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Autonomy, Authority, and Law-Abiding: Aristotle EN v. I-2

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Abstract

Scholars disagree about Aristotle's views on political obligation. Most treat Aristotle as a kind of authoritarian, but a few think he was a proponent of individual autonomy. Aristotle never presents any arguments explicitly for or against political obligation, however, so his views have to be inferred. The most recent works have tended to piece together Aristotle's argument from what he tells us in the Politics about the political and legislative activity of a good citizen. But we ought to look at places where Aristotle's ethical and political theory overlap. A good text for this examination is EN V.1-2 where Aristotle describes justice as law-abiding. A close look here shows that Aristotle takes law-abiding to be the essence of justice. Thus he appears to think that political authority is more fundamental than individual autonomy. An argument can be made, however, that Aristotle takes it to be in an individual's best interest to have this attitude towards law. Thus he may believe that although conflicts between individual and civic interest should generally be resolved in favour of the city, the decision, by a just person, to resolve them this way, is at least consistent with autonomy, and grounded in prudence.

I. Aristotle and the Question of Political Obligation

On what grounds, if any, does an individual have a general obligation to obey the laws of his or her state? This is a fundamental question of modern political philosophy. But it is a question that Aristotle nowhere explicitly addresses. Why? Many of the answers that have been given are superficial. We are told that he simply could not put the question, at least not in the way modern philosophers do.¹ Aristotle, it is said, lacked our concepts of autonomy and individual rights.² He did not think of human beings as individuals in the modern political sense.³ The concept of obligation does not play an important role in his ethics or politics.⁴ He had a broader (some

would say richer) conception of law than we have, he had a different conception of authority, and in place of the state he had the polis, that place of “sunshine [and] the common life”.⁵ There is some truth in all of this. Nevertheless, the distance between us and Aristotle is not so great. For whatever vocabulary we use, the question of political obligation arises whenever there is conflict between what the law commands (or forbids) and what a deliberate agent believes should be done. This conflict is not something only moderns can see.

II. The relevance of the *endoxa*

It is an explicit commitment of Aristotle’s method in ethics to set out and consider all the phenomena that pertain to the most significant ethical matters, and to preserve and harmonise the *endoxa*; the “reputable opinions” of the many, the wise, or the most wise. From this point of view it seems surprising that Aristotle does not raise the question of political obligation (in some form or other). He was certainly aware that issues of this sort were important and controversial. He was familiar, for example, with Sophocles’ *Antigone*. In the *Rhetoric* he even quotes, with obvious approval, Antigone’s famous speech to Creon after she has been caught violating the law that forbids the burial of Polyneices:

For me it was not Zeus who made that order.
Nor did that Justice who lives with the gods below
mark out such laws to hold among mankind.
Nor did I think that your orders were so strong
that you, a mortal man, could over-run
the gods’ unwritten and unfailing laws.
Not now, nor yesterday’s, they always live
and no one knows their origin in time.⁶

Οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε,
οὐδ’ ἡ ξύνουκος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη·
οὐ τούσδ’ ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὤρισαν νόμους·
οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾤομην τὰ σὰ
κηρύγμαθ’ ὥστ’ ἄγραπτα κάσφαλῆ θεῶν
νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ’ ὑπερδραμεῖν.
Οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κάχθές, ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ ποτε
ζῆ ταῦτα, κοῦδεῖς οἶδεν ἔξ ὅτου φάνη.

It is noteworthy that Antigone does not entirely repudiate Creon’s authority. She only says that Creon’s orders are weaker than the gods’. Thus, she implies a basis for deciding between competing obligations in the strength and durability of different laws. Creon, on the other hand, is depicted until very nearly the end of the play as thinking that one’s obligation to obey the (man-made) laws of the city is absolute and insuperable. The consequences of disobedience include not only the destruction of the city, but of its people. This view is clearly illustrated in Creon’s speech to Haemon:

But he who crosses law, or forces it,
or hopes to bring the rulers under him
shall never have a word of praise from me.
The man the state has put in place must have
obedient hearing to his least command

Ἄσπις δ’ ὑπερβὰς ἢ νόμους βιάζεται,
ἢ τοῦπιτάσσειν τοῖς κρατοῦσιν ἐννοεῖ,
οὐκ ἔστ’ ἐπαίνου τοῦτον ἔξ ἐμοῦ τυχεῖν.
Ἄλλ’ ὄν πόλις στήσειε, τοῦδε χρῆ κλύειν
καὶ σμικρὰ καὶ δίκαια καὶ τάναντία.

when it is right, and even when it's not.
He who accepts this teaching I can trust,
ruler, or ruled, to function in his place,
to stand his ground even in the storm of spears,
a mate to trust in battle at one's side.
There is no greater wrong than disobedience.
This ruins cities, this tears down our homes,
this breaks the battle front in panic rout.⁷

Καὶ τοῦτον ἂν τὸν ἄνδρα θαρσοίην ἐγὼ
καλῶς μὲν ἄρχειν, εὖ δ' ἂν ἄρχεσθαι θέλειν,
δορός τ' ἂν ἐν χειμῶνι προστεταγμένον
μένειν δίκαιον κάγαθὸν παραστάτην.
Ἄναρχίας δὲ μείζον οὐκ ἔστιν κακόν·
αὕτη πόλεις ὄλλυσιν, ἥδ' ἀναστάτους
οἴκους τίθησιν, ἥδε συμμάχου δορὸς
τροπᾶς καταρρήγνυσι

There are many who think that by the time he wrote the *Ethics* and *Politics* Aristotle had second thoughts about Antigone's speech, and that he adopted a view more along Creon's lines,⁸ but he can hardly have forgotten the issue. And if he has changed his view without any discussion of the matter, that appears all the more curious to us.

Consider, in addition to Antigone's predicament, the predicaments of Socrates. When Socrates was among the Presidents of the Council during the trial of the Arginusae, he alone defied the others and refused to try the generals collectively (*Apology* 32b). In doing this he faced the possibility of arrest and execution (despite the fact that his action was legally correct). When the Thirty Tyrants ordered Socrates to extradite Leon of Salamis he refused yet again, and this time his inaction was in direct violation of a judicial order. True, following his conviction for impiety Socrates decided to obey the laws and suffer death. But the thing to notice is that *he decided* to obey, and only after much deliberation. The obligation to obey was not manifest. Indeed, the account of Socrates' deliberation in Plato's *Crito* is regarded as a classic in political theory: virtually all the modern arguments for political obligation are anticipated in it. If Plato could see the question of political obligation, then, how could Aristotle have failed to see it?

The cases of Antigone and Socrates are striking, and they were obviously known to Aristotle. But there is evidence that the question of political obligation was not restricted or unusual.⁹ Thrasymachus' derision of justice as "another's good" shows that some thinkers were wondering why any powerful person should obey the laws (again Aristotle knew this well). And as Richard Sorabji has pointed out, plenty of Aristotle's predecessors and contemporaries had similar concerns.¹⁰ There was Antisthenes, who claimed that "the wise man's public life will not be in accordance with established laws, but the law of virtue" (DL 6.11), and Diogenes who "was bound by no law and engaged in no civic duties" (Maximus Tyrius, *Philos.* 36, 5). There was Crates who claimed that his citizenship was "not the legal one but the same as that of Diogenes" (DL 6.98) There were Theodorus, Aristippus, and — among the Stoics — Zeno and Ariston of Chios, all of whom denied or avoided the authority of the polis.¹¹

It is just possible that Aristotle himself felt the pinch of political obligation. If he too was indicted for impiety, as tradition has it, he

apparently felt no necessity to remain, stand trial and suffer punishment. (If you say, “but then Athens was not his polis,” we may well wonder why Aristotle, of all people, lived mostly outside the bounds of citizenship. Did he share the views of the Cynics, Cyrenaics and Stoics?) It is astonishing to find no discussion of these things in Aristotle. Here we have a serious ethical issue, with a considerable number of associated endoxa, some of which evidently conflict.

I think, though, that we have enough to persuade us that Aristotle could not have been blind to the question of political obligation. If he does not discuss it directly, then perhaps it is because he holds views which settle it prior to direct discussion. What views could these be? Two different answers have each enjoyed the support of scholars. The first is that Aristotle’s ethical theory, which makes deliberation and choice necessary for virtue and a good life, presupposes that autonomy is fundamental. In that case political obligations are all subordinate to prudential judgment, and conflict is settled, by appeal to an individual’s best interest. The second is that Aristotle’s political theory, which makes the city prior to the individual, presupposes that authority is fundamental. In that case, political obligations are primary and conflict is settled by appeal to what is in the interest of the polis. There is evidence to support each of these answers. The problem is, however, that the two positions are mutually inconsistent. I will suggest later that Aristotle’s views about law-abiding allow for a small amount of compromise between autonomy or authority, but before turning to that, it will help to have a clearer idea what the two opposed positions are.

III. Autonomy

The view that Aristotle treats individual autonomy as more fundamental than the recognition of authority is taken by scholars like Edouard Zeller, W. L. Newman, D. J. Allan, Elizabeth Browning Cole, Carnes Lord and Fred Miller. They argue that “free self-development”¹², “freedom of movement”¹³, being “self-directed”¹⁴, and taking responsibility for our own actions is a precondition of the good human life. To a large extent their view depends on Aristotle’s discussions of προαίρεσις (choice/decision), φρόνησις (practical wisdom) and αὐτάρκεια (self-sufficiency). The analysis of each of these terms is complicated and controversial. Aristotle, perhaps intentionally, does not use them with consistent precision. I can only summarise here the role they are supposed to play in grounding human autonomy.

Προαίρεσις, according to Aristotle, is necessary for ἀρετή and consequently also for εὐδαιμονία. Aristotle defines ἀρετή as a ἕξις προαιρετική (*EN* II.6 1106b36; VI.2 1139a22); a phrase that seems to express deep ambivalence.¹⁵ In whatever way the condition “involves

choice”, however, choice requires deliberation, and deliberation implies freedom from constraint, since we only deliberate about things that are in our power.¹⁶ Thus political obligation, as such, appears to cut against the grain of Aristotle’s ethical theory. If we are law-abiding, it should be because the deeds which the laws command are worth performing “for their own sake” [δι’ αὐτά], not for any other reason.

The importance of choice in the ethics is underscored by Aristotle’s account of φρόνησις. For that intellectual virtue, the keystone of Aristotle’s ethics, is tantamount to excellence in deliberation.¹⁷ Aristotle says that the mark of the φρόνιμος is “the ability to deliberate well about things good and advantageous to him, not [only] in part—i.e. not [only] about what sort of things are conducive to health, or strength—but on the whole, i.e. about what sort of things conduce to living well.” (*EN* VI.5 1140a26-28).¹⁸ So this would appear to reinforce the view that autonomy is necessary to εὐδαιμονία, since φρόνησις implies deliberation of all one’s actions.

Some scholars, such as Jonathan Barnes, find this line of thought completely unconvincing. Barnes says it rests on a “childish confusion” because it treats the freedom εὐδαιμονία requires as if it were political liberty.¹⁹ Now it is true that Aristotle does not speak of political liberty in his discussions of choice and practical wisdom. The freedom on which choice and deliberation depend is just freedom from physical constraint (βία), not freedom from coercion (see *EN* III.1). But Aristotle explicitly acknowledges that the voluntary character of acts “performed from fear of greater [evils] or from some noble [object]” (διὰ φόβον μειζόνων πράττεται ἢ διὰ καλόν τι, 1110a4-5) is compromised. Hence he calls such actions “mixed” (μικταί). It seems doubtful that a flourishing life could be comprised of very many of these mixed actions.²⁰ Nevertheless, Barnes insists that virtue cannot require political liberty, “for otherwise law-abiding actions could never be virtuous—and that is absurd.”²¹ Here, however, there *is* a childish confusion. It would, of course, be absurd to say that the deeds which the law enjoins can under no circumstances be virtuous, but it would not be absurd to suggest that deeds performed διὰ νόμιμον could not be *fully* virtuous, because virtuous deeds have to be performed δι’ αὐτά. That, I take it, is the point being urged by the friends of autonomy. Thus, although Aristotle does not infer, from his discussions of choice and practical wisdom, that ethical agents require autonomy, there is some reason to draw the inference for him.

Before we take up the arguments for authority, we still need to consider an argument about autonomy and αὐταρκεία. Elizabeth Cole claims that Aristotle’s conception of αὐταρκεία, “self-sufficiency”, is approximately the same as our modern conception of autonomy.²² This view initially seems plausible, and makes Aristotle appear to be a strong

proponent of autonomy, for αὐταρκεία is a necessary condition of happiness. I find Cole's argument misleading. It is not general autonomy (a negative concept) that is at issue here, but moral autonomy (a positive concept, that implies reasoning, deliberating and deciding for oneself). Upon examination, there turns out to be no good reason to think that Aristotle uses αὐταρκες to mean "morally autonomous."

In its most general usage, English "autonomous" just means "independent." There are many contexts in Aristotle where "independent" is a suitable translation of αὐταρκες (e.g. at *EN* III.3.1112b1 where Aristotle speaks about "exact and independent sciences"; ἀκριβείς καὶ αὐτάρκεις τῶν ἐπιστημῶν), but it is clearly not *moral* independence that is meant in these passages. In fact, Aristotle calls a whole range of things αὐταρκες: some sciences, as we have just seen, and also some causes,²³ natures,²⁴ motions,²⁵ properties,²⁶ and demonstrations.²⁷ Πνεύμα is on one occasion described as αὐταρκες,²⁸ (here the translation "autonomic" seems appropriate). In all these cases αὐταρκεία is a negative concept (x is αὐταρκες with respect to ϕ , iff it lacks nothing in order to be ϕ). If we can consistently interpret αὐταρκεία as a negative concept even in ethical contexts, then additional evidence would be needed to suggest that αὐταρκεία had some connection with moral autonomy in Aristotle. So let us consider the ethical contexts.

First, Aristotle sometimes says ἡ εὐδαιμονία ... αὐτάρκης.²⁹ We ought to understand this in the context of what Aristotle says about the good, in his ethical works and elsewhere. For it is clear that when Aristotle says that the good is αὐταρκες he is just asserting, as we would say, that the relation between subject and predicate is analytic.³⁰ It follows from this that anything is αὐταρκες just insofar as it is good. From this point of view the flourishing human being is included among things that are αὐτάρκεις in just the same way that certain sciences, causes, and natures are, and this makes it less likely that Aristotle takes αὐταρκες to mean "morally autonomous" in ethical contexts. Consider what he would say about the good woman (or the good slave!): she is αὐταρκες to the extent that she lacks nothing appropriate to a woman; but on Aristotle's view she is not fully capable of moral autonomy (and therefore he denies her political autonomy).

Aristotle does often refer to persons that he thinks could be morally autonomous as αὐταρκες. The great-souled man is αὐταρκες,³¹ as is the good king,³² the contemplative philosopher (qua contemplative),³³ and the good man generally.³⁴ Once again, however, these claims, are all consistent with the interpretation of αὐταρκεία as a negative concept. They suggest that it is possible for a person to be both independent (needing nothing from others) and happy. This nod in the direction of individualism eventually runs

aground, but it appears as though Aristotle must have been tempted by it, because he sometimes retains the claim that the good man is αὐταρκες even when it leads him to distort other ethical ideas. For example: the good man is self-sufficient, but friendship, an external good, is necessary for a good life; Therefore, the true friend is “another self”.³⁵ This is surely an obscure way of speaking. Elsewhere Aristotle explicitly acknowledges that no human being is αὐταρκες,³⁶ and the fact that he does strongly suggests that all along he has meant no more by αὐταρκες than “lacking nothing”.

In the *Politics* Aristotle says sometimes that the city³⁷ or the community (τὴν κοινωνίαν)³⁸ is αὐταρκες, and other times that the city is for the sake of αὐταρκεία.³⁹ These claims are ambiguous as to whether αὐταρκεία is a collective property (the city or community taken as a whole) or a distributive one (each citizen becomes αὐταρκες through the network of the community). Unfortunately, Aristotle does not resolve this ambiguity,⁴⁰ but even if he is referring to citizens distributively, he may still only have a negative conception of αὐταρκεία in mind. Thus, an appeal to Aristotle’s conception of αὐταρκεία will not help us settle the question of political obligation. It is compatible with the thesis, which is otherwise supported by Aristotle’s views about προαίρεσις and φρόνησις, that Aristotle would decide conflicts of obligation in favour of the individual, but that is all. Let us now consider the case for authority.

