experienced enough to appreciate the argument he offers. Aspasius, however, raises an *aporia* about a much more general interpretative issue, regarding the sense in which happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the end of practical philosophy (*In EN* 8. 17–18 Heylbut). He relates this *aporia* to the question he raised in the preface about the relation between practical and theoretical philosophy. On the one hand, Aspasius argues, happiness consists in a certain kind of action, yet it also consists in a life of *theōria*, which is actually the most important part of this end (*In EN* 8. 20 Heylbut). The question is whether for Aristotle happiness is twofold, comprising the active one, which is the result of practical virtue and is in itself incomplete, and the mixed one, which is the result of both practical and theoretical virtues and is complete (*In EN* 8. 22–8 Heylbut). If the latter is the case, as Aspasius assumes (apparently on the basis of *NE* 10. 7–9), then, he argues, the end of practical philosophy, i.e. happiness, entails that we acquire both practical and theoretical virtues, and in this sense theoretical philosophy may be thought to be inferior to political philosophy because the latter commands us to pursue both right action and theoretical wisdom, while theoretical philosophy is itself in the position of being commanded. This puzzle, Aspasius claims, is solved by Aristotle himself, since later in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argues that nothing prevents a lesser science from giving commands about more sublime things, as is the case with political philosophy, which prescribes what should be done concerning the temples of the gods even though it is not superior to theology (*NE* 1045<sup>a</sup>10–11; *Aspas. In EN* 8. 27–9. 2 Heylbut). Aspasius argues that this is also the case with regard to the relation between political philosophy and the wisdom achieved by theoret-

*Fragments* (Oxford, 2001), and Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, i. 83–207. See also below, pp. 151–2.

tical philosophy: that is, the former gives commands yet the latter is superior.<sup>22</sup>

Aspasius' comment regarding the relation between practical and theoretical philosophy is hardly invited by the passage on which he is commenting. Aristotle does not even talk about happiness as the end of practical philosophy at this point, let alone about kinds of happiness. Aristotle speaks about happiness for the first time in the following passage (*NE* 1095<sup>a</sup>12–<sup>b</sup>4), on which Aspasius comments next. Aspasius clearly means to complement the argument of his preface, especially his point that practical philosophy accounts for good life (*kalōs zēn*, *In EN* 1. 4 Heylbut) and must be studied before theoretical philosophy. Aspasius now talks in terms of happiness (*eudaimonia*), arguing that this is the end of practical philosophy although in its perfected form it requires the contribution of theoretical philosophy. Aspasius now offers a more complete view, which is that practical philosophy is our guide to happiness both because it regulates emotions, which is crucial for the exercise of rational judgement, and because it guides us to a theoretical life, which is a life that complements the ideal of happiness.<sup>23</sup> This supposedly supports his conclusion that practical philosophy is prior to theoretical philosophy, while the latter is more valuable. Yet this conclusion is also undermined because, as Aspasius admits, both practical and theoretical philosophy are needed for happiness. Aspasius' argument works only on the assumption that theoretical philosophy is useful only if it contributes to happiness, and for this to happen one must be trained first by practical philosophy in acting virtuously and in seeking a theoretical life as a complement to virtuous action.

Both on this occasion and in the preface of his commentary Aspasius comes to discuss the relationship between practical and the-

<sup>22</sup> ἢ διττὴν τίθεται τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν τὴν μὲν πρακτικὴν ὡς ἀτελεστέραν, τὴν δ' ἕξ ἀμφοῖν ὡς τελειότεραν; ἢ ἔστι πως εἰπεῖν τὴν μὲν εὐδαιμονίαν θεωρητικὴν ἅμα καὶ πρακτικὴν οὖσαν τέλος εἶναι τῆς πολιτικῆς; διὸ προστάττει αὐτῇ τοὺς μέλλοντας ἀρίστους τῶν πολιτικῶν ἔσεσθαι μὴ μόνον πρακτικούς ἀλλὰ καὶ θεωρητικούς εἶναι. δόξειε δ' ἂν κατὰ γε τοῦτο ἐλάττων εἶναι ἢ σοφία καὶ ὅλως ἢ θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη τῆς πολιτικῆς, εἴ γε ἢ μὲν προστάττει, ἢ δὲ προστάττεται. ἀλλὰ ταύτην γε λύει τὴν ἀπορίαν προῖόν· φησὶ γὰρ τὸ μηδὲν κωλύειν τὴν ἐλάττω προστάσσειν περὶ τῶν κρείττωνων, οἷον (προστάσει) ἢ πολιτικὴ καὶ ναοὺς θεῶν κατασκευάζεσθαι καὶ σέβειν αὐτοὺς οὐ δῆπου κρείττων οὖσα τῶν θεῶν τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ περὶ τῆς σοφίας ἐπιτάττει ἡγουν πολὺ θειότερας καὶ τιμωτέρας αὐτῆς ἐπιδείκνυσιν (Aspas. *In EN* 8. 26–9. 2 Heylbut).