IV. Authority

The view that Aristotle ignores the question of political obligation because he supposes the authority of law to be fundamental is taken by, among others, Alexander Grant, J. A. Stewart, Ernest Barker, and Jonathan Barnes. Most of their evidence comes from the *Politics*, especially from Aristotle’s account of the ideal city (Books VI-VII), but we may start with two statements made in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: First, political science is architectonic (I.2 1094a27). It decides even what practices will thrive in the city. Second: the good of the city is prior to the good of the individual: “even if [the end] is the same for one man and the city, that of the city appears greater and more perfect both to produce and to preserve; for though it is worthwhile [to produce and preserve the end] even just for one man, it is nobler and more divine [to produce and preserve it] for a race and for cities” (I.2 1094b7-10).⁴¹

These views are retained and amplified in the *Politics*. The laws make pronouncements about everything,⁴² and they do so because the good of the city is prior. In fact, the city is *ontologically* prior: citizens are only parts of the whole, like a hand is part of a body.⁴³ On this analogy it appears that Aristotle makes the individual thoroughly subordinate. A hand may

sometimes have to be amputated to preserve the body. It is then a hand only in name, since it cannot perform its ἔργον except as part of a body. By analogy we should say that any citizen may be sacrificed for the city, and without a city is only a citizen in name. But Aristotle goes further and suggests that such a person is not even a human being, but either a god or a beast. This is because it is not just the ἔργον of a *citizen* that cannot be performed outside the city, but the ἔργον of a human being. Some have claimed that Aristotle's analogy is a misleading overstatement,⁴⁴ but he reiterates later in more explicit terms: "... at the same time we must not think that any of the citizens is of himself, but all are of the city" (VIII.1 1337a27-28).⁴⁵

If the city is ontologically prior to the individual, then it would appear reasonable for Aristotle to decide questions of political obligation in favour of authority. The citizen has an obligation to obey the laws of his city, even if it requires him to lose his life, not because only in this way will *his own good* be realised, but because only in this way will *the city's good* be realised. To emphasise this point, scholars sometimes cite Aristotle's proposals for so-called "totalitarian" legislation,⁴⁶ including:

- laws restricting free association [VII.6 1327a37-40]
- laws restricting freedom of expression [VII.17 1336b3-5]
- laws regulating education and educational content [VIII.1 1337a11-12; cf. EN I.2 1094a27]
- laws governing copulation, procreation and marriage [VII.16 1334b29-32]
- laws forbidding the rearing of deformed children [VII. 1335b19-21]⁴⁷

However much liberal spirits might recoil from the thought of such laws,⁴⁸ the force of this evidence is very limited. It is likely that in addition to thinking that he thinks these are the sorts of laws which foster a city's good, Aristotle thinks these are the sorts of laws which any virtuous agent would approve.⁴⁹ Besides, it is not the *content* of a city's legal code that matters for the present argument. What matters is whether a citizen's obedience to the city is grounded in his beliefs about his own good (so that it is merely a prudential obligation), or whether it is grounded in a rightful claim of the city to have authority over him.

V. Justice as Law-Abiding

So we have two different explanations for Aristotle's neglect of the question of political obligation. Both have a certain basis in the text, but the two explanations conflict. It is true that the first stems mainly from the *Ethics* and the second mainly from the *Politics*. But we can hardly say that Aristotle failed to notice they conflict, for at crucial points his ethics and politics

overlap. The overlap is substantial in book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*; in Aristotle's account of justice. Perhaps, then, we can find something there that will help us to decide which, if either, of these two explanations he presupposed. The first chapter, on general justice, is especially important, particularly the passage from 1129b31-1130a13, where justice is equated with law-abiding. The evidence there, though it admits of qualification, suggests that Aristotle favours a general obligation to obey the law, even in cases where the law is partial or ill-framed.

I shall focus on 7 claims, all of which appear plainly to support the authority of law. For each claim I discuss ambiguities that might allow a political autonomist a little room to plead a case, but I think it will become clear that the overall thrust of the passage is against it. The first claim comes at 1129a32-34:

[1] the lawless man is thought to be unjust, so it is clear that the law-abiding man will be just.

δοκεῖ δὴ ὁ τε παράνομος ἄδικος εἶναι ... ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι καὶ [ὁ] δίκαιος ἔσται ὁ τε νόμιμος ... (1129a32-34)

The main ambiguity here is whether, when Aristotle says "the law-abiding man will be just", he means that such a man will be just *because* he is law-abiding, or whether he is simply providing a way of recognising the just man, by reference to external actions.⁵⁰ If he means the latter, then his comment has no special implications for us. But if Aristotle is identifying the state of character, justice, with law-abiding, then, though he will not have given the just man's motive, he will still have given an explanation of what justice consists in. Law-abiding will be essential to justice, and this will favour the view that for Aristotle, political obligation is primary. The next claim fits rather well with this interpretation.

[2] The just, then, is the lawful; the unjust is the unlawful.

τὸ μὲν δίκαιον ἄρα τὸ νόμιμον ... τὸ δ' ἄδικον τὸ παράνομον ... (1129a34)

Here Aristotle shifts from masculine to neuter, from the just *man* to "the just". On the most natural reading of this claim, τὸ δίκαιον is equivalent to ἡ δικαιοσύνη.⁵¹ In that case, Aristotle is saying that justice is essentially lawfulness, which goes a long way towards supporting the claims of authority. But it is just possible to take τὸ δίκαιον simply as "whatever is just" (e.g. this or that just deed), in which case the claim is at least consistent with individual autonomy (i.e. "anything that it is just to do is, *a fortiori*, lawful"). Although this second reading is somewhat strained, it must be conceded that

Aristotle does not use the abstract noun ἡ δικαιοσύνη again until the close of the present section, where he says that justice is complete virtue. Thus we have no way of being certain about the connection between τὸ δίκαιον and ἡ δικαιοσύνη in the local context; Aristotle might simply draw a conclusion about the virtue, justice, on the basis of what is evident in a typical just deed.

There is support for the first reading, however, in the phrase αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ δικαιοσύνη at 1129b25-26: “*this* justice”, viz. law-abiding (see also 1130a8-9). And there is further evidence from chapter two that τὸ δίκαιον and ἡ δικαιοσύνη must indicate the same thing. At 1130b13, in the midst of an admittedly confused sentence,⁵² we find the phrase καὶ τὸ ἀδίκον καὶ ἡ ἀδικία (“the unjust and injustice [in the sense of the unfair]”⁵³), where καὶ is most plausibly taken as exegetical, and the two terms are coordinate. Aristotle then immediately proceeds to speak about “*this* injustice” (note the phrase αὕτη ἡ ἀδικία), viz. injustice in the sense of the unfair, as parallel to justice (δικαιοσύνη) in the corresponding sense. Aristotle’s view throughout the passage is that contraries have parallel properties (1129a17-18), and on that basis we may infer that if τὸ ἀδίκον and ἡ ἀδικία are the same, then so are τὸ δίκαιον and ἡ δικαιοσύνη. It seems clear then, that in this passage Aristotle is saying that the virtue, justice, is essentially lawfulness. Let us turn to the third claim:

[3] it is clear that all the lawful [deeds] are in a sense just [deeds]

δηλον ὅτι πάντα τὰ νόμιμά ἐστὶ πῶς δίκαια (1129b12)

With this comment, we shift attention a bit. Aristotle has already identified law-abiding as the essential feature of the virtue of justice. He now proceeds to spell out its chief implication, namely, that all lawful deeds are, in virtue of being lawful, also just deeds.⁵⁴ This suggests that laws have at least some authority over individuals. But what sort of qualification do we have in πῶς? Jackson thinks the qualification marks the difference between genuine justice and conventional justice. He remarks, “even οἱ κατὰ τὰς παρεκβεβηκυίας πολιτείας νόμοι, which are ἀπλῶς οὐ δίκαιοι are πῶς δίκαιοι (i.e. even the laws of the illegitimate constitutions, which are not strictly just, are just in a sense). If he is right, then there is still room for a weaker interpretation of the passage, according to which an autonomous agent might, by acting in a way that was strictly just, not obey a law that was merely “in a way” just, e.g. by having been enacted according to a legally prescribed and accepted procedure. Stewart, however, says “πῶς” is added because all enactments are not just in the sense of aiming at the maintenance of ἰσότης. Many of them have no reference to the requirements of Particular Justice: they are just *in a certain sense* — i.e. they are just in the wide and loose sense, not

the narrow and technical sense.”⁵⁵ I do not see that the text gives us enough information to settle the matter, but Stewart’s suggestion at least has the merit of relying on the local context, whereas Jackson’s suggestion relies on appeal to the *Politics*.⁵⁶ There is simply no discussion of the strictly just in *EN* V.1-2. The next claim carries even more weight:

[4] for the things laid down by the legislative art are lawful and each of these, we say, is just.

τά τε γὰρ ὠρισμένα ὑπὸ τῆς νομοθετικῆς νόμιμά ἐστι, καὶ ἕκαστον
τουτων δίκαιον εἶναί φαμεν (1129b12-14).

On the most unforced reading of this claim, Aristotle is saying that laws established by correct legislative practice are not only lawful but just. The proponent of individual autonomy might object that we cannot be sure that νομοθετική is here used in a conventional sense. It might, so the objection goes, be used in an ideal sense, so that it should read “the things laid down by the *true* legislative art are *genuinely* lawful, and each of *these*, we say, is just.” It seems to me that such platitudes better suit Aristotle’s predecessor than Aristotle himself. But even so, the objection continues, we need to mind the qualification introduced by φαμεν. If Aristotle were to have said simply “the things laid down by legislators are lawful and each of these is just”, then it would be clear where Aristotle stands on political obligation. But the qualification allows us to read him as saying “we [commonly] *say* that those things set down as lawful are just.” It opens the door to claims that at least some legislation is unjust (and hence not obligatory). At this point it seems to me that such appeals to ambiguity and qualification are special pleading, and as we shall soon see, the plea cannot be carried through the remainder. Let us turn to the fifth claim.

[5] the laws pronounce on all matters...

οἱ δὲ νόμοι ἀγορεύουσι περὶ ἀπάντων, (1129b14-15)

This clause has often been taken to reveal Aristotle’s “interventionist” tendencies,⁵⁷ and it is usually suggested that it anticipates X.9 1180a1 ff:

But it is surely not enough that when they [sc. youths] are young they should get the right nurture and attention; since they must, even when they are grown up, practise and be habituated to them. We shall need laws for this as well, and generally speaking *to cover the whole of life*; for most people obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than the sense of what is noble. (Ross translation, my emphasis)

If our passage is alluding to book X, then it suggests a new distinction: perhaps Aristotle is speaking of justice in a weak sense throughout V.1-2:

the justice that [he thinks] most people, including but not limited to women, children and slaves, are barely capable of, *viz.* law-abiding. And that is why in book X he says most people obey necessity rather than argument — because he wants to contrast this weak sense of justice (obedience) with the strong sense (action through choice and reasoned deliberation, cf. V.9 1136a1-5). If that is Aristotle’s view, then he is likely to answer the question of political obligation in different ways for different sorts of people. For the many, the obligation to obey is absolute; but those with practical wisdom may do what the best argument bids.⁵⁸ There is nothing at all, however, in V.1-2 which prompts us to draw the distinction between weak and strong senses of justice. Indeed, the context is against it: Aristotle has just been speaking, in books III-IV of each of the several virtues in the strong sense (i.e. as involving choice and deliberation), and he begins book V by reminding us of this context: ἡ δὲ σκέψις ἡμῶν ἔστω κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν μέθοδον τοῖς προειρημένοις (“our investigation will be according to the same method as in the foregoing [discussions]” 1129a5-6). So the passage at X.9 is appropriate to the context here.

So far, then, the passage in V.1 has provided no evidence that Aristotle favours individual autonomy in questions about justice and law-abiding. It is most plausibly taken as showing that Aristotle favours political obligation. If we continue one step, we find something more definite:

[6] [the laws pronounce on all matters,] taking aim at the common advantage either of all or of the best or of those who hold power [according to virtue] or in some other such way, so that in one way we say just deeds are the things that make and secure happiness (and its parts) for the political community.

[οἱ δὲ νόμοι ἀγορεύουσι περὶ ἀπάντων] στοχαζόμενοι ἢ τοῦ κοινῆ συμφέροντος πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς ἀρίστοις ἢ τοῖς κυρίοις [κατ’ ἀρετὴν] ἢ κατ’ ἄλλον τινὰ τροπὸν τοιοῦτον· ὥστε ἓνα μὲν τρόπον δίκαια λέγομεν τὰ ποιητικὰ καὶ φυλακτικὰ εὐδαιμονίας καὶ τῶν μορίων αὐτῆς τῆ πολιτικῆ κοινωνία. (1129b15-19)

The admission that law is sometimes made with a view to the advantage of those who hold power, *combined* with the standing claim that justice is essentially law-abiding seems to imply a straightforwardly positivist account of justice.⁵⁹ Otherwise, why should it be just for anyone to contribute to the advantage of his/her rulers by obeying laws that were framed for that very purpose? This positivistic attitude about the law is further amplified in our last excerpt:

[7] and the law orders us to do the deeds of a brave man—such as not breaking rank, or deserting, or throwing away one’s armour—and the deeds of the moderate man—such as not committing adultery or being

wanton, and the deeds of the gentleman—such as not assaulting or slandering—and similarly for the other virtues and vices, bidding us to do the former and forbidding the latter; and the law rightly laid down does this rightly, but the hastily conceived law less well.

προσάττει δ' ὁ νόμος καὶ τὰ τοῦ ἀνδρείου ἔργα ποιεῖν, οἷον μὴ λείπειν τὴν τάξιν μηδὲ φεύγειν μηδὲ ῥιπτεῖν τὰ ὄπλα, καὶ τὰ τοῦ σώφρονος, οἷον μὴ μοιχεύειν μηδ' ὑβρίζειν, καὶ τὰ τοῦ πράου, οἷον μὴ τύπτειν μηδὲ κακηγορεῖν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετὰς καὶ μοχθηρίας τὰ μὲν κελεύων τὰ δ' ἀπαγορεύων· ὀρθῶς μὲν ὁ κείμενος ὀρθῶς, χεῖρον δ' ὁ ἀπεσχεδιασμένος. (1129b19-25, cf. 1130b23-24)

Note how far removed Aristotle is from speaking about an “unjust law”. He does not even speak about laws “*incorrectly* laid down” as opposed to the ones which are correctly laid down, but only “hastily conceived” laws. He does not say of the hastily conceived law that it bids or forbids wrongly. The continuum of legislative value has only a positive side: from “rightly” to “less well”. Yet we know from experience that hastily conceived laws often have highly undesirable consequences. And once again we may ask, unless Aristotle has a positivist conception of justice, why should it be just to obey these laws?

It seems then that the only consistent way of reading the whole passage from 1129b31-1130a13 is by taking Aristotle to be a positivist about justice. The essence of justice is law-abiding. Hence, all lawful deeds are just deeds. Hence, the things laid down by the legislative art are all just, whether they aim at the common advantage of all or of some other group, and whether they are rightly laid down or not. In that case, we have an answer to our question about political obligation. The priority of the city, which is elaborated in the *Politics*, but also anticipated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is more fundamental than individual autonomy.

It is possible to supplement this view, which might seem narrow-minded to some, with a pragmatic argument to the effect that Aristotle takes it to be consistent with an individual’s best interest to observe a standing obligation to obey the law. The argument may be made in terms of Aristotle’s views about how we learn to become practical; it adopts and then extends a view expressed by Sarah Broadie.⁶⁰ To begin with, we must consider the social conditions under which we become practical. Ordinary human beings are incapable of rearing themselves. They must absorb and approve at least some of the lessons of their elders and some of the customs of their society, in order even to survive. Among these lessons necessary for survival are the elements of social justice, for we must trust some others as acting for our sake, and doing so entails that we regard their interests. We “fashion ourselves by others, as they by us.”⁶¹

This approach to becoming practical, which involves social justice, may be extended from the social to the political realm, by analogy. We know that Aristotle believes humans typically cannot achieve their end except in political society. Administering justice (a political function) is therefore necessary to the human good. Accordingly, a citizen is “one who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state” (*Politics* III.1 1275b15). It is essential to Aristotle’s political theory that the good man be not merely a good subject of his city, but that he take part in ruling. Only in the good ruler do political and human virtue fully coincide (*Politics* III.4 1276b17 ff.). The good citizen learns about how to become a good ruler through being ruled, and through being law-abiding. This is analogous to the way that a child learns to become practical by trusting a parent’s advice about what to do. Even though it is obvious that the science of legislation is imperfect, prudence argues for the standing presumption that law-abiding will not only promote the interests of others, but also our own interests, because the laws represent views of how everyone should act. Thus, although Aristotle’s claim that universal justice is law-abiding shows that he assumes citizens have an obligation to obey, the obligation is ultimately consistent with prudence.

There is not space to discuss this interesting argument further. It would explain how an autonomous moral agent could accept an obligation to obey the city’s laws, even when they appear “hastily framed.” But it will clearly run into problems where the analogy between the social and political breaks down.⁶² And it does not address at all the question what one is to do when the laws appear grossly unjust.

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Endnotes

1. See Barker (1946:l): "The 'limit of state-interference' never suggested itself to the Greek philosophers as a problem for their consideration." And further on the same page: "But after all we do an injustice to the theorists of the city state if we compare them to the theorists of the great modern state." Barker saw correctly that the vocabulary of modern political theory, which derives primarily from Latin, tends to distort our view of the Greeks. His chapter on the vocabulary of the *Politics* gives a good summary of the differences between Aristotelian and modern political terms.
2. For autonomy, see *Politics* V.11 1315a6, cf. III.13 1284a13-14. The first passage is remarkable since it contains the only use of the term αὐτονόμος in Aristotle. In this context Aristotle anticipates Machiavelli in advising the despot to seem just and virtuous. He then claims that the despot should honour good men in such a way that they think they wouldn't be more honoured by autonomous citizens: τοὺς τε ἀγαθοὺς περὶ τι γιγνομένους τιμᾶν οὕτως ὥστε μὲ νομίζειν ἂν ποτε τιμηθῆναι μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν αὐτονόμων ὄντων. It seems clear that all that is implied here is a contrast between subjects and citizens, the latter who rule on their own behalf. The second passage bears this out. Aristotle speaks about monarchs of superior virtue: αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσι νόμος. Cole seeks to identify modern autonomy with Aristotle's αὐταρκεία, on which see below. For individual rights see Miller, 1995.
3. In Aristotle's metaphysics, of course, the concept of an individual is fundamental. But in his ethics and politics, Aristotle recognises that an individual is not "self-sufficient" (αὐταρκες). Thus he sometimes describes persons as belonging to the city rather than to themselves (see *Pol.* VIII.1 1337a26-27: ἅμα δὲ οὐδὲ χρῆν νομίζειν αὐτόν αὐτοῦ τινα εἶναι τῶν πολιτῶν, ἀλλὰ πάντας τῆς πόλεως). For this reason the Aristotelian city cannot be a mere aggregate of individuals. Evidently, Aristotle would not have agreed with Mill that, "the only freedom that deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way" (*On Liberty*, Chapter 1).

4. The verb δέω appears only once in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, at 1159a21.
5. Barker (1946:lxiii).
6. Sophocles, *Antigone* 450-459. Translation: Elizabeth Wyckoff, in Green and Lattimore (1960).
7. Sophocles, *Antigone* 663-674. Translation: Wyckoff.
8. For example, see Nussbaum (1986:302).
9. It is hard to miss, in fact, even at the beginning of the *Iliad*, where Achilles questions Agamemnon's authority.
10. The examples that follow are all summarised in Sorabji (1990:274-6).
11. Theodorus: one should take the cosmos as one's country (DL 2, 98-99); Aristippus "prized freedom and avoided ruling or being ruled by being a foreigner wherever he went" (Xenophon, Mem. II 1,13); Zeno: "we should not reside by cities or parishes, each distinguished by its own system of right and wrong." (Plutarch, Alex. Fort. 329a-b); Ariston: "by nature we have no fatherland" (Plutarch, De Exilio, 600e).
12. Zeller (1897:ii 224-6)
13. Allen (1964:61)
14. Miller (1995:)
15. See *EN* II.4 1105a31-33, where Aristotle states the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for virtuous actions: πρῶτον μὲν εἰδώς, ἔπειτ' εἰάν προαιρούμενος, καὶ προαιρούμενος δι' αὐτά, τὸ δὲ τρίτον εἰάν καὶ βεβαίως καὶ ἀμετακινήτως ἔχων πράττει ("First he must do them knowingly, second he must do them by choice and choosing them for their own sake, and third he must do them having a firm and unchanging state.") Now the first condition, Aristotle says, counts for little or nothing, but the other two are "all-important" (πᾶν δύναται). But these two conditions appear incompatible with one another. According to condition [2] each action must be decided on (cf. δι' αὐτά), but condition [3] implies that his actions will be determined by his character. Aristotle later responds to this puzzle by claiming that ἔξεις, rather than the πράξεις are directly chosen, and the actions are prohairetic in the sense that they stem from corresponding characters (see III.5 1114a3-20). But this only raises further complications: a ἔξις is produced by habituation from an early age, and it is particularly the legislators who are concerned "to make citizens good by habituation" (II.1 1103b3-4).
16. See the discussions in *EN* III. and VI.2
17. A note of caution: at the beginning of *EN* VI.8 Aristotle says: : "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἡ φρόνησις ἡ αὐτὴ μὲν ἔξις, τὸ μέντοι εἶναι οὐ ταῦτον αὐταῖς ("Political [science] and prudence are the same condition, but their being is not the same")!
18. See also *EN* VI.7 1141b10: τοῦ γὰρ φρονίμου μάλιστα τοῦτ' ἔργον εἶναί φαμεν, τὸ εὖ βουλευέσθαι ("for we say this is especially the function of the sage: to deliberate well"). I insert the word "only" because it is clear from the discussion in chs. 8-9 that Aristotle thinks excellence in deliberation, and practical wisdom, are concerned with both particular actions as well as the good life (see 1142a24030, 1142b28-33).
19. See Barnes (1990:252).

20. It is interesting to follow out the consequences of this for the virtue of courage. In ch. 7 Aristotle says repeatedly that the brave man acts from a noble object (e.g. καλοῦ δῆ ἔνεκα ὁ ἀνδρῆος ὑπομένει καὶ πράττει τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀνδρείαν, 1115b23-24; see also ὅτι καλόν 1116a11, 1117b9).
21. See Barnes (1990:252).
22. Cole (1990).
23. See *GA* 732a17
24. See *GA* 776b8
25. See *De Incessu Animalium* 708a25.
26. Heat for example, See *Problemata* 880a15
27. See *Topics* 102a17, cf. 150b23
28. See *De Mundo* 396a13
29. *ENX.6* 1169b6, see also *Rhetoric* I.5 1360b14
30. See *Metaphysics* XIV.4 1091b17-19, where “good is self-sufficient” is treated as analytic (ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐ δι’ ἄλλο τι ἀφθαρτον ἢ διότι εὖ ἔχει, οὐδ’ αὐτάρκες, “but indeed a thing can be for no other reason imperishable or self-sufficient than because it is good.”) See also *Rhetoric* I.6 1362a27: τοῦτό <γάρ> ἐστὶν ἐκάστῳ ἀγαθόν, καὶ οὐ παρόντος εὖ διακέεται καὶ αὐτάρκως ἔχει (“for this is good in each [case]: namely, that which, by its presence, makes a thing noble and self-sufficient”).
31. See *ENIV.3* 1125a12
32. See *ENVIII.9* 1160b4
33. See *ENX.8* 1177a27, cf. 1177b1, 1177b22
34. See *ENIX.9* 1169b5
35. See *ENIX.9* 1169b5 ff.
36. See *ENIX.9* 1169b6, *X.8* 1178b34, *Politics* 1253a26-28.
37. See 1291a10 (αὐτάρκης γὰρ ἡ πόλις), 1275b21, 1321b17, 1326b3-24, 1328b17
38. See 1252b29, 1261b11
39. See 1280b34
40. He does sometimes say the city or community is self-sufficient for life (ζωῆς) but whose life? Since the city is treated as an organism, we have to take seriously the possibility that Aristotle meant its life, rather than the lives of individuals.
41. εἰ γὰρ καὶ ταῦτόν ἐστιν ἐνὶ καὶ πόλει, μεῖζόν γε καὶ τελειότερον τὸ τῆς πόλεως φαίνεται καὶ λαβεῖν καὶ σῶζειν· ἀγαπητόν μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἐνὶ μόνῳ, κάλλιον δὲ καὶ θεϊότερον ἔθνει καὶ πόλεσιν (1094b7-10).
42. On this compare Antiphon, DK 87 B44 “the laws make pronouncements about what the eyes should and should not see, what the ears should and should not hear,” etc.
43. See *Politics* I.2 1253a18-29.

44. Miller (1995:205). Miller argues that we cannot take the analogy seriously because it implies that individuals cannot exist apart from the polis, which is “transparently false”. But Aristotle does not say that individuals cannot exist outside the city, only that human beings *qua* human cannot, and that is not transparently false.
45. ἅμα δὲ οὐδὲ χρῆ νομίζειν αὐτόν αὐτοῦ τινα εἶναι τῶν πολιτῶν, ἀλλὰ πάντας τῆς πόλεως, 1337a27-28. I was alerted to this passage by Barnes (1990:262-263). Barnes points out that elsewhere Aristotle describes a free man as αὐτοῦ φύσει (*Politics* 1.4 1254a14, by contrast to a slave, who is ἄλλου) and αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ μὴ ἄλλου (*Metaphysics* 1.2 982b 25-26).
46. Barnes (1990: 259).
47. These examples are adumbrated in Barnes (1990:259)
48. For the sake of brevity I have expressed the examples generally. But so expressed they may not appear so “totalitarian”. Except for the first and last group, similar kinds of laws may be found in nearly all liberal democracies. When one looks at the specific recommendations Aristotle makes, considerable impositions on individual liberties are obvious. But even in their general expression, these sorts of laws are decried by libertarians.
49. I think this is what D. J. Allen (1964:57) means when he says that “instances will only serve to confirm what has otherwise been established.”
50. D. J. Allan argues that the passage is carefully constructed to avoid speaking about “virtuous action in the full and proper sense”, but addresses only “the external actions of virtue irrespective of the motive” (1964:64; cf. 65-69).
51. See Stewart (1892: 407), who argues that the two terms differ only “as notion and state.”
52. See Stewart (1892:406-409), who says, “there is perhaps no place in the E.N. where the MSS. show so much confusion as they do here” (408).
53. Following Ross.
54. The plural πάντα τὰ νόμιμα shows that Aristotle is not speaking about ideal lawfulness.
55. See Stewart (1897:389) Stewart argues that the qualification implied by πως is revealed by the text at 1129b17: ὥστε ἓνα μὲν τρόπον δίκαια λέγομεν τὰ ποιητικὰ καὶ φυλακτικὰ εὐδαιμονίας καὶ τῶν μορίων αὐτῆς τῇ πολιτικῇ κοινωνίᾳ. (“so that one way we speak of just things is as what produce and preserve happiness and its parts for the political community”). He suggests that ὥστε ἓνα μὲν τρόπον is answered at the beginning of chapter 2 by Ζητοῦμεν δὲ γε τὴν ἐν μέρει ἀρετῆς δικαιοσύνην· ἔστι γὰρ τις, ὡς φαμέν (“But we are seeking justice which is a part of virtue, for there is a [justice of this kind; Ross], as we say”), so the contrast is between general and particular justice. Stewart’s view that we should look in the immediate context, if anywhere, for clarification of πως is sound, and his appeal to the text as 1129b17 is plausible. But the contrast ὥστε ἓνα μὲν τρόπον—Ζητοῦμεν δε is opposed by Jackson (1879:69) who thinks ὥστε ἓνα μὲν τρόπον is answered by the immediately following προστάττει δ’ ὁ νόμος καὶ τὰ τοῦ ἀνδρείου ἔργα ποιεῖν, etc. (“but the law commands also the acts of a brave man”, etc.).

56. See Jackson (1879:69). Jackson cites *Politics* III.11 (1282b12) in support.
57. See Stewart (1897:389-90)
58. For a discussion of different implications of the passage at *Politics* X.9, see D. J. Allan (1964:72-78).
59. The text is admittedly questionable; see Stewart (1897:390-91), Jackson (1879:69). But even if κατ' ἀρετὴν is retained, all are in agreement that the contrast is between τοῦ κοινῆ συμφέροντος and the advantage of the various rulers of the παρεκβάσεις. And Aristotle reiterates the point a little later when he says, echoing Thrasymachus, that justice is "another's good" because it does what is advantageous to another, *whether that person is a member of the community* (κοινωνω 1130a5 cf. τοῦ κοινῆ συμφέροντος 1129b15) *or a ruler* (ἄρχοντι 1130a3-5, cf. κυρίου 1129b16).
60. See Broadie (1991:114-118). The first part of the argument, about social justice, is meant to be simply a summary of Broadie's view; the second part, about political justice, is an extension of it.
61. Broadie (1991:117).
62. Broadie herself only uses the argument to ground the elements of social justice. She explicitly states that an argument like this cannot "ground a system of rights and duties" because it can "supply no principle for determining who should fall within the circle of those with whom the ethically developing individual stands" (1991:117-118).

Is man by nature a political and good animal, according to Aristotle?

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Abstract

According to Aristotle a person is by nature a political animal. He/she is namely predestined to live as a socio-political being. He/she belongs to those gregarious and "political" animals who share a common activity. A person's politability-sociability certainly reaches its peak with his participation in the political society of the polis where his rational nature is fully realised. However a person is by nature a good animal. This of course applies to all physical beings. All beings as beings are good, since nature in its entirety is in Aristotle's view good and purposeful. But not only are all beings good but they also pursue good whether this is actually good or it only seems to be good. In each case the good is identified with purpose and constitutes the fullness of its natural appetite thereof. A person is good ontologically in two ways: He/she is good and desires to do good and only the good.

According to Aristotle, man is by nature a political animal. This means that he is destined by his own nature to live as a sociopolitical being. He is a being in which political behavior is an innate possibility, since he is governed by a natural urge to live in the company of other men: *φύσει μὲν οὐν ἡ ὀρμὴ ἐν πᾶσιν ἐπὶ τὴν τοιαύτην κοινωनीαν* (sc. τὴν πολιτικὴν) (1253a 29-30).¹ This phrase however is often misinterpreted. And so it is imperative to provide some answer to the question regarding the real meaning of the natural political behavior of man, as well as regarding the meaning of natural "political behavior" of certain animals. According to Aristotle the biologist, man is not the only political animal, because many of the animals which live in herds are political in his opinion, that is, they participate in some common activity.² As a result, political behavior, even in Aristotle's *Politics*, a political text par excellence, does not necessarily refer to our familiar Greek polis, since it is compared to the political behavior of the bee³ - even if human political activity is richer and more complex. Of course human nature is not limited to its political behavior, for there also exists the theory for the sake of theory, which constitutes the most divine human

activity.⁴ And as S. Klark correctly notes: “no man’s identity can be exhausted by his social role, none the less in so far as he is a man he is social.”⁵ It is obvious that the word “political” must be disconnected from the word “polis”, with respect to its strict political sense, and must be understood in its broader meaning, so that it indicates *“that which belongs to a community like the polis”*,⁶ in other words, the same thing as the word “social”. This identification is made clear in the relevant passage of the Aristotelian treatise on animals mentioned above.

Indeed, the word “political” is used in its broader sense both in the Politics and in the Nicomachean Ethics. Thus in the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle tells us that man, because he is by nature a political animal, that is a social animal, would never prefer to live alone, even if he had at his disposal all the riches of the world: ουδεις γαρ ελοιτ’ αν καθ’ αυτον τα παντα εχειν αγαθα. πολιτικον γαρ ο ανθρωπος και συζην πεφυκως⁷ (1169b 17-19). Indeed, at another point in the same treatise, Aristotle underlines that the social nature of man is always a step ahead of his political nature, in the sense that the social nature of man in the fundamental form of the sexual union between a man and a woman is more powerful and superior to any other form of human communal cohabitation, because this form of union constitutes the necessary condition of existence not merely of the cohabitating community of the polis, but of the human species itself: ανδρι και γυναικι φιλια δοκει κατα φυσιν υπαρχειν. ανθρωπος γαρ τη φυσει συνδυαστικον μαλλον η πολιτικον, οσω προτερον και αναγκαιοτερον οικια πολεως, και τεκνοποια κοινοτερον τοις ζωοις (1162a 16-19).⁸

In any case, the adjective ‘political’ is used by Aristotle with two different meanings. At times it is used to denote things and situations that are related to the political society of the polis, and at times to denote something broader; in this latter sense, it means the same as the adjective ‘social.’ The use of the adjective ‘political’ with the meaning of ‘social’ is also two-fold, for sometimes it simply means the cohabitating animals, that is the animals that live in herds, and at other times it means ‘social’ and ‘political’ at the same time, and so it refers exclusively to man.⁹ That is, it denotes, both the general need of man for social life in the company of other men, and something else beyond this form of socializing, because it also denotes the political conduct of man, which is the more narrow meaning of the term. It denotes the institutions and the purely political life of the political society of the polis.

But it is time to move on to the meaning of the word “political” in the phrase ‘political animal’ in the Politics, where it occurs three times:

- A) εκ τουτων ουν φανερον οτι των φυσει η πολις εστι, και οτι ο ανθρωπος φυσει πολιτικον ζων (1253a 1-3).

- B) διότι δε πολιτικόν ὁ ἀνθρώπος ζῶν πάσης μελιττῆς καὶ πάντος ἀγέλαιου ζῶου μάλλον δηλον (1253a 7-9).
- C) φύσει μὲν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπος ζῶν πολιτικόν. διο καὶ μῆδεν δεόμενοι τῆς παρ' ἀλλήλων βοήθειας οὐκ ἐλάττον ὀρεγόνται τοῦ συζῆν (1278b 19-21).

In the first passage the natural political behavior of man is attached to the natural character of the polis, given that the nature of man reaches its completion inside and through the polis¹⁰ to which man is inclined by his very nature.¹¹ As a result, the adjective “political” in the passage in question refers to the political society of the polis, namely, it is used with its more narrow and precise meaning.¹²

In the second passage of the Politics listed above, the natural political behaviour of man is compared to that of the bee and generally to that of all animals that live in herds, and it is argued that man is a political animal to a higher degree than the other animals that live in herds. A difference of superiority favors man, and this is certainly due to the fact that man is not merely a ‘political animal’ but also an ‘animal who has rationality’, a trait which clearly enriches and upgrades his social capital in many respects.¹³

In the third passage of the Politics, which also contains the phrase ‘man the political animal’, the adjective “political” is used in its broader and more comprehensive sense. It has, that is, the same meaning as the word ‘social’. That the socialization of man is fulfilled within the community of the polis, and therefore, here as in all the parallel texts, that in some way the political society of the city is also implied, cannot be doubted, I believe.