<sup>23</sup> Aspasius may have discussed the topic further in his comments on *NE* 10, which are no longer extant.

oretical philosophy, although Aristotle's text does not invite such a discussion. In both places Aspasius is concerned to address questions and objections regarding his argument for the priority of practical philosophy. This feature suggests that he is joining a debate about the importance of ethics and its order of study in Aristotle's work, and he has in mind people who disagree with his position.

### 3. The debate from Aristocles to Simplicius

There is a good deal of evidence showing that there was an ongoing debate among Peripatetics in late antiquity about the relation between practical and theoretical philosophy and the place of the former in the Aristotelian curriculum. Some evidence comes from Alexander of Aphrodisias. In his commentary on *Prior Analytics* Alexander argues that theoretical philosophy is the most valuable part of philosophy since truth, which is the end of theoretical philosophy, is the highest good for humans (*In An. Pr.* 4. 33–5. 2; 5. 14–22 Wallies), and in so far as knowledge of truth comes about through demonstration, which is a kind of syllogism, syllogistic is worthy of study (*ibid.* 6. 10–12), albeit only as an instrument, not a part of philosophy (*ibid.* 4. 30–3). In his commentary on the *Metaphysics* Alexander again stresses the superiority of theoretical wisdom to action and practical wisdom (*In Metaph.* 2. 13–21 Hayduck), and with reference to *Metaph. a* 1, 993<sup>b</sup>19–22, he argues that philosophy *stricto sensu* is theoretical philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Alexander appears to suggest that one must study logic first in order to acquire the means for appreciating Aristotle's arguments, and then move to theoretical philosophy. He apparently defends the order logic, theoretical philosophy, practical philosophy, for expository reasons but also with regard to the relative value of the subject-matter of theoretical and practical philosophy. This was also the position of Andronicus of Rhodes.<sup>25</sup> Considering logic to be an essential instrument for doing

<sup>24</sup> φιλοσοφίαν γὰρ ἰδίως τὴν θεωρητικὴν λέγει, ὡς δι' ὧν ἐπιφέρει δηλοῖ, λέγων θεωρητικῆς μὲν γὰρ τέλος ἀλήθεια, καὶ ταύτης ἔτι μᾶλλον τὴν περὶ τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν τε καὶ αἰτίων τῶν παντάπασιν αἰσθήσεως κεχωρισμένων καὶ τῇ αὐτῶν φύσει ὄντων, ἣν καὶ σοφίαν καλεῖ (Alex. Aphr. *In Metaph.* 144. 15–145. 4 Hayduck).

<sup>25</sup> On Andronicus see Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, i. 97–141, 144–6, 176–7, and H. B. Gottschalk, 'Aristotelian Philosophy in the Roman World' ['Aristotelian Philosophy'], in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II.36.2 (1987), 1079–1174 at 1095–1102.

philosophy in the first place, he put it first in order, and also made theoretical philosophy prior to practical. Notably, though, one of the sources which attests this, Philoponus, also challenges it.

In his commentary on the *Categories* Philoponus reports three tendencies among Peripatetics. First is the tendency of Peripatetics such as Boethus, who advocate the educational priority of the study of *Physics*, presumably on the basis of *Physics* I. 1 and *Posterior Analytics* I. 1, according to which the most familiar matters should be examined first. Second is the tendency of Peripatetics such as Andronicus, who maintain that logic should come first, theoretical philosophy second, and practical philosophy last. Finally, there are those who maintain the priority of ethics on the grounds that one should build a good character first, so that one will be in a position to control one's emotions and make sober, rational judgements.<sup>26</sup> Philoponus does not mention any representative of the third group, but clearly this is the view that Aspasius defended. Philoponus aligns himself with the third group and against the second group. I quote the relevant section:

φασὶ δὲ τινες ἀπὸ τῆς ἠθικῆς δεῖν ἄρχεσθαι· πρότερον γὰρ δεῖ τὰ ἦθη κατακοσμεῖν καὶ οὕτως ἐπὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἰέναι πραγματείας, ἵνα μὴ τεθολωμένον ὑπὸ τῶν παθῶν τὸ λογιστικὸν ἔχοντες τὰς περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων κρίσεις μὴ ἀκριβεῖς φέρωμεν. εἰ δὲ τινες λέγοιεν μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τῆς λογικῆς, ἵνα μετὰ ἀποδείξεως εἰδείημεν τὰ ἄγοντα ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ ποία ἐστὶν ἡ ὄντως ἀρετή, φασὶ μὲν οὕτως ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς εἰδέναι τοῦτο ὀφείλομεν, εἰθ' ὕστερον καὶ ἀποδεικτικῶς· ὥστε κἂν ταῖς ἀποδείξεσι μὴ παρακολουθῶμεν, δεῖ πρότερον αὐτὰ τῆς ἠθικῆς τὰ ἀποτελέσματα μαθόντας ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς κατ' αὐτὰ ζῆν, εἰθ' ὕστερον ταῖς ἀποδεικτικαῖς ἐπιβάλλειν μεθόδους. (Philop. *In Cat.* 5. 23–34 Busse)

There are those who argue that one must begin with ethical writings. For one must first educate one's character and then move to the other treatises, lest, having the rational part confounded by the emotions, we may form inaccurate judgements about things. And if some people should say that we should rather begin with logical works, so that we could know by means of demonstration the things that lead us to the proper principles and what sort of thing real virtue is, we reply that first we ought to know this subject [sc. ethics] in terms of the right opinions and then also by means of demon-

<sup>26</sup> Βόηθος μὲν οὖν φησιν ὁ Σιδώνιος δεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς φυσικῆς ἄρχεσθαι πραγματείας ἅτε ἡμῖν συνηθεστέρας καὶ γνωρίμων, δεῖν δὲ αἰεὶ ἀπὸ τῶν σαφέστερων ἄρχεσθαι καὶ γνωρίμων. ὁ δὲ τούτου διδάσκαλος Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ Πόδιος ἀκριβέστερον ἐξετάζων ἔλεγε χρῆναι πρότερον ἀπὸ τῆς λογικῆς ἄρχεσθαι, ἥτις περὶ τὴν ἀπόδειξιν καταγίνεται. ἐπειδὴ οὖν ἐν πάσαις αὐτοῦ ταῖς πραγματεῖαις ὁ φιλόσοφος κέχρηται τῇ ἀποδεικτικῇ μεθόδῳ, δεόν ἡμᾶς πρότερον ταύτην κατορθῶσαι, ἵνα εὐχερέστερον παρακολουθήσωμεν τοῖς ἄλλοις αὐτοῦ συγγράμμασι. φασὶ δὲ τινες ἀπὸ τῆς ἠθικῆς δεῖν ἄρχεσθαι (Philop. *In Cat.* 5. 16–24 Busse).

stration. Thus, even if we do not follow the demonstrations, we must first get to know the results of ethical writings and live in accordance with the right views outlined in them, and then devote ourselves to them by means of demonstrative methods.

Unlike Aspasius, Philoponus does give an argument in favour of the priority of ethics, namely that ethics teaches us how to make rational judgements and this is necessary for the study of theoretical philosophy, including logic. Philoponus' argument involves a suggestion for a certain kind of study of Aristotle's ethics. He suggests that Aristotle's ethical treatises can be read at two levels and during two stages of one's philosophical education: first as works which teach the correct opinions (what Philoponus calls *orthodoxastikōs*) and then later, once we are equipped with the knowledge of logic and can thus appreciate their demonstrative arguments. Here Philoponus must be addressing those who dispute the priority of ethics on the grounds that Aristotle's ethical works include demonstrations and thus presuppose familiarity with logic. Indeed, his teacher Ammonius takes this view, placing ethics after logic, with physics to follow, and yet he stresses the need for preliminary ethical instruction from non-Aristotelian sources.<sup>27</sup> For Philoponus, however, the logical character of Aristotle's ethical works is hardly an argument against their pedagogical priority, because the aim of these works, which consists in training us in making rational judgements, can also be achieved without familiarity with logic.

Philoponus' contemporary Simplicius discusses the same issue in his commentary on the *Categories*. Yet he lists only two groups, those who maintain the priority of logical works on the grounds that logic is an essential instrument for understanding Aristotle's arguments and for distinguishing true from false (*In Cat.* 5. 2–15 Kalbfleisch), and those who support the priority of ethical treatises (*In Cat.* 5. 16–6. 5 Kalbfleisch). Simplicius first outlines the arguments used by adherents of the latter position (*In Cat.* 5. 16–19 Kalbfleisch), and subsequently advances his own view. I quote the relevant section:

τινές δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἠθικῶν προστάττουσι ποιείσθαι τὴν ἀρχήν· τὰ γὰρ ὄργανα, φασί, τῶν μέσων ἐστὶν καὶ δυνατὸν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶ καὶ κακῶς χρῆσθαι· δηλοῦσι

<sup>27</sup> Ammon. *In Cat.* 5. 31–6. 8 Busse; *In Porph. Isag.* 15. 17–23 Busse. Ammonius defends the order logic, ethics, physics, mathematics, theology, as an ascending *ordo cognoscendi* which is also an *ordo essendi*. Ammonius' view is expounded by Elias, *In Cat.* 118. 20–31 Busse.