There is no doubt that Aristotle uses the adjective “political” in the phrase “political animal” wishing to state simultaneously two things: first, that man is a social animal, somewhat like many animals that live in herds, and second, that man is the social animal par excellence, because he can move beyond the simple political behavior or social behavior, which he shares with the animals of the herd, and reach the political behavior of the polis, which is the most complex and most perfect society. And it is possible for man to move beyond the simple political behavior, because only man has (superior) intelligence and the ability to communicate in articulated speech, in language, not mere sounds.¹⁴ The creation of the political society of the polis also enables the realization of the more complete political behavior of man, which is expressed also in the famous phrase: “man is by nature a political animal”. In other words, political behavior, from mere natural urge¹⁵ and the possibility of social cohabitation with other men, becomes true political life (life of the polis), within which man is able to realize completely his nature and so become a ‘good citizen’, and should the circumstances be conducive, also a ‘good man’ as well. The political behavior of man is complex and multi-leveled, because his nature is complex and multi-leveled. This is the reason why man is more of a political

animal than the other political animals. "The polis has the nature of man as its essence, because it is inside the polis that the logos of man is realized".¹⁶ The man of nature, being a product of nature, is essentially man only in principle. He becomes true man, according to Aristotle, in stages and through political life, and the life of the polis¹⁷ more specifically.¹⁸ This, however, does not mean that when Aristotle says in his Politics: man is by nature a political animal, he means exclusively that man is by nature "destined to live inside the polis".¹⁹

After what has been argued so far it is, I believe, obvious that the adjective "political" at a first level means social, socialis, gesellschaftlich, and at a second level it means political, politicus, politisch. Thus, when someone claims²⁰ that Thomas Aquinas defines man as a social and political animal, allegedly contrary to Aristotle, who defines him only as a political animal because he presumably does not know the meaning of 'society', he obviously has not understood the meaning of the aforementioned famous Aristotelian phrase — a phrase which covers completely both the notion of civic society and the notion of political society. For Aristotle social behavior-political behavior constitutes an ontological characteristic of man. For this reason Aristotle argues that the man who has no political nature is either something less than man, that is, a wild animal, or he is self-sufficient on his own, that is, something more than man, he is god.²¹ Of course, this does not at all mean that those who live outside the polis are not men. For Aristotle only he who does not have a political nature is not man; ο δια φυσιν και ου δια τυχην απολις (1253a 3-4).²² For this reason, the thesis that, presumably according to Aristotle, man is by nature an animate being of the polis, a being who lives in the perfect society,²³ cannot be accepted.

Let us now see if man is by nature a good animal. To begin with we should say that we shall see goodness ontologically on the one hand, and on the other hand, morally. As far as our first consideration, the ontological one, is concerned, we must say that the good, just as being, is for Aristotle something that can be said in many ways, that is a concept with many meanings, and it corresponds to the ontological categories of being as good,²⁴ refers to the essence and it expresses the ontological good.²⁵ In this sense, all beings are good. The reason for their goodness is purely and simply the fact that they exist. Being and Good at an introductory basic level are identical. They differ only secundum rationem, because the concept of good points to the concept of desirable, and this in turn to the concept of perfection, which is entwined with a real, with an ontologically perfect, being. Whatever exists, is automatically a bearer of perfection, which is founded in the very nature of being, of each being. All beings, nature in its entirety, have inside them the purpose, they are themselves their own

purpose, they exist for a purpose and not in vain. Η δε φυσικς τελος εστιν²⁶ (1252b 32), says Aristotle, and the self-realization of every being equals the realization of its respective nature. And since beings are themselves their own purpose, they are good by themselves.²⁷

Thus, according to Aristotle, the nature/physis of every being is identified with its telos, its end, which these beings reach only when the course of their ontological growth has been completed, when, that is, they reach that level of perfection which is foreseen by their own nature. That is precisely why the telos is identical to natural perfection, to the good, ontological and moral, because the latter is attached to the natural identity-individuality of every being. And precisely because the good is identified with the natural perfection of all beings, towards which all move, it is defined by Aristotle as that which is desired by everything and is pursued by everything: διο καλωσ απεφηναντο τ' αγαθον, ου παντ' εφιεται (Ηθ. Νικ. 1094α 2-3)²⁸. It is identified, in other words, with the object of desire/appetite, with the particular end at any given time, since this constitutes the fulfillment of will in the case of man, as well as the cause and the end of every practical and theoretical activity of man,²⁹ and also of all cosmic activity becoming, for, in Aristotle's view, physis is the end, and the end, every end, is good. And since good is the telos (end), and nature, the work of nature, is always serving some purpose, the teleological interpretation of both the moral and the natural/cosmic reality for Aristotle is given. In Aristotle, good in its ontological dimension is not limited to the human ontological and moral good, but it includes all beings, animate and inanimate. All natural beings are good, simply because they exist, because the Being is better than the not-Being³⁰, and beings in act (energeia) are more perfect and therefore better than the beings in potentia (δυναμει), because each thing, Aristotle says in his Physics, receives a definition when it has reached its realization rather than when it exists only in potentia (δυναμει)³¹. The precise nature of every thing, in other words, presupposes its complete development.³² For the same reason, the species in Aristotle ranks a step higher than matter (υλη);³³ it is nature to a higher degree than matter is nature. And precisely because the cause of the ontological good is the things themselves, the numbers are not considered an ontological good, because they are neither autonomous natural substances nor composites (matter and species), and so they are not causes of the autonomous natural substances.³⁴ For the same reason ontological evil is understood only as privation in relation to the normal nature of the being to which it refers. This means that ontological evil does not have autonomous existence, it does not exist on its own, as it does in Plato.³⁵ δηλον αρα οτι ουκ εστι το κακον παρα τα πραγματα (Μεταφ. 1051α 17-18)³⁶. Ontological evil is an imperfection of a particular being, because this being either has not yet attained completely the shape that it is destined

to have by nature (ΕΝΤΕΛΕΧΕΙΑ), or it has a defective form (ΕΝΤΕΛΕΧΕΙΑ). This means that no being is evil as being, but it is evil only when it lacks certain things which it is destined to have by nature. One such natural evil is, for example, blindness, or various diseases. The same also holds true for moral evil. This too, is a form of privation in relation to the moral perfection which pertains to man according to the potential of his nature. The existence of natural and moral evil is not contradictory with respect to the ontological being which is identified with being itself, but they constitute accidents of being. Thus, a man who, for example, does not have moral virtues or sharp vision, is not ontologically evil, he is not generally evil as a man, but only with respect to one moral and natural dimension.³⁷ This means that the ontological goodness, for example of men, is not absolutely identical, but rather it differs from man to man depending on their ontological perfection because τ' αγαθον ισαχως λεγεται τω οντι (ΗΘ. ΝΙΚ. 1096α 23-24)³⁸. This is precisely the reason why Aristotle mentions 'natural virtues'. These are natural aptitudes which through prudence may become principal qualities, that is moral virtues.³⁹ The natural virtues are not the same for all men. There are qualitative differences. This is why Aristotle speaks of men with optimal nature or corrupted nature.⁴⁰

Ontological good is understood as the affirmation of Being. This is why all nature is per se good. Ontological good despite its being different from moral good⁴¹ is not irrelevant to it,⁴² because it is part of the ontological particularity of beings, which operates as the familiar matter with respect to the moral good.⁴³ As far as man is concerned, the ontological good par excellence is identical to his rational soul,⁴⁴ which is the presupposition and the instrument for all dimensions of moral good.⁴⁵

If the ontological good of man is his rational soul, understood as the carrier of his unique powers and abilities which of all beings he alone possesses - because it is his soul which enables him to be who he is, in other words it gives him his identity - then the work of man can only be attributed to the work of his rational mind (ΨΥΧΗ), and as such to be rational deeds and activities,⁴⁶ because it is not possible for the ontological uniqueness to be purposeless, namely that one or more functions do not correspond to the rational mind. Aristotle states that it is not possible for every man-craftsman and for every member or instrument of man not to have their familiar work, and man as human being, namely man as an ontological type (ΕΙΔΟΣ) not to have a familiar function which will express his specific distinction, his ontological identity and his substance.⁴⁷ The substance is expressed from within its familiar activity or function and the familiar activity or the familiar function are expressions (ΕΚΦΑΝΣΕΙΣ) of the substance. However the function of man, as is moreover self-evident is not qualitatively undifferentiated but is distinguished in terms of good and bad. Thus just as the functioning of a

guitarist may be bad, average or excellent (σπουδαιο) so the functioning of man as human being is according to his gifts and abilities, in respect of the appropriate virtue, is in Aristotle's language good or bad. Subsequently the function of an excellent man, the man with distinct virtues (αρεται), will be correspondingly excellent,⁴⁸ and because the good of man as human being, as a logical necessity, lies for him in the appropriate function: "Εν τω εργω δοκει ταγαθον ειναι και το ευ".⁴⁹ "For the good (goodness) and the well (efficiency) is thought to reside in that function", and as this, as already stated, is nothing else than the rational faculties and activities. Aristotle comes thus to the interesting conclusion that the human good turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there is more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.⁵⁰ This means that the most perfect good of man, namely happiness, should be identified with the most perfect function of man.⁵¹

But the correctness of this teaching of Aristotle is disputed in the sense that for man as human being there is an own appropriate function and that a good man is a man who performs his function well. Thus there are those who claim⁵² that to man as human being, - a specific action does not correspond - a function which is not exclusively appropriate to his nature. They say man has not been created for a specific purpose or at least there is no common acceptance of such a view. However those who support this criticism forget that so long as we accept that man has a unique ontological identity, since he is the only rational being, that is, a being who possesses reason both with regard to the meaning of high intelligence and to articulated speech, namely language. We are of necessity - rational necessity - compelled to accept that in this unique rational nature of man also corresponds a unique and analogous function which cannot be anything else but the rational faculties and activities. The function is derivative from the substance of its producer. And as G Santas correctly observes "the question whether man has a distinct function in the Aristotelian sense of the term is tantamount to the question whether man has certain abilities or powers that no other living being has namely to think in terms of means and aims and to conduct theoretical research or in other words to contemplate as to what he has to do and search for the truth. We know that man has indeed these abilities and as far as we know he alone possesses them".⁵³ Therefore when Aristotle speaks regarding an appropriate function in man, surely he does not mean a particular or unique function, for example as the function of an artist or a mathematician.

Concerning the second objection namely that a good man is a man who performs his function well and as a result of it he is apparently an instrument in the service of others' aims, something morally unacceptable, since man is an end in himself and he should never become a means and

an instrument in the service of other people. It must be said that the man who performs his function well in the final analysis mainly advances his own happiness and thereby does not become an instrument in the service of others. According to Aristotle, man, every man, is always an end in himself, since the highest aim of every proper state is happiness, this highest good, of all citizens and all people. All people without exception have the right to happiness. G Santas observes as follows: "Aristotle maintains that a man is a good man if he performs his function as man well and therefore man is not assessed on the basis of the quality of services he offers as instrument of someone else's aims".⁵⁴

But let us return to the good as the object of desire, as desideratum. We have already mentioned that the notion of desire in this case has a special breath and depth.⁵⁵

With respect to their quality, Aristotle divides goods into true and apparent. Both the former and the latter are equally objects of desire. Every man always desires and pursues whatever seems good to him, that is pleasant, beneficial, useful, just, beautiful, regardless of whether it is actually good or not: του γαρ είναι δοκουντος αγαθου χαριν παντα πραττουσιν παντες (1252a 3-4).⁵⁶ This, though, obviously leads to an extreme subjectivism and to a corresponding relativism—in other words, to a sophisticated treatment of things. At this point it is necessary to stress something which of course is absolutely self-evident, namely that Aristotle is not at all indifferent to the question as to whether this is an issue regarding the true good or merely the apparent good. He is indifferent only with respect to approaching the good on an exclusively descriptive and empirical way. If, however, we approach matters as we should and according to the rules, just as Aristotle approaches them, then of course it should not be a matter of indifference to us whether the good is an apparent or true one. So, according to Aristotle, the will always directs itself toward a certain end. And since the telos (end) and the good in Aristotle are one and the same,⁵⁷ the will is always directed towards a good.⁵⁸ On this everybody agrees. But the question is whether the object of the will is identical to the true good or merely to whatever is considered good. Others believe that the will is always directed towards the true good, and that if someone happens to desire something after making a bad choice, this cannot be considered the object of the will: τοις μεν βουλητον τ' αγαθον λεγουσι μη ειναι βουλητον ο βουλεται ο μη ορθως αιρουμενος (Ηθ. Νικ. 1113a 17-18).⁵⁹ Alternatively, others believe that the object of the will is the apparent good, that is, whatever one considers to be good: τοις δ' αυ το φαινομενον αγαθον βουλητον λεγουσι (Ηθ. Νικ. 1113a 20).⁶⁰ Aristotle tries to find the golden mean between these two diametrically opposed moral theories, accepting that according to a more general and correct consideration of things, the

object of the will is the good, the true good, while for man as individual, the object of the will is what under particular circumstances seems good to him: φατεον απλως μεν και κατ' αληθειαν βουλητον ειναι τ' αγαθον, εκαστω δε το φαινομενον (Ηθ. Νικ. 1113α 23-24).⁶¹ And from theory, Aristotle moves one to praxis, creating some form of compromise between the Sophists and Plato, arguing that the true good is the object of the virtuous man's will, while the morally imperfect, (φαυλος) limits himself to what seems good to him, whatever offers him pleasure or satisfies some temporary interests: τω μεν ουν σπουδαιω το κατ' αληθειαν (sc. αγαθον βουλητον εστι), τω δε φαυλω το τυχον (Ηθ. Νικ. 1113α 25-26).⁶² With this thesis, a really important one, Aristotle also answers the big question, what is the rule and the measure of the morally right.

According to Aristotle the sure criterium for the morally right or wrong is the excellent one, namely the distinguished man on account of his ethos and sound judgement. This man precisely due to his abilities can act as a rule and measure for the assessment of current moral issues.⁶³ On the contrary most people are swept by pleasures in making erroneous judgements resulting in them always preferring sensual things, by considering them as good while in reality this is not always the case, and to avoid sad matters viewing them as bad while this does not always hold good.⁶⁴ Therefore according to Aristotle the rule and measure of morality is the excellent man. The relationship between excellent and good is dialectical and wavering since the good is whatever seems good to the excellent man and an excellent man is the man to whom the real good seems good. In other words the criterium of the good man's goodness is the excellent man and the criterium of the excellent man's goodness is the real good.

The raising of a man, even though an excellent man, to a criterium of goodness and morality is viewed with criticism and scepticism.⁶⁵ In other words what is called in question is the correctness of the authority's criterium. However what must be noted here is that the raising of the excellent man to a rule of morality is neither arbitrary nor is it due to some aristocratic inclination on Aristotle's part. Aristotle's excellent man is not self-appointed to be an excellent man neither is he appointed by some other authority but is recognised as such by the political society in which he lives. That is to say he earns the enviable title through a tacit agreement of a society which he expresses in an informal way because he represents in an exemplary manner what in his society constitutes a common conscience and a universal demand on a level of correct speech and virtue. What certainly cannot be proved in an unquestionable way is who is excellent and who is depraved. Besides, in the changing topics of morality and politics, it is both futile and irrational to search for proof.⁶⁶

Regarding the goodness of man from the perspective of morality, as is

known, this is an accomplishment of man, an accomplishment, that is, of the human intellectual and voluntary faculties, and it is founded on man's nature, exercise and learning. On ethical criteria, man is neither good nor bad by nature: ουδεμια των ηθικων αρετων φυσει ημιν εγγινεται...ουτ' αρα φυσει ουτε παρα φυσιν εγγινονται αι αρεται, αλλα πεφυκοσι μεν ημιν δεξασθαι αυτας, τελειουμενοις δε δια του εθους (Ηθ. Νικ. 1103α 19-26).⁶⁷ This is also true for the intellectual virtues.

Man, then, is good in a double sense. On the one hand, he is good per se (ontological good), and on the other hand, he is good as subject and bearer of the desire of the good, apparent or real. Inside him coexist simultaneously the good as subject and the good as object, as the fulfillment of biological and emotional needs.

Endnotes

1. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a 29-30.
2. Aristotle, *The History of Animals*, 487a 1-4.
3. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a 7-8.
4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, K 7.
5. S Klark, *Aristotle's Man: speculations upon Aristotelian anthropology*, 101.
6. R G Mulgan, *Aristotle's Doctrine*, 439.
7. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1169b 17-19. I do not agree with R G Mulgan (*Aristotle's Doctrine*, 441) who thinks that the present excerpt refers to the political society of the polis.
8. The complete misconception of the present excerpt by R G Mulgan (*Aristotle's Doctrine*, 440) comes as a surprise: "Once again here we have to do with the same allusion, namely that man's political nature refers to the need for the polis rather than other forms of society."
9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b 8-11, 16-19 and 1169b 17-19.
10. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b 27- 1253a 1.
11. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a 29-30.
12. R G Mulgan did not grasp the relation of the naturalness of polis with the natural civility of man, namely that the naturalness of polis belongs to man's political nature who is brought to the polis, so that his nature may be realized. Muller has been evidently carried away by the fact that polis as the broader and more accomplished society comprises all the smaller and more incomplete associations, and as such thought that the word ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟΣ is used here in a broader and inclusive sense. "The term ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟΝ ΖΩΟΝ is here clearly used in the inclusive sense. The ΠΟΛΙΣ embraces all the lesser associations in a self-sufficient unit, and man is naturally ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟΝ because this unit is the one in which his nature finds its perfect development" (*Aristotle's Doctrine*, 442).
13. In this respect quite indicative of man's superiority are the following excerpts: *Eudemian Ethics*, 1242a 21-26, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1162a 16-19, 1097a 8-12, and *Politics*, 1278b 17-21.