δὲ καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ῥητόρων καὶ τῶν σοφιστῶν· δεῖν οὖν πρότερον τοῖς χρησομένοις τοῖς ὀργάνοις ζωῆς μετρίως παρεσκευασμένης. οὐ γὰρ τοιαύτη ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν οἰκοδομικῶν καὶ κυβερνητικῶν γνώσις, οἷα ἡ φιλοσοφίας, ἀλλ' αὕτη ζωτικὴ· δεῖ οὖν πρώτης τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἠθικῶν καταρτύσεως, οὐκ ἀποδεικτικῶς, ἀλλ' ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς τὰ ἠθικὰ παραλαμβάνοντων ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς αὐτοφυεῖς περὶ τῶν ὄντων ἐννοίας. [5. 23] ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν τὰ Ἠθικὰ Ἀριστοτέλους κατηχήσεις μόνον ἦσαν παραινετικαὶ καὶ ἀναπόδεικτοι, οἷαι πολλαὶ παρὰ τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις ἐλέγοντο, ὀρθῶς εἶχεν ἐκ τούτων ἀρχομένους προκαταρτεῖν δι' αὐτῶν τὰ ἦθη· εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐκεῖνα μετὰ διαιρέσεων καὶ ἀποδείξεων τῶν ἐπιστημονικωτάτων παραδέδωκεν Ἀριστοτέλης, πῶς ἄνευ τῶν ἀποδεικτικῶν μεθόδων ἰόντες ἐπ' αὐτὰ δυνησόμεθα τι πλέον ἀνύτειν; μήποτε οὖν δεῖ πάντως ἠθικῆς προκατηχήσεως, ἀλλ' οὐ διὰ τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους Ἠθικῶν παραδιδόμενης, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀγράφου συνεθισμού καὶ τῶν ἀτέχνων παραινέσεων ἀγράφως τε καὶ ἐγγράφως τὸ ἦθος ἡμῶν ἀπευθυνόντων, καὶ τότε τῆς λογικῆς τε καὶ ἀποδεικτικῆς μεθόδου καὶ μέτ' ἐκεῖνας τοὺς τε περὶ ἠθῶν ἐπιστημονικοὺς λόγους καὶ τοὺς τῆς περὶ τῶν ὄντων θεωρίας ἐπιστημονικῶς δυνησόμεθα παραδέχεσθαι. (Simpl. *In Cat.* 5. 16–6. 5 Kalbfleisch)

Some people instruct us to begin with the ethical writings, for they say that the instruments belong to the category of intermediary things, and it is possible to use them either well or badly, as is illustrated by the majority of rhetoricians and sophists. Those who are going to use the instruments must [*dein*] first lead a life moderately prepared, for the knowledge of philosophy is not like that of building and navigation, but it has to do with life itself. We must [*dei*] then begin our training with the ethical works, receiving the ethical teachings not demonstratively but in terms of the right opinions about ethical matters, in accordance with the innate notions concerning beings. [5. 23] But if Aristotle's *Ethics* were only hortatory and undemonstrated catechisms, of the kind formerly offered by the Pythagoreans, it would be correct to begin with them and use them to give preliminary training to our characters. If, however, Aristotle handed down these treatises too, equipped with the most scientific divisions and demonstrations, how could we hope to make any progress by approaching these writings without the demonstrative methods? Perhaps some previous ethical instruction is necessary [*dei*] after all, but this should not be offered through Aristotle's ethical writings, but rather through unwritten habituation and non-technical exhortations, which rectify our characters by means both written and unwritten. It is only then that we shall need the logical and demonstrative method. After such studies, we shall be able to comprehend scientific discourses about characters as well as those pertaining to the theory of beings, and do so in a scientific way. (trans. Chase, modified)

Simplicius' text leaves little doubt, I think, that he is setting himself in dialogue with Philoponus' view.<sup>28</sup> There are some clear in-

<sup>28</sup> See I. Hadot (trans. and comm.), *Simplicius: Commentaire sur les Catégories*



dications to that effect. First, Simplicius focuses on the issue that Philoponus addresses, namely whether ethics must be prior to logic or not, which explains why Simplicius limits himself to mentioning the two chief rival views on it, one advocating the priority of logic and the other advocating the priority of ethics. The terminology that Simplicius uses is another strong indication. Simplicius' use of the pair of terms *orthodoxastikōs/apodeiktikōs*, employed also by Philoponus, can hardly be accidental. This pair of terms does not occur in the works of any other commentator, although several others discuss the same issue.<sup>29</sup> Philoponus and Simplicius agree, following their teacher Ammonius, on the priority of ethical instruction and on the need to know the right ethical opinions. Yet there is also some contrast between the two as to how one should get such an ethical instruction (Simpl. *In Cat.* 5. 23 ff. Kalbfleisch).<sup>30</sup>