14. (Superior) intelligence is a unique privilege of man and is mainly expressed as βουλευτικον and διανοητικον, whose expressions are generally theoretical reflection and more specifically foresight (προοραν). *Politics*, 1252a 31-32, 1260a 10-14.
15. This urge is not purely instinctive – animalistic but human, since it mainly expresses man’s civility which in spite of its commonality with the “civility” of some animals, constitutes specific distinction of man, for it belongs to his peculiar rational nature.
16. J Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik* 76.
17. Aristotle surely knows very well that humans exist also outside the Greek cities.
18. In Aristotle the distinction, not the contrast, is clear between nature and civilization. (*Eudemian Ethics*, 1214a 14, *Nicomachean Ethics*, B 1-7, and *Politics*, 1332a 38-40). Therefore Heidegger and Kullmann are at fault as well as others who do not accept that Aristotle makes a distinction between animal and man, nature and logos, nature and civilization. (See M Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus*, 65 and W Kullmann, *The political thought of Aristotle*, 54-58).
19. A Kamp, *Aristoteles’ Theorie der Polis*, Frankfurt a. M. 1990, p. 66.
20. As for example in A Kamp, *Die politische Philosophie des Aristoteles*, Freiburg-München 1985, p. 131. This unsubstantiated and paradoxical view is also supported by H Arendt, (*The Human Condition*, Athens 1986, p. 41), when she writes that the word *social* (socialis) is of Roman origin and it has no equivalent in the Greek language and thought).
21. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a 27-29.
22. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a 3-4. Therefore D Keyt’s objection in (“three fundamental theorems in Aristotle’s *Politics*” *Phronesis* 32, 1987, p.77-78) that it is possible for someone to live outside the polis and to still be a man does not rescind Aristotle’s premise.
23. See A Kamp, *Die politische Philosophie des Aristoteles*, p. 61.
24. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1096a 23-24.
25. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1096a 24-25.
26. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b 32.
27. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b 32-1253a 1.
28. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a 2-3. It is not certain whether the definition refers exclusively to man or to the entire physical world.
29. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a 1-3.
30. Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, 336b 28.
31. Aristotle, *Physics* 193b 7-8. *Metaphysics*, 1029a 29-30, 1035a 1, 1035b 9-10, 1042a 32 and *On the Soul*, 412b 9. Also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1 22, n. 208: non enim dicitur esse aliquid ex hoc quod est in potential, sed ex eo quod est in actu.
32. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b 32-33.
33. Aristotle, *Physics*, 193b 6.
34. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1093b 16-25.

35. Plato, *The Republic*, 476a.
36. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1051a 17-18,
37. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I 5,3 ad 2.
38. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1096a 23-24.
39. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144b 16-17.
40. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254a 36-39 and 1260a 10-14.
41. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a 19-24. The ontological good consists in the own nature of being while the moral good simply presupposes nature as its foundation.
42. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a 23-26 and the previous endnote.
43. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 414a 25-28 and *Metaphysics*, 1044a 28.
44. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a 7-8 and *On the Soul*, 412a 27.
45. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a 16-17.
46. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a 3-14.
47. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b 28-30.
48. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a 8-10.
49. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b 26-27.
50. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a 16-18.
51. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a 12-18.
52. J L Austin, *Agathon and Eudaimonia in the Ethics of Aristotle*, J M E Moravcsik (Ed.), *Aristotle*, London 1967, p. 282 and J M Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, Cambridge 1975, p. 146.
53. G Santas, *Desire and Perfection in Aristotle's Theory of Good*, *Apeiron* 1989, pp. 90-91.
54. G Santas, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
55. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Γ 6.
56. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a 3-4.
57. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a 2-4 in conjunction with *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a 1-6.
58. The will is always directed toward a good in the sense of purpose. In the present case the good is identified with the object, aiming at an ontological-biological desire that is inherent to all living beings.
59. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 17-18.
60. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 20.
61. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 23-24.
62. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 19-26.
63. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 31-33.
64. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 33 – 1113b 2.

65. F Dirlmeier, in (Aristoteles, *Nikomachische Ethik*, Darmstadt 1956, p. 284, 18.1) who amongst other things observes: In our view the boundary between the Protagorian proposal of "*all things the measure is man*" and the raising of the excellent man to the criterion of morality is frighteningly thin.
66. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094b 23-27 and 1098a 26-33.
67. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a 19-26.

Real Resemblances: Falsity and the Kinds of Being

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Abstract

*This paper examines the discussion of the kinds in Plato's *Sophist*. The kinds are posited as ways of allowing for the possibility of speaking about negation and difference. In order to claim that certain kinds of activities speak falsely, it is necessary to illustrate that speaking of what is not does not involve a logical contradiction. This discussion also has important consequences for a view of the arts that is representational in essence.*

In this paper I shall examine the discussion on the nature of the kinds in Plato's *Sophist*. This discussion is important insofar as resolving the nature of the kinds, and determining how the various kinds interrelate or mix and are essential both for discourse and for ontology. Indeed, the nature of discourse is seen to rely on the nature of being. The discussion on the nature of the kinds is prompted by the analysis – by the method of division – of the nature of the sophist. In order to define the sophist as someone involved in the realm of appearances, it becomes necessary to be able to give an explanation of non-being. Failure to do so may result in a contradiction on the part of the Stranger, for if one cannot speak of what is not, then the sophist cannot be accused of speaking falsehoods, a crime of which the Stranger accuses him. Language must allow for the possibility of representing what is not in order for the sophist to be able to speak falsely. As Zuckert notes, "The problem with speaking falsely ... is that one cannot be properly said to speak or to talk about nothing. Such a person should rather be said not to be speaking or thinking at all. Yet, the Stranger points out, they have contradicted themselves indeed just now by talking about that which is not!"¹ Thus in order to trap the sophist in definition, the Stranger must be able to give an account of non-being, and hence must be able to give an account of being. The two projects are seen as united – the Stranger says that "since reality and unreality are equally puzzling, there is henceforward some hope that any light ... thrown upon one will illuminate the other to an equal degree."² As Benardete notes, "The impasse that

nonbeing makes for anyone who attempts to deny that it suggests to the Stranger that the fault lies with an understanding of being".³ Although this claim by the Stranger will be taken at face value for the purposes of present discussion, it is important to keep in mind the question of whether the Stranger is sincere in making it. It certainly seems to be the case that knowledge of reality, of being, is important for unravelling falsehood or non-being, because the former is more fundamental than the latter. Falsehood or non-being conceptually and ontologically dependent on being, and understanding the nature of reality can clarify the nature of non-reality. There is a question, though, of whether the implication holds the other way round; can an understanding of non-reality shed light on reality? Surely not, one would think. Moreover, the Stranger cannot afford to assent to this implication, because it may give the work of the sophist a legitimacy the Stranger denies: if being and non-being are "equally puzzling", and if light "thrown upon one will illuminate the other", then the sophist can argue that talking of non-being can shed light upon being. This is a conclusion that the Stranger must repudiate. I shall return to this worry about the mutual dependence of being and non-being later in the paper. For now, I shall look at the issue of philosophical method by which the Stranger teases out the different kinds of being.

The method by which reality is to be understood is by the analysis of the nature of the *kinds*, and it is this discussion that I shall examine more closely in this paper. What is also interesting, however, is the question to which the kinds are posited as an answer. More precisely, the Stranger hopes to catch the sophist in the web woven by the method of division. But the method cannot be fully carried out until we are able to define *being*. I am interested to examine the relationship between the method of division, and the examination of the mixing of kinds. The former – the method – is the epistemological project that the Sophist uses in order to arrive at knowledge of reality; ontology determines method. It is this closeness between ways of coming to know, and kinds of being, that is both taken for granted and investigated in detail in the dialogue. Reality is perceived as being multi-faceted and complex, a complexity made possible by the "mixing of kinds". If the mixing of kinds is seen as something that must be solved in order for the true, or at least more correct, definition of the sophist to be reached, then this allows us to say something about the slices of ontology that the method of division picks out. If language is to reflect reality accurately, then our method of arriving at knowledge – in this case, the method of division – must correspond to the divisions that exist in being itself. Thus, it will be interesting to look at the nature of the kinds picked out by the method of division, as well as the relationship between the various art forms that are analysed by this method. The point is, I think, that there is a

relationship posited between epistemology and ontology – between what is known or what can be said, and what exists. It is my hope that a discussion on the method of division and of the mixing of the kinds will shed some light on this area.

Since ontology precedes epistemology, I shall examine first the nature of the kinds in the *Sophist*, and then I shall later explore the method of division. The discussion on the nature of the kinds begins with a discussion on the nature of *being* – in the debate between the gods and the giants the Stranger comes to the conclusion that real being possesses a power “to affect anything else or to be affected” – “real things ... are nothing but power”.⁴ The further conclusion that is reached is that reality consists in all that is changeable and unchangeable. This leads to a problem – the possibility of infinite regress (third man argument); if reality consists in movement (changeable) and rest (unchangeable), it cannot consist in them “both at once”, but it must be a third thing in which motion and rest alternatively participate. This point leads to the discussion on what we must allow to be blended together, and what must remain separate; whether we should allow that all things are capable of blending together, or whether nothing is capable of mixing with anything else, or whether some forms of combinations are allowed. The possibility that all things are capable of blending together is untenable, as it will deny that motion or rest (or anything else) has any existence, as nothing will be able to participate in *being* and retain its distinctive features. Such blending will result in annihilation rather than existence. The possibility that everything blends with everything also leads either to contradictions, or else it leads to the problem of infinite regress. With respect to contradiction, the reasoning is as follows: if both motion and rest are capable of blending, then motion can remain at rest, and rest would be in motion. This clearly contradicts the nature of each kind. Furthermore, we would have a contradiction in *being* itself, for being would be defined as existing *both* in motion and at rest. We could avoid the contradiction by denying that being is neither intrinsically defined by either motion or rest – in other words, we could claim that being is some other third thing. But this move leads to infinite regress – by positing *being* as existing apart from motion and rest, we are led back to the third man argument. Thus, it cannot be the case either that all things are capable of blending together, or that nothing is capable of mixing with anything else. So the solution posited is that certain kinds are capable of blending, and certain kinds are not.

The argument for the mixing of kinds is important not only for ontological considerations, but also for language. To hold that no forms combine is a self-refuting position, although, as Ackrill points out⁵, we must be careful to state in what way they combine – not all combinations are

going to be symmetrical, and some Forms will participate in others without themselves being participated in. This is emphasised by the Stranger at 260a – “any discourse we can have owes its existence to the weaving together of forms.” This is so because once we have the five kinds – being, sameness, difference, rest and motion – we are able to speak of things that are *not* just as we are able to speak of things that *are*. Both negation and the assertion of identity *presuppose* difference – the former because we can say that something is not only if we have a sense of what it means for it to be other than itself, and *mutatis mutandi* with respect to the *assertion* of identity. We can say that motion is different from rest and at the same time assert that motion is the same as itself – i.e. it is intelligible to speak of that which *is not* in one respect, but still maintain that it *is* in another respect. Indeed, the former presupposes the latter. Similarly, we are able to say *of* motion that it exists, while deny that it is to be identified with *being*. This argument attempts to disprove the position of those “late learners”, who deny that one can predicate something different of a subject other than what exhaustively defines it – for instance, they deny that one can say of a man anything other than that *he is a man*. The Stranger wants to argue that one can intelligibly predicate things of a subject other than simple identity. So the mixing of kinds is essential not only for discourse concerning what exists, but also for discourse *about negation*. If (one of the) central concern(s) in the *Sophist* is the meaningfulness of false statements, and if the discussion on the nature of the kinds is important for allowing for the possibility of speaking falsely, then one of the jobs of the kinds must be to allow for negation.

At this point one may ask why it is that we cannot allow for negation using the ontology of the Forms. Without wanting to digress too far in this discussion, I would like to examine some of the differences between the *Forms* and the *kinds* in an attempt to point to the need to develop this later ontology. The discussion will be by no means exhaustive. The Forms of Plato’s earlier dialogues are not the kinds of things that are able to combine with anything else – they are eternal and unchanging, and thus their natures are immutable. If this is so, then it does not make sense to speak of reality as changing in any way – to speak of what is real is to speak only of *being*, of what is. Forms do not participate in other Forms, but are rather participated in by all other things in the material world. Forms are thus unable to combine with one another.⁶ On this analysis, the theory of the Forms is dangerously similar to the position of the friends of the Forms in the *Sophist* – the friends of the Forms deny that the “power of acting and being acted upon ... is compatible with real being” (248c) On their account, not only can real *being* not be known, as this would imply that *being* must be in some relational mode to a knower, which would imply that it is being acted

upon, but any talk of non-being collapses into absurdity, since non-being is regarded as no being of any kind. The theory of the kinds allows Plato to develop a “relational notion of not-being and [show] this to be paradox-free;”⁷ the development of the theory of kinds allows us to posit reality as inter-woven.”

That the theory of the kinds allows us to say something more illuminating about non-being can perhaps be illustrated in the following way: the question can be raised why Plato does not deal with non-being by using the theory of the Forms, and explicate non-being in terms of non-participation. For instance, if we want to say that Socrates is not wise, why not simply do this by saying that Socrates does not participate in the Form of Wisdom? The reason is that non-participation in Forms does not reveal the full significance of what we mean when we say that Socrates is not wise. We say of other things – stones and trees – that they are not wise, but what we mean is something quite different. In the case of Socrates, we want to say that wisdom *could* be applied to him, but doesn't, but in the latter case the predicate “wise” is inapplicable in principle to stones and trees. An analysis that seeks to explain both uses of “not wise” only in terms of non-participation fails to distinguish between the two cases – in the case of Socrates, we want to say that, corresponding to the form of wisdom there is a form of non-wisdom that applies to him, whereas there is no corresponding form that applies to trees and stones. The theory of the kinds, insofar as it allows different kinds to mingle, does allow for this distinction in usage. It allows us to carve reality in such a way that both positive (x is F) and negative (x is not-F) predicates can intelligibly be asserted of a subject, whereas the theory of the Forms allows us to only assert or deny predication – either it is the case that X is F, *or* it is not the case that X is F [which we can write as: *not* (X is F)]. So the theory of the kinds allows us to say that Socrates is not-wise, where “not-wise” is itself a kind, whereas in the case of trees and stones we would assert simply that it is not the case that trees and stones are wise (trees and stones are not the kinds of things of which the term predicates “is wise” and “is not wise” could intelligibly be asserted). This division of the realms of discourse is discussed by the Stranger at 257c – “The nature of the different appears to be parcelled out, in the same way as knowledge.” For every predicate F that can be asserted of X, there is a corresponding predicate non-F that can be asserted of Y, where Y is contrary to X in respect of F.⁸ The assertion that X is non-F becomes an assertion of *difference* rather than one of existential negation. This is emphasised at 257e, 258a and 258b – the not-beautiful and the not-tall are said to be parts of existence – they are not “contrary to ‘existent’, but only ... different from that existent.” So the mingling of kinds, by allowing relations between different kinds, allows us to speak of that which is other.

This may assist us in explicating the Stranger's claim that "since reality and unreality are equally puzzling, there is henceforward some hope that any light ... thrown upon one will illuminate the other to an equal degree." If the notion of non-being that is under discussion here is understood within the discussion of predication, then this claim is unproblematic, for understanding that or why X is F rather than G sheds light on both properties F and Y, and also on X. However, if we move from the realm of predication to that of existence, the Stranger's claim becomes nonsensical, because non-being, not having any existence, cannot be known and hence cannot be a vehicle through which being is known. This provides further evidence for the distinction that is made in this dialogue between the kinds and the Forms, and it illustrates the nuances of distinction to which the former can be put in a method of discourse.

The theory of kinds is important, then, both for allowing for positive discourse and for negative statements. This is so because the theory of the kinds is a doctrine about *being* – the five kinds are the fundamental dimensions of Plato's ontology, they are the co-ordinates on which all things can be plotted and by which all things are measured. I would like to examine the five kinds and their relationship with one another; if the kinds are seen as fundamental and exhaustive descriptions of reality, it needs to be examined why *these* kinds and not others are posited. Why, for instance, do we not have the Beautiful or the Large as kinds? The answer to this lies in the understanding that the kinds define an ontology, and thus will be the most basic constituents of reality. They must therefore be the sorts of things that are not only common to all being, but they must be the elements *necessary* for anything to be at all. The kinds are constituted by two relational elements – Same and Different, two modes of *being* – Rest and Motion – and Being itself. The relational elements are necessary for identity and difference, and hence for both negation and for mixing. Rest and Motion – rather than say Beauty or Large – are the two modes presented as fundamental because these modes of being relate intrinsically to any ontology. In the debate between the gods and the giants, for instance, what one considers "real" is connected to whether one sees reality as moving or stationary.⁹ In other words, answers to questions concerning "the one and the many", or answers that concern whether the material or the immaterial world is more real, depend on one's answers to whether Being is in motion or stationary. For instance, the question about whether the real is one or many, discussed at 245a ff, is a question concerning the *unity* of the real. Plato raises the question whether, if the real is one, it is a whole or a sum of parts. The relation of this issue to the issue of Motion and Rest is as follows: if reality is one and whole, then it seems that motion is impossible, for (to use an argument that I've borrowed from Locke), there will be nowhere for being to move, as it were. If Being is one, then

nothing exists outside Being. Furthermore, if Being is motionless, then it is also eternal and unchanging. So the kinds Motion and Rest must be fundamental and allow us to examine other ontological questions, the solutions to which depend on our views of reality as being in motion or at rest. Plato thus sees the five kinds as fundamental forms of ontology – they are the determining co-ordinates of all *being*.

I would like to relate the above discussion concerning the nature of kinds to the method of division. The method of division is used by the Stranger to arrive at a definition of the sophist. The method consists in dividing the arts into various categories – productive, distinguishing, acquisitive; the categories are then further divided by a method of binary division until the required definition is reached. The method attempts to define the definiendum, but it is acknowledged that the nature of the definiendum – in this case the sophist – is not exhaustively accounted for. This could be so for several reasons: it could be a statement about the sophist, that his nature eludes strict definition. Or it could be a more general statement that not all kind of terms or activities are strictly definable. It could also be the case that the method is simply unable to carry out the task. The method differs, say, from an Aristotelian method, where one is able to arrive at a unique defining characteristic of a species. If one defines man as, say, “featherless biped”, then this definition is not only true of man and nothing else, but it also captures the *essence* of what it means to be a man. From these unique differentia one can also trace back the higher species and genus from which this lower species is descended. Aristotle’s method of division is thus more strictly vertical. That this is not so with the Stranger’s method can be seen from the initial division of the arts, and the subsequent division of each category. If each division within the category attempts to say something true, if not strictly definitive, about the sophist, it must be the case that the definitions arrived at can be interwoven in order to capture the fuller picture of the thing defined. That is, each definition arrived at within the separate category is merely one aspect of the fuller picture. Of course, it may be the case that the earlier definitions are just wrong, and will be supplanted by the final definition, but I do not think that this is the case. For one thing, the various definitions are not contradictory or mutually exclusive; it may be possible for the sophist to be someone who argues for money as well as one who attempts to teach others although he is ignorant himself. If there is anything incomplete about these definitions, the implication is that it is the sophist who is involved in various diverse activities, and so does nothing properly or truly, but this is due to the wayward nature of the sophist himself, and is not a fault of the method.

Another possible reason for the multiplicity of divisions could be to illustrate the multi-faceted nature of reality. It is interesting to note that,

whereas Aristotle's method attempts to define natural kinds, the method in the *Sophist* attempts to define human activity and "artistic" kinds. We are given analyses of the conqueror and tradesman, the angler, the fighter, the money-maker, and so on. The multiple levels of interpretation may simply reflect the multi-faceted nature of human endeavour. But it is also interesting to note that the method of division hopes to capture something, not only about human activity, but also about the Arts themselves, and, in the final division, about the nature of the Divine. The implication is, I think, that we should take seriously the method of division as a means of enquiring about reality itself. If the method is horizontally as well as vertically defined – and this is emphasised in the discussion of the final division – then this is so because reality is multi-faceted and interwoven. And here may be a link with the mixing of kinds; since reality consists in the weaving and mixing together of various kinds, so too must our epistemological method, our discourse, be flexible enough to capture all the various formulations of being. So the non-hierarchical method of division may not be accidental. Furthermore, the method divides the form of Art into various categories, but it does not seem that these divisions are exhaustive¹⁰ – there may be other ways of dividing artistic activity. If this is so, then the method provides a conceptual scheme of the world that allows for analysis of kinds as defined by human activity and interest as well as of natural kind terms. Depending on how we decide to perform the cuts, we shall arrive at differing definitions that are more or less useful for our purposes. Furthermore, the method gives us a deeper understanding not only of the activity being defined, but also of the category of the arts that is being divided. By seeing, for instance, how the productive arts can be divided, and by seeing what sorts of activities are grouped together, we gain a deeper understanding of the various sorts of artistic categories. So, by seeing what sorts of activities hunters or fighters engage in, we develop insight into the nature of what it means to call something a productive art. Similarly with other categories of arts, and similarly for the form of the arts – dividing art into the three categories discussed in the dialogue presents us with a fuller understanding of the higher form.

So the classificatory system is informative not only because it clarifies the activity that is being defined, but also because it clarifies the art form that is doing the defining. The method of division does relate to ontology, but it is reflexive – its different methods of enquiry, or different ways of investigating the world, may result in different sorts of categories. This is not to deny the objective nature of being, because no method that arrives at knowledge of the world can provide the investigator with falsehoods. No accurate method will be inconsistent with another. Relating this to the mixing of kinds, we see that, not only does an understanding of the kinds allow us a deeper insight into the nature of existing things, into the understanding of

negation and discourse, but an examination of both language and existing things provides us with insight into the realm of the kinds; explanation is mutual and both horizontal and vertical, as is the final explanation of the nature of the sophist. So the flexible nature of the method seems necessary if we are to be able to describe the mixing of kinds in all their actual (and possible) variety. The mixing together of the various definitions to produce a fuller analysis of the sophist mirrors the mixing together of the kinds to produce a distinct entity of being. This illustrates once again the close connection between methods of discourse – epistemological enquiry – and ontology; depending on the way we examine reality, the picture we are presented with will be very different. Returning to the sophist, we are once again shown the dangers of speaking falsely. For if it is indeed possible to speak of what is not, as the Stranger has shown, then the discourse of the sophist, if false, can present us with a picture of reality that is also false. The sophist in this instance is more dangerous than the painter, who is blamed by Plato in *The Republic* for merely holding up a mirror to nature. The sophist does not even do this, but rather presents to his interlocutors a false and misleading picture. By speaking of “what is not”, the sophist neither reflects reality, nor reflects upon it, but rather leads us further away.

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Endnotes

1. C. H. Zuckert, “Who’s a Philosopher? Who’s a Sophist? The Stranger v. Socrates”, p 181.
 2. *Sophist*, tr. F. M. Cornford, 251a.
 3. S. Benardete, S. “On Plato’s ‘Sophist’”, p 771.
 4. *Sophist* 247e.
 5. See Ackrill’s discussion on this point in his “Plato and the Copula: *Sophist* 251-259”, pp 4 ff.
 6. It may be that the “super” form of the Good in *The Republic* represents an effort to bring interrelationship to the world of the Forms.
 7. J. Moravcsik, *Plato and Platonism*, p 169.
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8. This may indicate that Plato did not want to treat "exists" as a predicate, for he would want to assert that we can say "X exists", but he would want to deny that asserting "Y does not exist" is a contrary, rather than a contradictory, statement. Saying "Y does not exist" is not asserting non-existence of something that "is", as would be the case with, say, "Y is not-beautiful".
9. This has echoes later in Spinoza's metaphysics, where he argues that Substance is eternal and unchanging.
10. See Wollheim's discussion on the "*bricoleur*" problem of art.

The Portrayal of Socrates by Damascius

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Abstract

In this paper I propose to investigate Damascius and his relation to Socrates. Late antique Hellenistic philosophy has occasionally proven to be an area riddled with a fascinating array of syncreticism, mystery and inconsistency. My aim is to see how the image of Socrates has been preserved but also altered to fit the conceptions of the time. I started my investigation with the suspicion that Socrates would have been reduced to a puppet, a non-entity, crushed by a thousand year absence. Instead he emerged almost unscathed and re-invented: a symbol of pagan resistance against Christian oppression, a speculative philosopher, carrying the Platonic and Neoplatonic thought firmly on his shoulders, but also an exemplary teacher, mentor and exponent of practical wisdom.

I. Introduction¹

Damascius (c.460–c.539 A.D.) originated from Damascus, Syria. He was one of the last Neoplatonists and the last Platonic *diadochus* at the head of the Platonic Academy. Socrates (469–399 B.C.) was Plato's forerunner in Athens. The Platonic tradition lasted almost a thousand years between these two poles: Socrates and Damascius. Our aim is to trace down the changes that took place during this period. Socrates' portrait as it is painted by Plato,² and the difference to its execution by Damascius.

Today, only a part of Damascius' work is extant. We have access to his *Questions and Answers on First Principles (De Principiis)*, the *Philosophical History* and a *Commentary on the Parmenides*. Student notes from his lectures *On the Philebus* and the *Phaedo* are also available. He also wrote now lost commentaries *On the Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Sophist*, the *Timaeus*, the *Laws*, and the *First Alcibiades*: dialogues which are classified in the middle or the mature period of Plato's work.

In order to deduce their presence and relative importance, we will seek nominal references to Socrates, Plato and other Neoplatonic philosophers (displayed in table I). In Damascius' own works there are a total of 151 references to Plato, 66 to Iamblichus, 56 to Proclus, 34 to Socrates, 24 to

Aristotle, 29 to the Chaldeans and five to Plotinus. In the lecture notes of two of his students, there are 75 references to Socrates, 40 to Plato, 28 to Proclus, 18 to Iamblichus and Aristotle, 9 to Plotinus and one to the Chaldeans. We can make two comments on these statistics.

First, the significance of references made to Socrates seems important, both in the student lecture notes, where he ranks first and in Damascius' own writings, where he holds an intermediate position. Plato is also mentioned often and this shows a gravitation of Damascius' thought towards the founders of Platonism rather than Plotinus, the later founder of Neoplatonism. However the repeated mention of Socrates does not necessarily mean that he was on a par with Plato. One might have expected in Damascius a distancing from Plato and Socrates, as late Neoplatonists showed an inclination to focus on their own interpretation of Platonism and engage in dialogue regarding (fine theological) issues that they regarded highly amongst themselves, as is testified by the high occurrence of references to Proclus (56) and Iamblichus (66) in Damascius' own works and the relatively average occurrence of references to Proclus (28) and Iamblichus (18) in Damascius' lecture notes.

Table I							
References to ³	Socrates	Plato	Aristotle	Plotinus	Iamblichus	Proclus	Chaldeans
In Damascius' Own Works							
<i>De Principiis</i>	15	70	8	3	35	4	11
<i>Vita Isidori (ap Sudam)</i>	6	10	3	0	3	27	4
<i>Vita Isidori (ap Photium Bibl)</i>	0	17	4	0	4	25	2
<i>In Parmenidem</i>	13	54	9	2	24	0	12
Total	34	151	24	5	66	56	29
In Damascius' Student Lecture Notes							
<i>In Philebum</i>	21	15	8	0	10	13	0
<i>In Phaedonem A'</i>	51	17	7	5	8	5	0
<i>In Phaedonem B'</i>	3	8	3	4	0	10	1
Total	75	40	18	9	18	28	1

Secondly, the discrepancies in the ranking of various philosophers - between Damascius' own writings and the lecture notes taken by his students - show that the change in authorship signifies a change in writing style and possibly content. Damascius mentions Plato in his own works 151 times, while he mentions Socrates 34 times. On the contrary, his student lecture notes mention Plato 40 times and Socrates 75. These figures are reversed in relation to magnitude. Similar discrepancies between original texts and lecture notes are also noted regarding Aristotle, Plotinus, Proclus, Iamblichus and others as it is evident in Table I. Therefore the philosopher's own

writings may be taken to constitute a more reliable source regarding his own views, than the notes taken by his students during lectures. It is possible that a student may misunderstand a comment made by Damascius or interpret it differently (according to his own views on the matter in question) and thus record it wrongly or inaccurately. We are therefore going to rely more on Damascius' original thought, than its secondary sources.

In order to put in context Damascius' attitude towards Socrates and Plato, we can seek corresponding references in other Neoplatonists. As we see in Table II, Proclus mentions Socrates almost 1,400 times, in the totality of his works and Plato almost 1,700 times. Plotinus mentions Socrates 41 times and Plato 56. Finally Iamblichus mentions Socrates once and Plato 31 times. Comparative to these figures, Damascius' approach, who mentions Socrates 109 times and Plato 191, seems to lie closer to Proclus and Plato than Plotinus and Iamblichus.

Table II			
References to ⁴	Socrates	Plato	Chaldeans
By			
Plato	1,484	3	-
Proclus	1,399	1,697	17
Damascius	109	191	30
Plotinus	41	56	0
Iamblichus	1	31	7

Having reached these conclusions, we would like to note that the method of deducing the significance of Socrates through counting nominal references is bound to some limitations. (a) One is the length and the nature of the texts in which they appear. For example, Damascius' *In Parmenidem*, where Socrates is mentioned 13 times, is by far larger (maybe two or three times) than the *In Phaedonem*, where Socrates is mentioned 54 times. So, the shorter a text is the less likely it is for a name or its repetition to occur and vice versa. (b) Also, it is in the nature of texts such as commentaries on Platonic dialogues, to repeat many times the name 'Socrates' (in cases such as 'Socrates says') for example, without bestowing any particular significance to Socrates himself. On the other hand, in an original philosophical or other work, Socrates would only be mentioned when something would be said specifically about him. This may probably explain why (in table II) there are so many instances of Proclus mentioning Socrates (whose many lengthy commentaries are extant) and so few of them in Plotinus (whose only extant work, *The Enneads*, is speculative in nature and relatively short). These are factors that cannot be accounted for in the name counts. (c) Finally, another limitation of nominal reference counts is that they do not include indirect references to a philosopher. For example, the author

of Damascius' lecture notes *On the Phaedo* often refers to Proclus as 'the commentator' or 'he'.⁵ This means that by counting the occurrence of a philosopher's name we miss indirect references and thus can only approximately calculate his significance from the times he is mentioned. However, in spite of these limitations, we think that word counts are a reliable method of obtaining a good first impression of the matter at hand.

II. Socrates in Damascius' Philosophy

In his speculative works Damascius, like Socrates, puts more emphasis in asking pertinent questions and giving alternative solutions, than in proposing precise answers to the problems he poses. There is an aporetic disposition in common between the two philosophers. They both feel most at ease when making alternative hypotheses, which they subsequently defeat.⁶ It is not accidental that Damascius' only surviving speculative work is titled *Questions and Answers on First Principles*. However, contrary to Socrates, one would say that Damascius is not distinguished for his emphasis on rationalism.

In general, his philosophy is influenced by eastern mysticism. The Chaldean Oracles⁷ and the Orphic tradition play a major exegetical role in his rendering of Hellenic philosophy. His thought is characterized by a strong metaphysical angst with religious overtones, which are reflected in the way he approaches the Platonic Socrates. Following the long tradition that started with Plotinus, Neoplatonic philosophers give to themselves the role of *exhegete*, commentator of Plato, while in the process they develop and expand their own ideas. Thus routinely, Socrates acknowledges and sanctions Damascius' ontology.⁸ He seems to be aware that the highest intellectually accessible hypostasis is the One. It contains and produces everything in the intelligible world. Beyond the One, there exists another principle, which is not in our powers to comprehend: ineffable, inexpressible, unknowable, unmentionable,⁹ something strongly reminiscent of a negative theology.¹⁰

In Damascius' philosophical works such as the *De Principiis* and the *In Parmenidem*, Socrates usually appears in relation to Plato. As we can see in Table III, we often come across standard formulations such as: "the *Theaetetus* Socrates says" ("φησιν ὁ ἐν Θεαιτήτῳ Σωκράτης", *De Princ.* I.9.21), «the *Republic* Socrates says" ("ὁ δὲ ἐν Πολιτείᾳ Σωκράτης ... φησὶ", *De Princ.* I.66.9), "the *Philebus* Socrates shows the cause" ("αἰτιᾶται ὁ ἐν Φιλήβῳ Σωκράτης", *De Princ.* I.64.3), "as the *Phaedrus* Socrates says" ("ὡς φησιν ὁ ἐν Φαίδρῳ Σωκράτης", *In Parm.* 94.1) and other such cases. These are not unique to Damascius. In fact Proclus uses them quite extensively. Thus, in the totality of his works we have 23 occurrences of "the

Phaedrus Socrates", 33 occurrences of "the *Republic Socrates*". Syrianus and Simplicius also employ them. This observation leaves us with the impression that they consist of standard formulas used by some late Neoplatonists.

Table III					
Occurrence in ¹¹	Damascius	Proclus	Simplicius	Syrianus	Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Olympiodorus
The <i>Philebus Socrates</i>	1	19	0	0	0
The <i>Republic Socrates</i>	4	33	1	0	0
The <i>Theaetetus Socrates</i>	2	4	2	0	0
The <i>Phaedo Socrates</i>	1	7	4	0	0
The <i>Cratylus Socrates</i>	2	3	0	0	0
The <i>Phaedrus Socrates</i>	4	23	1	1	0

So what do such formulations entail regarding Socrates, given the fact that they do not appear in the context of commentaries? Reading these passages one assumes that Damascius and his contemporaries did not think of Socrates in the middle and late Platonic dialogues as a soulless *dramatis persona*. A caricature placed strategically by Plato in order to stimulate dramatic action and voice the views of its author. If that was the case, it would suffice to say "Plato in the *Theaetetus*", "Plato in the *Republic*" and so on. On the other hand, Socrates was not regarded as a philosopher in his own right either.

As those formulations make it clear, he was regarded as an amalgam of both Platonic and Socratic thought, being constantly defined in relation to the Platonic works in which he featured. Two factors must account for this treatment: Socrates had shaped Plato's way of thinking, by being his mentor. Plato had shaped the future generations' way of thinking about Socrates, by preserving (together with Xenophon) his philosophy in his opus - Socrates having left no written testimony. It seems reasonable to assume that late Neoplatonists saw the Platonic Socrates in this light. In Damascius' *De Principiis* some other passages reinforce this view. During an analysis of the theory of Ideas, he explains that

the human species is characterized by common attributes, even though each and every one of us has their own personal attributes that make him or her unique; so one cannot append to all human beings the Idea of Socrates, while one can append the Idea of Human Being to Socrates, Plato and all other humans (*De Princ.* 208.14-23).

Then he cursorily mentions that "Socrates is no different to Plato" ("οὐκ ἄρα ἕτερος Σωκράτης Πλάτωνος", *De Princ.* 208.9). Does this reinforce a previously

stated suspicion that Socrates is nothing more than Plato's mouthpiece, the empty shell of a *dramatis persona*? In another passage Damascius wonders:

"the rational soul doesn't get educated by absorbing the lessons of its teacher? The Pythagorean does not become philosophising? Nor Platonic? Socrates said: how can one know the state of mind of someone else, if they don't have anything in common?" (*De Princ.* II.3.23-25).

It can be deduced from this and the previous passages that Socrates and Plato are not different, because Plato is a student of Socrates and they have common characteristics of the soul. This identification represents more a merger of teacher-student views and less a merger at the level of a *dramatis persona* with its author. Damascius then sees the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues expressing opinions that he would have voiced in real life and which Plato as an authentic pupil could conjure and transcribe in his works with accuracy.

III. Socrates in Damascius' Historiography

In the historiographic work "*Philosophical History*" or "*Life of Isidorus*"¹² Damascius recreates the atmosphere of late Roman antiquity and paints a vivid portrait of the Athenian and Alexandrian pagan communities of his era. He mentions Socrates in various contexts, in relation to people and situations that he describes. Through these references Socrates is portrayed as a teacher, proponent of the oral tradition¹³ and the personification of practical wisdom. Socrates in this instance is the counterpart of Plato, who comes across as representing intellectual wisdom.