What precisely is the contrast here? While Philoponus argues that we should study Aristotle's ethical works without knowledge of the demonstrations involved in them in order to derive from them the right opinions about ethical matters, since this is crucial for judging well, Simplicius, following Ammonius, maintains that this approach goes against the nature of Aristotle's ethics. The latter, Simplicius argues, is such that it requires knowledge of logic in order to be appreciated at all, and in this sense is different from other ethical writings, such as those of the Pythagoreans, for instance. Here one may recognize opposition to points defended by Aspasius—an indication that Simplicius is not targeting only Philoponus. Aspasius argued that theoretical knowledge would be useless without previous education of character through Aristotle's eth-

(Leiden, 2003), 94–6, and M. Chase (trans. and comm.), *Simplicius: On Aristotle Categories 1–4* (London, 2003), 101–2.

<sup>29</sup> φαιμέν ὅτι πρῶτον μὲν ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς εἰδέναι τοῦτο ὀφείλομεν, εἴθ' ὕστερον καὶ ἀποδεικτικῶς (Philop. *In Cat.* 5. 29–30 Busse); δεῖ οὖν πρῶτης τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἠθικῶν καταρτίσεως, οὐκ ἀποδεικτικῶς, ἀλλ' ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς τὰ ἠθικὰ παραλαμβάνοντων ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς αὐτοφνεῖς περὶ τῶν ὄντων ἐννοίας . . . εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐκεῖνα [sc. Aristotle's *Ethics*] μετὰ διαιρέσεων καὶ ἀποδείξεων τῶν ἐπιστημονικωτάτων παραδέδωκεν Ἀριστοτέλης, πῶς ἄνευ τῶν ἀποδεικτικῶν μεθόδων ἴοντες ἐπ' αὐτὰ δυνησόμεθα τι πλέον ἀνύτεις; (Simpl. *In Cat.* 5. 21–8 Kalbfleisch). The adjectival form ὀρθοδοξαστικά occurs at Olymp. *In Gorg.* 9. 7 Westerink, qualifying ethical exhortations. Cf. also Asclep. *In Metaph.* 273. 6–7 Hayduck, who uses the pair ἐπιστημονικῶς/ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς, presumably also drawing on Ammonius.

<sup>30</sup> Simplicius and Philoponus elsewhere engage in polemical exchange. A case in point is their disagreement on the eternity of the world: see P. Hoffmann, 'Simplicius' Polemics', in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (London, 1987), 57–83.

ics, while Simplicius suggests that one cannot possibly profit from Aristotle's ethical treatises without previous familiarity with logic. Aspasius sees similarities in the Aristotelian and Pythagorean approaches to ethical education, while Simplicius distinguishes them sharply. Nevertheless, Simplicius agrees with Aspasius and Philoponus that one must acquire the right ethical opinions first, but, like Ammonius, he maintains that the way to achieve this is through habituation and study of non-technical ethical works. Simplicius was indeed faithful to this idea: he recommended study of the *Handbook* of Epictetus, on which he wrote an entire commentary.<sup>31</sup>

What side does Aristotle himself support? It is noticeable that none of the discussants makes references to Aristotle. Clearly there are passages in Aristotle which can be adduced in support of either side. Those in favour of the priority of studying the ethical treatises could appeal to the function argument in *NE* 1, according to which man's function consists in the activity of the rational part of the soul, which is distinctive of humans, and this is why human happiness lies in that activity. One could argue that one must perform man's function, which is to engage in the activity of the part of soul that has reason, and thus to learn how to reason well, before moving on to more theoretical subjects, including logic. This argument may rely also on a certain interpretation of *NE* 10. 7–9, according to which one must acquire practical wisdom before obtaining theoretical virtues, a point that Aspasius seems to be making. Besides, Aristotle's emphatic remark in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that his aim in this treatise is to make people good, rather than to offer knowledge about virtue,<sup>32</sup> suggests that no previous knowledge is required for the study of this treatise.

However, Aristotle also offers support to the view that his ethical treatises are not meant as primary education of characters but rather presuppose prior ethical training. In particular, he appears to maintain that one cannot learn about goodness unless one is already engaged in the process of becoming good. In *NE* 1. 3 Aristotle claims that he addresses an audience already familiar with virtuous action, not young, inexperienced people led by their emotions and desires (*NE* 1095<sup>a</sup>2–11). And at *NE* 1. 7, 1098<sup>b</sup>4, he observes that some principles (presumably those governing correct action)

<sup>31</sup> See the edition and introduction of I. Hadot, *Simplicius: Commentaire sur le Manuel d'Épictète* (Leiden, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> *NE* 1095<sup>a</sup>4–6, 1103<sup>b</sup>26–30, 1105<sup>a</sup>10–12.

are discovered by habituation of some kind (*ethismōi tini*). Later on, in *NE* 7. 8, he elaborates on that, making it clear that it is training in virtue and not reasoning that provides the first principles in ethics, which means that this cannot be achieved through the study of his ethical treatises.<sup>33</sup> Aristotle comes back to that point at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to argue that one must already have a character trained in the good through habituation in order to acquire virtue, because one cannot battle emotion by reasoning but by the force which comes from a character sensitive to the fine and the shameful (*NE* 10. 9, 1179<sup>b</sup>20–31).<sup>34</sup>

#### 4. The background to the debate about the place of ethics

The evidence of Aristotle clearly does not settle the matter. In fact, Aristotle does not even explicitly raise either the issue of the pedagogical order of ethics and practical philosophy more generally, or of its relative value vis-à-vis theoretical philosophy, although parts of his work can be considered relevant to the debate concerning these issues. How, then, could such a debate arise at all?

The first factor that played a role is not difficult to imagine. Such a debate owes much to the ordering of Aristotle's treatises for publication. There is good evidence to suggest that this was the work of Andronicus of Rhodes. There has been considerable debate about his contribution, yet the evidence pointing to the ordering of Aristotle's work in an edition is good. Porphyry (*Vita Plotini* 24. 5–16) claims that his division of Plotinus' treatises into six enneads is modelled on Andronicus' division of Aristotle's *pragmateiai*.<sup>35</sup> And for Porphyry such *pragmateiai* are the *Metaphysics*<sup>36</sup> and the *Categories*.<sup>37</sup> The parallelism that Porphyry draws between himself and

<sup>33</sup> See *NE* 1151<sup>a</sup>15–19 and the discussion in D. Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford, 2000), 226.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *NE* 1098<sup>b</sup>2–4.

<sup>35</sup> J. Barnes, 'Roman Aristotle', in M. Griffin and J. Barnes (eds.), *Philosophia Togata*, ii. *Plato and Aristotle at Rome* (Oxford, 1997), 1–69 at 39–40, expresses doubts about the correspondence between the *Enneads* and Andronicus' *pragmateiai*, arguing that the latter are organized as treatises, while the former are not, and suggests that Porphyry's models are Apollodorus and Epicharmus. But Porphyry may have been inspired by Andronicus in so far as his idea was the editing of independent treatises together and in a certain, meaningful, order. See also Gottschalk, 'Aristotelian Philosophy', 1097–9.

<sup>36</sup> ἢ Μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους πραγματεία (*Vita Plotini* 14. 7).

<sup>37</sup> Porph. *In Cat.* 57. 5 Busse.

Andronicus suggests that the latter not only created *pragmateiai* like the *Metaphysics* from independently circulating treatises, but also ordered them in a certain way, as Porphyry did with Plotinus' *Enneads*.<sup>38</sup> The testimony of commentators such as Philoponus (*In Cat.* 5. 16–24 Busse, quoted above, n. 26) to the effect that Andronicus advocated the priority of logic, corroborates this conclusion.

Nevertheless, even if Andronicus was not the first to order Aristotle's treatises in the ways presented above, from his age onwards the order and unity of Aristotle's work became an issue. Boethus defended the priority of *Physics* as a subject of study (Philop. *In Cat.* 5. 16–18 Busse), presumably in reaction to Andronicus, while he wrote a commentary on the *Categories* in which he apparently sought to set the treatise in the context of Aristotle's philosophy as a whole.<sup>39</sup> And Adrastus, a contemporary of Aspasius, wrote a work *On the Order of Aristotle's Works*, in which he apparently discussed both the compilation of treatises (such as the *Physics*) and their order.<sup>40</sup> Such evidence suggests that the ordering of Aristotle's works, whether an invention of Andronicus or not, developed into a fashionable and much-debated subject in the period from the first century BC to the first century AD. And the question is: what accounts for this development in Peripatetic philosophy, which gave rise to the debate about the pedagogical order and the value of the alleged parts of Aristotelian philosophy?

Several pieces of evidence suggest that the impact of Stoic philosophy was crucial in this regard. To begin with, it is attested that Antiochus, who was clearly under the spell of Stoic philosophy, maintained that Plato went beyond the ethics that Socrates cultivated to construct a system of philosophy which comprised three parts: ethics, physics, and logic (Cic. *Acad.* 1. 19).<sup>41</sup> The Peripatetic Aristocles approves of the fact that Plato understood that the science of human and divine matters is one, and in this sense represents a unified philosophy (one is reminded of the *Timaeus*), yet on the other hand he divided philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic,

<sup>38</sup> *ἑκάστη δὲ ἐννεάδι τὰ οἰκεία φέρων συνεφόρησα δοῦς καὶ τάξιν πρώτην τοῖς ἐλαφροτέροις προβλήμασιν* (*Vita Plotini* 24. 14–16).