Damascius expounds in his commentary *On the Phaedo* three alternative ways of approaching the Good or the One: a) practical virtue, through occupation with politics and external pursuits, b) intellectual wisdom, through the practice of philosophy c) theurgy, through purification of the soul.¹⁴ The ultimate principle's ineffable nature is such that it cannot be intellectually fathomed.¹⁵ It can be approximated through an experience of the void and lack of words to express it.¹⁶ Such is the result of the separation of the soul from matter and the sensible world, a separation that can be perfected by death of the material body.¹⁷

In the *Philosophical History*, Damascius testifies to the great reverence of his mentor Isidore for Socrates, mentioning that "when defending Socrates, Isidore spoke too profoundly for his pupils' understanding" (*PH* 37B). Further on, he explains that "leaving to others the graceful display of words, [Isidore] occupied himself with revealing the thing itself, pronouncing concepts rather than words, or rather, not even concepts as he brought to light the very essence of the things themselves" (*PH* 37D).¹⁸ This condescending attitude towards the spoken and written word is due to the

remoteness of the highest principles from the sensible world and is reflected by other Neoplatonic philosophers. Porphyry relates that Plotinus composed his works in a state of inward contemplation and hardly ever read what he had written. It was left to him to correct and decipher his teacher's unintelligible scribbles.¹⁹ However Socrates did not seem to fall in that category. Theosebius' teacher, Hierocles, who was "an adornment to the Alexandrian scholastic scene" and "an accomplished Platonic commentator" (PH 45A) "once likened the words of Socrates to dice: however they fall, they fall rightly" (PH 45B). Thus Damascius draws a line between his own contemporaries and Plato or Socrates whose eloquence exceeded even their own expectations.

Elsewhere Socrates is paralleled with the Alexandrian Theosebius, who was not a great theorist but a virtuous man with a talent in the interpretation of Platonic dialogues. He was thought to live a public existence with the aim of perfecting his inner wisdom and practical virtue. He was tending to his inner spiritual polis ("τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐν ἑαυτῷ πολιτείαν διακοσμῶν" (PH 46D), rather than the one grasped through the senses, the outward public one ("εἰ μὴ γὰρ καὶ τὸν δημόσιον ἐπολιτεύσατο τρόπον, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἴδιον" (PH 46D).

[Theosebius] had a natural inclination towards the life of virtue (εὐζωΐαν) rather than towards intellectual pursuit²⁰ (ἐπιστήμην); though this "life of virtue" was by no means a quiet one, exerted only in imaginary labors (φαντασίαις γυμναζομένην) ... he did not lead a public existence but a private one, such as that led by Socrates and by Epictetus and by everyone who is in his right mind (εὖ φρονῶν), regulating his outward way of life and the life within. (PH 46D).

Another role bestowed upon Socrates in Damascius' writings is that of the proponent of freedom of thought. He had been transformed to an icon, a symbol of resistance for the pagans of late antiquity, against the religious oppression instigated by Byzantium. This symbolism is remarkable, given the special circumstances in which Damascius and his contemporaries lived and taught philosophy. In Athens, Proclus had to suspend teaching for a year, when his worship of pagan gods started to offend the Christian authorities and Horapollo was persecuted. Pagan persecution was escalating in Alexandria too with incidents such as the murder of the female Neoplatonist Hypatia in 415 AD by an enraged Christian mob.²¹ Similarly Socrates was a restless spirit, the gadfly of Athens, who was accused of impiety and ultimately paid with his life the price of asking uncomfortable questions.

Inspired by Socrates, Damascius reports that his mentor Isidore did not interrupt philosophic activity in spite of the Byzantine emperor's prohibitions. He was "no less than Socrates in the search for truth; for he too was not able to obey the command of the Thirty Tyrants who had ordered him not to hold discourse" (PH 116). Another pagan philosopher, Agapius, located in

Alexandria, was under investigation from the Byzantine authorities, after some informers gave his practices away (*PH* 127A-B). He did not succumb to the Christian persecution. According to Damascius,

patiently standing up to those who opposed him, he proved the truth of the maxim which Xenophon²² quotes Socrates as addressing to Ischomachus, that it is possible for the virtuous man to derive benefit even from those who attempt to harm him (*PH* 127C).

This attitude of resistance can be better explained by a strong inclination for introspection. Following the advice of Socrates, Damascius maintains that philosophy cannot perish from external but only from internal evil. Commenting on the fate of Diomedes, one of his fellow Athenian pagans, he notes that:

His mind was corrupted by flatterers, gifted though he was in philosophy - and of course philosophy cannot be harmed or damaged by any external evil, but only by the evil within, as Socrates said – this is why the downfall of philosophy [in Diomedes] was caused by disgrace from within ... a hedonistic mentality (*PH* 146E)

No external evil, such as the Christian persecution can harm philosophy. Only internal passions and turmoil can destroy it. A hedonistic mentality was often given as a reason for the downfall of the Roman Empire. However the esoteric view of philosophy that had prevailed in Damascius' era, created the foundations for the safe removal of the last pagan philosophic school from Athens, wishing to forfeit the fate of Socrates almost a thousand years after his demise. The edict issued by the Byzantine emperor Justinian in 529 A.D. forbidding the teaching of philosophy in the Byzantine Empire, only put the seal to an otherwise decided fate. Damascius relocated the Platonic Academy to Persia and eventually returned to his motherland Syria.²³

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Endnotes

1. A shorter version of this paper was presented in July 2005 at the conference "Socrates and Socratic Schools" held in Olympia, Greece by the Olympic Center for Philosophy and Culture.
2. In the early Platonic dialogues Socrates appears to be the father and main exponent of the aporetic method. In the middle and late Platonic periods he becomes the main advocate of the theory of Forms.
3. These references were counted in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG)*. The keywords used to search for Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus and the Chaldean Oracles were respectively Σωκράτ, Πλάτων, Ἀριστοτέλ, Πλωτιν, Ἰαμβλιχ, Πρόκλ, χαλδ.
4. These references were counted in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG)*. The keywords used to search for Socrates, Plato, and the Chaldean Oracles were respectively Σωκράτ, Πλάτων, χαλδ.
5. See L.G.Westerink's comments in Damascius, 1977, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, vol. II, North Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam, p.16.
6. See Damascius' treatment of various *aporiai* in the *De Principiis*. E.g. the section titled "Three questions and answers" in *De Princ.* I.16-18.
7. On the Chaldean Oracles particularly illuminating is: P. Athanassiadi, "The Chaldean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy" in *Pagan Monotheism* edd. P. Athanassiadi & M. Frede (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1999) pp. 181-182. See also pp. 149-183 regarding the provenance of the Chaldean Oracles as well as their use by Damascius and his contemporaries.
8. *De Princ.* I.64.10-25; I.66.11-15.
9. Translations of passages from the *De Principiis* are mine.
10. *De Princ.* I. 11. 21-12. 4; I. 6. 23-I. 7. 3; I. 10. 22-11. 3; I. 6. 7-16; I.9.8-14.
11. These references were counted in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG)*. The keywords used to search for "The *Philebus* Socrates", "The *Republic* Socrates", "The *Theaetetus* Socrates", "The *Phaedo* Socrates", "The *Cratylus* Socrates", "The *Phaedrus* Socrates" were respectively "ἐν Φιλήβῳ Σωκράτ", "ἐν Πολιτεία Σωκράτ", "ἐν Θεαιτήτῳ Σωκράτ", "ἐν Φαίδωνι Σωκράτ", "ἐν Κρατύλῳ Σωκράτ", "ἐν Φαίδρῳ Σωκράτ".
12. Henceforth referred to as *PH*.
13. Athanassiadi in Damascius (1999) p. 117.
14. *In Phaed.*, I.74, 119.

15. The philosopher who ventures beyond the One in search of the ultimate principle will discover that the most simple and comprehensive of all principles lies beyond conjecture and conception and its value lies in its simplicity.

16. "But, if the One is cause of the All and if it embraces all, which will be our way of climbing beyond it? For maybe we walk into the emptiness, strongly inclined towards nothingness itself; in fact, that which is not One, that is nothing in all justice." (*De Princ.* I.5.18-23). In a way Damascius is telling us that the philosopher who might experience this kind of inability to grasp pure nothingness is the one standing more closely to the truth: "And if that [the Ineffable] is nothing, let us say that the nothing is of two kinds, that which is better than the One and that which is beyond; and if we are walking on the void saying those things, then there are two ways of walking on the void (κενεμβατεῖν), one is by falling into the unpronounceable (ἄρρητον), the other into that which does not exist in any way; for this one is unpronounceable, as Plato says too, but it is according to the worse, while that one is according to the best" (*De Princ.* I.7.23-I.8.5).

17. *In Phaed.*, I.126-127.

18. Damascius had to edit his mentor's hymns to the gods. Isidore was deficient in versification and "he allowed" Damascius "to amend their metrical defects and whatever went against the correct rhythm" (*PH* 48A).

19. "In writing he did not form the letters with any regard to appearance or divide his syllables correctly, and he paid no attention to spelling. He was wholly concerned with thought; and, which surprised us all, he went on in this way right up to the end.", Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 8.

20. My translation.

21. Hypatia's eyes were removed from their sockets, thus imparting major spiritual pollution to the city. The incident is described in detail in the *Philosophical History* (43E), even though it took place at least 50 years before Damascius' time.

22. Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* I.15.

23. There is a debate about whether Byzantine imperial decrees were enforced at the time and whether Damascius and his collaborators were forced to flee or took a decision of their own *apropos*. See Athanassiadi (1993) and Cameron (1969).

MUTHOS, LOGOS, NOUS: in pursuit of the ultimate in human thought

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Abstract

*The aim of this essay is to explore as far as possible the full meaning of the three terms *muthos*, *logos*, and *nous* (myth, reason, thoughtfulness) as expressions of human self-understanding and then to link these three terms in an attempt to give an account of the validity and essential place and function of each of them in human discourse, in meaning-giving exercises, and in the understanding of the world, in the hope of revealing in the process the indispensable significance of each of these terms for human life.*

For centuries human beings have tried to articulate their understanding of the meaning of human existence, human subjectivity, and human action and have tried to adequately describe who human beings really are. Different terms and descriptions have been used to articulate human existence at different periods of history. Over the centuries, our understanding of human beings has been expressed in different metaphysico-epistemological terms: rationalism, materialism, socialism, existentialism, idealism, and so on. Although there are substantial and fundamental differences between these views, the basic issue of articulating our understanding of what it means to be human remains the primary issue. Each of these approaches (ie rationalism, materialism, etc) focuses on a specific aspect of our humanness as that which is the most basic, primary qualifying aspect of the human being: spirit, reason, matter, togetherness, existence, and so on. The way different human capacities are employed and words used for this articulation are equally interesting. Two examples of such capacities are: *logos* (or reason) and *muthos* (or myth, fable). The Greeks also had another term which, regrettably, fell into disuse, most probably because, at that stage it does not have the same significance as any one of the other two, but which is clearly of high significance in any process of human self-understanding. This is the term *nous*, or thoughtfulness.

One of the best ways of coming to terms with human self-understanding is to study the ways in which human beings express

themselves through the ages on and about themselves and their world. "Words tell our history", Gadamer (1993:170) writes. This brings us to the issue of language and terminology. The three terms mentioned above are excellent examples of giving expression to the way human beings understand their own uniqueness and their unique activities. These terms are, however, much more than mere linguistic entities. One can, in fact, refer to these terms as modes of understanding and even modes of being. Also, certain words become overburdened with meaning while others are hollowed out and, in the process, stripped of their meaning.

One word which is overburdened is the word *logos*, or reason. Its overelaboration has had some serious consequences: because of their capacity of *logos*, human beings claim absolute insight, control and understanding and even access to power; this is a distorted interpretation of *logos* which ignores emotion, imagination, sentiment and spirit. This overelaboration and distorted interpretation leads to what has been eloquently exposed as logocentrism (Derrida is one of many examples of thinkers dealing with this theme). At this stage, we should all know that all "isms", without exception, are distortions in various directions: they all involve an absolutising of the meaning of one aspect of that which is (being), and/or the limitation or reduction of the whole to only one of its aspects (reductionism).

A term which has been hollowed out and stripped of many of its significant dimensions, to such an extent that only the shell remains, is the term *muthos*. In antiquity, *muthos* was the term that articulated meaning in its most comprehensive and deepest sense. Today, it is a word that is almost abusive, a word used to describe someone or a group who represents shallowness, absence of any real significance and, above all, something or someone that is totally insignificant. We have to take a close look at the meaning(s) this word has lost in the process of becoming debased; we also need to think about what could have been gained had this term retained its original sense.

The other term, which is different from the two just discussed, and which is destined for oblivion (if not forced into silence), is the term *nous*. While *logos*, as rational thought, took over the scene of significant discourses in the West and *muthos* has been inherited as an empty, if not abusive, word, *nous* simply disappeared from the scene altogether. Unlike *logos* and *muthos*, *nous* has never been translated into Latin.

Logos was translated into the Latin *ratio* (reason), while *muthos*, initially translated as *fabula* (fable) with some predominantly negative connotations, was eventually taken over (in its original form) to mean myth, and was obviously regarded as a word not particularly worthy of translation and adaptation into new settings. *Muthos* remains untranslated and, as such, is

not understood. While myth can be interpreted as a kind of “wild thinking”, and reason as a kind of “bounded thinking”, *nous* or thoughtfulness represents a human disposition that transcends bounded thinking while, at the same time, “taming” wild thinking; *nous* can therefore justifiably be translated into the term “thoughtfulness”. It is important that we examine this term, because it represents an extremely significant mode of understanding and being and, in view of recent developments, is perhaps more important now than ever before. We find ourselves in the age of networks, the atlas of knowledges, and cyberspace; we need to acquire this lost dimension of humanness in order to respond sensibly to these developments. Given the way in which they are characterised, myth and reason cannot, by themselves, respond adequately to the challenges of today.

The aim of this essay is to explore the full meaning of these three terms as expressions of human self-understanding and then to link these three terms, in an attempt to give an account of the validity and essential place of each in human discourse, in meaning, and in understanding the world, in the hope of revealing the indispensable significance of each of these terms for human life. We shall start by exploring, in a fairly comprehensive but also balanced way, the meaning and use of each of these terms, and we shall try to determine the validity and function they have for human discourse, human self-understanding and human orientation in the world, that is, the human world.

We have already indicated that these three terms are not mere linguistic terms, modes of understanding and being. The implication is that our conceptions of myth, reason and thoughtfulness must but be properly founded. We have to analyse how the mythical, rational and thoughtful modes of understanding and being are related to the basic mode of being human in the world. We should try to found our interpretation of the mythical, rational and thoughtful life of human beings on the central characteristic of how humans comprehend their world. The philosopher Martin Heidegger (1983:225ff.) may be very helpful in this attempt at understanding our world. Humans simply find themselves in the world (*Befindlichkeit*) as if thrown into it (*Geworffenhheit*) and all they can do with this fate is to take care (*Sorge*) of themselves and their world. It must immediately be realised that the term “world” is of particular significance. It does *not* refer to the cosmos or the universe. Instead, it refers to the place where humans find themselves, find meaning for themselves, and have to take care of themselves; together, all these endeavours find expression in the term “world-view”. Each of these three terms reflects, in its own way, the different ways in which humans do indeed take care of themselves, their world, and their fate, and the kind of world-views they develop. The important question in view of the central position of care is: What aspects of care lead, respectively, to the mythical, rational, and thoughtful or noologic thinking and

dispositions regarding the world?

A study of the three terms in dictionaries such as *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Ritter & Gründer), *The theological dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel), and *The Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell and Scott) may help us to find direction in our search for the meaning of these terms. The Dutch philosopher Loen's contributions, as those of Husserl and Ortega, are also of relevance here.

In order to reach an understanding of the meaning(s) of these three terms, we shall discuss the linguistic, historical and philosophical presuppositions and developments - that is, the contexts.

MUTHOS

Linguistic: The original meaning of *muthos* is "thought", but thought in a very comprehensive sense. We may accept this as the starting point for the history of the meaning of this word. Kittel (1967:765-769) distinguishes the following main stages of meaning: (1) Thought as the root meaning and may remain unexpressed (as intention, purpose, opinion or idea, reason, rule, counsel) with a tendency to communicate itself. It may be expressed since every thought carries with it the urge for expression. In this case it becomes (a) word in the sense of sayings or (b) word in the sense of words or (c) an account or story, where the main emphasis is on content. It can therefore be (i) an account of facts; or (ii) a rumour or unauthenticated story; then, (iii) a fairy-story which is not true but is valued for the kernel of truth; (iv) the fable or the fabulous account related to stories where the deities act; and finally (v) the plot of a drama or, more generally, poetic creations.

In the ancient world, the paradox is accepted: that is, that the term for "word" which can also be a "fact" means also "invented story", which is the equivalent of something that is untrue.

The paradoxical development of *muthos* may be seen in the interrelation with the terms associated with it in the course of its development, especially the term *logos*. Initially it seems as if *logos* covers very much the same conceptual ground as *muthos*. It, too, can mean rumour, fable, lying tale. According to Greek linguistic sense, the distinction between true and false is as little developed in relation to *logos* as it is in relation to *muthos*. *Logos* as meaning a true story as distinct from *muthos* (the false) is a later, though dominant, development. However, in the Greek world this distinction is never absolute. *Muthos* is a reflection of *logos* and indirectly mediates the truth which can be culled from *logos* by means of rich allegorical exposition.