<sup>39</sup> See Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, i. 147–64, and Gottschalk, 'Aristotelian Philosophy', 1107.

<sup>40</sup> On the constitution of the *Physics* see Simpl. *In Phys.* 4. 11–15 Diels. On the order of Aristotle's works see Simpl. *In Cat.* 16. 1–4 Kalbfleisch.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Leg.* 1. 58–62 and *Fin.* 5. 9–11, where the order is physics, logic, ethics.

and prioritized the first on the grounds that one cannot have a good idea about human matters without prior understanding of divine matters (Euseb. *PE* 11. 2. 6; fr. 1. 6–7 Chiesara).<sup>42</sup> This is a recognizable Stoic view (S.E. *M.* 7. 21). What is more, it is a view shaped by the Stoic conception of philosophy as a system which is divided into three parts and yet has a unity of a certain kind. Aristocles argues that philosophy is like medicine in deriving its unity from its objective: as the physician cannot heal without knowledge of human nature in general before treating a part of it, similarly philosophy cannot guide us to happiness without knowledge of the nature of everything. This suggests that for Aristocles the aim of philosophy in Peripatetic terms is practical, and yet theoretical knowledge is presupposed.

The evidence of Antiochus and Aristocles shows that Stoicism was influential among Platonists and Peripatetics in the first century BC and first century AD in suggesting that philosophy is a system made up of parts which relate to each other in such a way that a certain unity emerges. This idea, however, leaves much room for discussion about the kind of system and unity that are involved, which in turn raises the question of the relation of the parts of philosophy. This was the case within Stoicism itself, for the Stoics disagreed about the order and importance of the parts of philosophy. Some Stoics put logic first, then physics, and third ethics (D.L. 7. 40), Chrysippus defended the order logic, ethics, physics,<sup>43</sup> while others put ethics first, and still others began with physics (D.L. 7. 41). Sextus Empiricus speaks of those who put physics first on the grounds that this is the science of the whole and the science cultivated by early philosophers; those who begin with ethics justify this on the grounds that it is a more necessary subject since it conduces to happiness; while Epicureans, but also some Stoics, start with logic (*M.* 7. 20–3).<sup>44</sup> Sextus does not name the representatives of the first two groups. But the fact that his immediately preceding paragraphs deal with the Stoic division of philosophy, and the similarity of reasoning with what Diogenes Laertius reports about Panaetius

<sup>42</sup> See Chiesara, *Aristocles of Messene*, 63–7, and Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, i. 190–205. Aristocles was the author of eight books on ethics (*Suda*, s.n. Aristocles, testimony 1 Chiesara).

<sup>43</sup> Chrysippus put physics last to serve as a revelation of the divine realm (Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1035 A; *SVF* ii. 42).

<sup>44</sup> On this text see K. Ierodiakonou, 'The Stoic Division of Philosophy', *Phronesis*, 38 (1993), 57–74.

and Posidonius (7. 40–1), suggest that Sextus must still be referring to the Stoics, although a more general reference to Peripatetics such as Aristocles cannot be ruled out entirely. What is more, Aristo of Chios famously considered only ethics to be worthy of study and despised both physics and logic as useless preoccupations because in his view they contribute nothing to practical life.<sup>45</sup> This view, of course, placed him outside orthodox Stoicism.

The Stoic idea that philosophy is a system must have also influenced Peripatetics of the generation of Andronicus, since, as can be seen from the extant testimonies of the work of Andronicus, Boethus, and also Xenarchus, all of them set themselves in dialogue with Stoicism. They defend, for instance, a Peripatetic version of the ethical ideal, advocated by the Stoics, of living in conformity with nature.<sup>46</sup> And Boethus apparently suggested that the Stoic hypothetical syllogism is prior to Aristotle's categorical one.<sup>47</sup> Peripatetic engagement with Stoicism continues in the first centuries of the common era. Aspasius is critical of the Stoics in their treatment of the emotions, and this critical stance is shared by the Anonymous commentator on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>48</sup> Quite interesting is the case of the pseudo-Aristotelian work *On the Cosmos* (first–second century AD), which is clearly antagonistic towards Stoic treatises on the subject, without becoming explicitly polemical.<sup>49</sup> The author of this work may well have aimed to fill what he considered to be a gap in the Aristotelian corpus. It is also noticeable that the Peripatetics of this era speak of 'logic', as the Stoics do, while Aristotle nowhere uses the term, let alone treating it as part of philosophy.<sup>50</sup> Of course, Aristotle speaks in the *Topics* (105<sup>b</sup>19) of three kinds of premisses—those of physics, ethics, and logic—but this hardly suggests a division of philosophy into such parts.

The impact of Stoic philosophy on late antique Peripatetics was not only in terms of its character as a system and the subsequent

<sup>45</sup> S.E. *M.* 7. 12; Sen. *Epist.* 89. 13. See A. Ioppolo, *Aristone di Chio e lo stoicismo antico* (Naples, 1980), 56–95.

<sup>46</sup> Alex. Aphr. *Mant.* 151. 3–13 Bruns; see Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, i. 178–9, 208–10.

<sup>47</sup> Galen, *Inst. log.* 7. 2; see Gottschalk, 'Aristotelian Philosophy', 1116.

<sup>48</sup> Aspasius. *In EN* 42. 13–47. 2 Heylbut; Anon. *In EN* 127. 1–9, 136. 27–137. 8 Heylbut.

<sup>49</sup> See J. Mansfeld, 'Περὶ κόσμου: A Note on the History of a Title', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 46 (1992), 391–411.

<sup>50</sup> Aristotle speaks only of 'syllogistic' or 'analytic'. See Hadot, 'Les divisions', 207–8; Gottschalk, 'Aristotelian Philosophy', 1098–9.

division of philosophy into parts, but also in terms of the idea that philosophy is a course of study leading to wisdom, and in order to achieve that, one must proceed in a certain way. For the Stoics, philosophy needs to be taught according to a certain pedagogical idea if it is to fulfil its role of making us wise enough to live a happy life. The Stoics disagreed on the order of the parts of philosophy because they disagreed on which pedagogical approach to follow in philosophy. Still, with the exception of Aristo, they did agree that all parts are essential, make an organic unity, and imply each other, since they contribute to the same objective.<sup>51</sup> There were actually Stoics who suggested that one must mix topics from all parts of philosophy instead of proceeding in a linear manner from one part to the other.<sup>52</sup> Further, the same Stoics who defended one order of study in one context were capable of defending a different one in another context.<sup>53</sup>

In the case of the Peripatetics discussed above, the disagreement is stronger than that among the Stoics because Aristotle nowhere speaks of distinct parts of philosophy and about how the different philosophical sciences are connected. For this reason the disagreement among Peripatetics extends to the nature of the treatises which represent a part of philosophy, especially ethics but possibly also physics, and their connections with the rest of Aristotle's work. Andronicus, Alexander, and Simplicius defend the logical nature of Aristotle's ethics and physics, and thus the priority of logic over ethics and physics, while Aspasius, Philoponus, and Boethus appear to question, in one way or another, whether logic is necessary for their study. Besides, their debate also touches on the value of the divisions of philosophy, viz. its parts, a topic which, again with the exception of Aristo, is absent from the Stoic camp.<sup>54</sup> Aspasius, for instance, assigns more value to practical philosophy than Alexander, despite their agreement about the relative value of the subject-matter of practical and theoretical philosophy. Apparently Aspasius is guided by a conception of philosophy according to which its end

<sup>51</sup> See A. Long, 'Stoic Eudaimonism', in id., *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge, 1996), 179–201; also J. Annas, 'Ethics in Stoic Philosophy', *Phronesis*, 52 (2007), 58–87.

<sup>52</sup> D.L. 7. 40, reading *προκεκρίσθαι* with the manuscripts instead of *ἀποκεκρίσθαι*. See Hadot, 'Les divisions', 217.

<sup>53</sup> So Chrysippus. See the discussion of the evidence in Ierodiakonou, 'The Stoic Division of Philosophy', 67–71, and Annas, 'Ethics in Stoic Philosophy', 77–8. Cf. D.L. 7. 46–8.

<sup>54</sup> See Ierodiakonou, 'The Stoic Division of Philosophy', 70–1.

is to lead us to happiness, while for Alexander the end of philosophy is to discover the truth (see above, p. 144).

The imitation of the Stoic division of philosophy imposes on Aristotelian philosophy the appearance of a system comparable to that of the Stoics, but this system is more open to debate than the Stoic one, because there is no such clear, or at least clearly expressed, conception of philosophy in Aristotle, as there is with the Stoics, to unify the Peripatetic system under that conception, which would also specify the relations between its parts and their order of study. There was room, then, for Peripatetics to disagree on whether the end of philosophy is practical, as Aspasius and Aristotle imply (presumably under the influence of Stoic philosophy), or theoretical, as Alexander advocates.<sup>55</sup> The debate among Peripatetics about the order and value of the allegedly Aristotelian parts of philosophy is to a large extent a debate about the sense in which Aristotle's philosophy is a system, a debate similar to that of contemporary Platonists.

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<sup>55</sup> The Peripatetic debate on the parts of philosophy had an impact on Platonists. Alcinous speaks of theoretical and practical philosophy, not of physics and ethics (*Didask.* 3). And, like Andronicus and Alexander, he approves of the pedagogical priority of logic, as his exposition makes clear.



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