Muthos has a threefold relation to *logos*: (1) the fairy tale as distinct from the credible history; (2) the mythical form of an idea as distinct from its

dialectical presentation; (3) popular myth as distinct from the deeper meaning (the kernel of truth) which can be extracted from the word "*muthos*". Understandably, in general instruction, *logos* is more highly esteemed than *muthos*.

Historical: In spite of its deficiency in truth content, and the other objections that could be brought against it, myth has a solid place in the intellectual world of Greece. Phantasy is the ability to build myths that express all experiences which cannot be verified scientifically. It is important, however, to realise that phantasy may also have a different and much more constructive meaning. Reference can here be made to Foucault's comments (1977) on Deleuze. Historically, as a result of the influence of the Christian critique of myth, the mythical world-view came to be understood as the opposite of a scientific world-view. One only has to read Homeros to realise the overwhelming role of reason and, especially, noology which the Greeks assign to human Dasein. Both the worlds of religious traditions and the poetic forms of thoughtfulness are answers constructed as a result of human imaginative powers, as efforts to understand aspects of being human.

Although myth and the mythical do not really have a place, according to some, in our scientific age, it is nevertheless in this age of science that myth is the chosen word penetrating the life of language as the expression of that which lies beyond and on the other side of knowledge and science (Gadamer 1993:170; Cf. especially Gadamer 1999 as well).

Philosophical: Mythology signifies all uncontrollable powers that limit and overwhelm our consciousness but, at the same time, its link with phantasy opens up a totally different set of perspectives on human meaning-giving activities as such. According to Paul Ricoeur (1967:5), myth is "not a false explanation by means of images and fables, but a traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and, in a general manner, establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world. .. Myth reveals its exploratory significance and its contribution to understanding, ... its power of discovering and revealing ... Myth is a dimension of modern thought." Gadamer expresses the same view. "In truth," Gadamer (1977:51) writes, "myth is obviously and intimately akin to thinking consciousness. Even the philosophical explication of myth in the language of concepts adds nothing essentially new to the constant new movement back and forth between discovery and concealment, between reverential awe and spiritual freedom, that accompanied the entire history of Greek myth." Along the same lines Kockelmans (1973:67) expresses his views on the significance of the

mythical mode of being human when he writes : "Myth is primarily an inherent human form of understanding or conceiving. What is typical of this mode of understanding is that it is oriented toward a certain totality of meaning or world and not immediately toward concrete events, states of affair, or entities of some kind. This form of understanding or conceiving has the character of a firm belief in the totality of meaning or world which it discloses and which is its immediate subject matter. On the basis of this firm belief, action of some kind becomes possible and meaningful." This kind of action extends to all forms of human experience: theoretical understanding, social practice, religious ritual, economic behaviour, and so on. Any time human beings are in need of a totality of meaning in order to be able to act theoretically or practically they appeal to this mode of understanding.

Georges Gusdorf (1973:261-262) adds a significant dimension to these views with his emphasis on the fact that while the death of myth runs the risk of producing ontological despair which made primitive civilizations perish, the mythical consciousness designates the supreme instance that regulates the ontological equilibrium of human beings. It reveals the profound song of human destiny in its plenitude which not only encompasses time but also goes beyond time. Myth consists in maintaining and keeping alive the idea of the infinite and eternity.

LOGOS

Linguistic: *Logos* can be translated as "word" or "saying". In the second case, it can mean "reason" and "rational activity". According to Kittel (1967:73-75) terms such as "counting", "calculation", "account" and "consideration" are not far removed from the term "*logos*". These terms, then, bring us very close to reflection, ground, and condition, ideas which became important in everyday use and in philosophy. Whereas *muthos* can refer to "meaningful statements" related to history, *logos* is used for rationally established and constructed "speech". Kittel (1967:77) elaborates on this in the following way: "Although little used in epic, *logos* achieved a comprehensive and varied significance with the process of rationalisation which characterised the Greek spirit. Indeed, in its manifold historical application one might almost call it symbolic of the Greek understanding of the world and existence." This agrees with the point already made: that these terms are modes of understanding about what it means to be human.

Historical: Initially, *logos* was understood as being very similar way to the word myth. As a result of the emphasis on *logos*, the scientific world-view is characterised by an understanding of the world as calculable and controllable, thus dissolving mythical world-views. For the scientist everything

which cannot be methodologically verified is of a mythical nature. Hence the move from *muthos* to *logos* during the age of the enlightenment. This view is also supported by Christianity. In the case of Christianity, world is understood as the untrue, as the being of humans in need of salvation. The romantics, however, take a different view. According to the romantics, myth is seen as the carrier of its own truth which cannot be reached by rational explanations of the world. Eventually myths, as a unique human ability to bestow meaning, were forced into the background, and reason emerged as the sole meaning-giving agency.

Philosophical: *Logos* thinks in terms of the essence or being of things and thus possesses a certain knowledge of things and, as such, is in direct opposition to what myth (Latin:fabula) represents.

The agreement between inner consciousness and the reasonable organisation of beings is included in the human capacity called "*logos*" by the Greeks and "*ratio*" by the Romans. We should never underestimate the immense significance of human rationality for the human race in the world. Scientific and technical developments provide ample proof of this significance. Likewise, that this mode of understanding and being is nevertheless limited and has its own shortcomings should never be denied. Human reason (ie in the sense in which rationalism and empiricism and all related approaches use it) is inadequate as a means of fully expressing what belongs to humanity. This view has been extensively explored in the literature and will therefore not be discussed here. Nonetheless, rationalists and empiricists accept the complete adequacy of rational exercises.

NOUS

Linguistic: According to Liddell and Scott (1955) the root Greek verb *noew* means roughly the following: to perceive by the eyes; to observe, but also to think, to suppose, to be thoughtful; *noesis* means intelligence or thought, and *noema* that which is perceived. *Nous* means mind, or to be sensible; to have one's mind directed to something; also heart and the thoughtful. For a concise definition of *nous* the following descriptions given by Kittel (1967:952) should suffice: The original meaning of *nous* is the "(inner) sense directed on an object", embraces "sensation", "power of spiritual perception", "capacity for intellectual apprehension". Of the wealth of possibilities of meaning contained in the term the following, according to Kittel (1967:952-953), are the chief senses found in actual usage: 1. Mind, disposition for the total, inner or moral attitude; 2. Insight, inventiveness, and more generally spirit, reason, consciousness, the mental side of human beings which shows them to be feeling, willing and thinking beings; 3.

Understanding, thinking ability, capacity of intellectual perception, wisdom;
4. Meaning, significance.

For the purposes of this article “thoughtfulness” appears to be a suitable translation of *nous*.

Historical: The rediscovery of *nous* may contribute to a reassessment of the place and value of myth and the rediscovery of *nous* and the reassessment of *muthos*, together with the deconstruction of reason, may succeed in enriching and uplifting sensible human discourse. Furthermore, this may come about at a time when the implications of the deconstruction of *logos* (ie the rational or logocentric) seem to be fading away without the comprehensive impact one was hoping for and that is so urgently needed.

Given that my argument will centre around the term *nous* in order to rediscover an appropriate place for *muthos* and *logos*, we need to pay some attention to noology as it is, for instance, explored by Edgar Morin (1983, 1990, 1991) in a very special way. We have to take heed of the remark by Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1988) that *nous* has never been translated into Latin and how unfortunate this neglect really was. The two terms, *noema* and *noesis*, are extensively employed by Husserl (1954) in the development of his philosophical views, and are still highly relevant. The intentional and strictly non-material component of an experience is described by Husserl as *noesis*. This word is related to *nous* and acquires a deep philosophical significance. Husserl looks at *noesis* as ‘specifications of *nous*’ and the *noema* is the ideal content correlate of *noesis* often referred to as ‘noematic meaning’. Equally relevant are the views of Ortega (1961:42-43) on *nous*. He writes “that the value that justice and truth have in themselves, that plenary sufficiency in them that makes us prefer them to the very life that produces them, is the quality we denominate spirituality.” The spiritual is not an incorporeal substance, not a reality, but simply a quality that consists in the possession of a special significance and value. The perception of justice, the knowledge or thought of truth, artistic creation and enjoyment possess a significance of their own, a value in themselves. They are spiritual life or culture. The Greeks would have called this spirituality *nous*.

Philosophical: Noology means a study of the activities related to *nous* or the phenomenon called *nous*. Edgar Morin has developed some very significant views on this and how crucial noology is not only for the human sciences, but for all the sciences (1983) and also, perhaps more importantly, for human thinking (1990). Morin names the human noetic activities in many ways, but the two main foci are the noosphere (articulating the life of ideas), and noology (articulating the organisation of ideas). These views are made

explicit and are comprehensively explored in his book on ideas (Morin 1991). "The noosphere is in us and we are in the noosphere" (1991:241) he states emphatically. Morin's work is a formidable articulation of human spirituality in an age of reductionism in the forms of technicism, scientism, and logocentrism.

In his "Apologia for the art of healing" Gadamer 1996:73-74 began from the Greek experience of the world. We have to recognise, he stated, that the body (as well as other capacities or functions such as reason, mind, soul, etc) cannot be treated without, at the same time, treating the soul. He also suggests that perhaps even this is not enough. It is impossible to treat the body, soul, and so on without possessing knowledge concerning the whole of being. In Greek the whole of being is *hole ousia*. Anyone knowing this phrase in Greek will also hear, along with the expression "the whole of being", the notion of "hale and healthy being". The being whole of the whole and the being healthy of the whole, the healthiness of wellbeing, seems to be intimately related. When somebody is unwell, you often hear people say that something is lacking, or that something is wrong.

We need to recognise that a genuine consciousness of the problem and a genuine concentration of thought upon that problem is only possible if the whole is disturbed. We know only too well how physical illness can make us insistently aware of our bodily nature by creating a disturbance in something which, normally, by its very freedom from disturbance, almost completely escapes our attention. And what is wellbeing if it is not precisely this condition of not noticing, of being unhindered, of being ready for and open to everything?

Through Heidegger we have learned that this sense of "it is there" does not have the thinglike character of an object. The decisive point is that, in this "it is there", in our being given over to the world, in our state of openness, in our spiritual receptivity for everything, whatever it may be, we are also there ourselves. For this the Greeks used the term *nous*. This term, when properly applied to human beings, refers to the awesome capacity humans possess to give themselves over to something completely, and to allow what is other to be entirely "there" in its own right. No other capacity, than this neglected one called *nous*, has these same dimensions. In another essay Gadamer (1993:166) makes *nous* even more explicit when he states: "The highest way in which truth is revealed, in which in this way the logos-bearing capacity of being in human thinking reveals itself, is called *nous* by the Greeks." This concept of *nous* is, according to contemporary thinking, in agreement with "thoughtfulness" (German: Vernunft). "According to Kant, it is the ability of ideas. Its fundamental need is the need for unity, in which disparate experiences are taken together and integrated. Mere multiplicity does not satisfy thoughtfulness. Where there is multiplicity, it wants to see

what it signifies and how it is formed... Thoughtfulness is there where thought is with itself."

It is the reflection on *nous* that leads Morin (1983) to his significant insight, which in a substantial way complements the views of Gadamer discussed above, of relating *nous* to the knowing mind and noology to the science of the knowing mind. It is in terms of *nous* that Morin articulates "the real complexity of an unheard-of interpenetration" of the sciences, as well as his consideration that "there is likewise a Gordian knot where everything is tied together and which reflects the multi-determined character of knowledge." Knowledge in this sense has the following determinations which are individual, bio-anthropological, sociocultural, psychoanalytical, and noological (which encompasses the linguistic, logical, and ideological moments). This combination of moments, in forming the noological, constitutes at the same time the notion of paradigm, and governs the whole organisation of reasoning and the direction of the reasoning process, and orients the discursive developments at the heart of ideologies and theories and all logical processes. At the same time it relates logically the central axioms of a theory to its rules and inferences. It is in this combination of the linguistic and the logical that the noological system is formed, while integrating into this system mythology, ideology and theory. No wonder Morin characterises these events as noology, that is, as the organisation of ideas (1991:161-238), ideas that find themselves in the noosphere (1991:105-157) from where it calls for organisation and integration.

The massive and elemental idea of the noological system, that is the *nous* in full function, holds up the entire intellectual edifice. The whole structure of our thought system is hereby transformed; the whole superstructure of ideas is affected, caved in. It concerns both our views of, and actions on, the world and the heart of our societal existence. This focus has enormous implications for the existential, inter-individual, social, political and cultural dimensions of human beings, and of course for the future of humanity. In other words, *nous* has the function of relating and directly integrating the central issues of the human make-up and, as such, constitute a core, but the highly missed core, of a philosophical anthropology. Where these foci are missing we indeed encounter in the words of Morin (1990:18-21) "a pathology of knowledge" and "blind intelligence".

New developments in the field of knowledge and the field of information and communication technologies pose new challenges to human thinking and our handling of knowledge. The comprehensive and penetrating nature of these challenges, and possible human responses, are worked out by many. In this context, Lévy's notion of collective intelligence and intelligent communities, directly related to information and

communication technologies, are excellent examples (1997, 1998). Stiegler's analyses of, and reflections on, "technics and time" are equally relevant (1994, 1996). Gilles Deleuze (1993), Pierre Lévy (1993), and Michel Serres (1994) all offer examples from a theoretical point of view and from the point of view of challenges to the future of human thinking in this context, and which are relevant to these developments. An atlas of knowledges, network theory, a new conception of thinking, and the future of human thinking in view of developments in information technologies offer new ways of dealing with current challenges related to knowledge, understanding, humanness and so on.

All these explorations rest on one assumption: there exists a human capacity which can meet these challenges in a pertinent and unique way, but which needs awareness and articulation. Stiegler (1996:9) emphasises the need for a new way of handling matters in view of certain new developments. In previous centuries, human beings slept in the beds in which they were born. They consumed food which varied very little from that of the diet eaten by their grandchildren. For seasons, years and generations landscapes, objects and ways of living remain identical. Everything appeared to be essentially stable. In recent times, however, and especially under the impact of technics, technology and technoscience, things have been transformed dramatically. Stability seems to be the exception and change has become the rule. Everything is a process. Tensions are created. A deep and fundamental disorientation emerges. It would be madness not to give an account of these developments. To these radical changes humans have to respond. It is expected of us to at least attempt to think another world.

To be able to think some new world, to invent a new world, thinking should go beyond the rationalistic and empiricist tradition of thought. Lévy (1997) develops the idea of collective intelligence as being a unique possibility that will enable humans to cope with this new kind of thinking, a thinking which will be nomadic not in the sense of "moving from point to point of the surface of the globe, but crossing universes of problems, lived worlds, landscapes of meaning" (1997:xxii). Mere rational thought will be inadequate. He links it deliberately to *nous* and the noetic by emphasising the link of thought to imagination (in a comprehensive sense). He writes (1997:248): "Unimaginable, imaginable, and imagined not only uniquely determine the three steps of a *noetic staircase*, but a dynamic spiral of the imagination." The ultimate finality of collective intelligence will be "to place the reins of *the great ontological and noetic machine* in the hands of the human species." (p250). *Nous* should inform, instruct and guide thinking. Deleuze (1994:138-139) also calls very emphatically and convincingly for a new approach to thinking. He distinguishes between a dogmatic image of

thought and a new image of thought. The conditions for a true critique of thinking and a true creation or invention are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself." In view of Deleuze and Guattari's opinions, this may be called a noological activity. In a later publication they explicitly state that "nous creates the image of thought" (1994:44), a view which, of course, is clearly supported by the full weight of their philosophical standpoint. That is what Deleuze's "philosophy of phantasm" hopes to achieve; and this idea was made explicit by Michel Foucault (1977:169): "We should be alert to the surface effects in which the Epicurians take such pleasure: emissions proceeding from deep within bodies and rising like the wisps of a fog - interior phantoms that are quickly reabsorbed into other depths by the sense of smell, by the mouth, by the appetites; extremely thin membranes, which detach themselves from the surfaces of objects and proceed to impose colors and contours deep within our eyes...; phantasms created by fear or desire...It is this expanding domain of intangible objects that must be integrated into our thought: we must articulate a philosophy of the phantasm that cannot be reduced to a primordial fact through the intermediary of perception or an image, but which arise between surfaces, where it assumes meaning..." This view is a confirmation of the view of Pascal as quoted by Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1988:193): There are two equally dangerous extremes - to shut reason out and to let nothing else in".

Michel Serres (1997:xvi) also expresses this need to go beyond rationalism and to cultivate a kind of thinking characterised by invention and inventiveness; Serres, however, specifically refers to science and scientific rationality: "Science speaks of organs, functions, cells, and molecules, to admit finally that it's been a long time since life has been spoken of in laboratories, but it never says flesh..." The "liberty of invention, thus of thought" is what he calls for since that is what transcends limits and boundaries (pxvii). The enabling capacity of humans in this regard is *nous* or the noetic and noological. He links inventiveness and thinking, but a thinking with a unique character. What these thinkers articulate is precisely the awareness of the need for something different in human approach and disposition from our normal type of thinking.

They emphasise a human position of understanding which lies outside myth and its bewilderment, and beyond reason, rationality and its keenness towards power to control, to take possession, to occupy and to expand. In other words, these writers have searched for a position on the other side of our generally accepted notions of myth and rationality. However, these writers want these modes of understanding and being to be incorporated and mobilised and taken further — further, that is, than they can take human societies by themselves. This new position is nothing but an

exploration of the notion of *nous* in its full scope; it includes complexity and fruitfulness and the opening up of remarkable inventive possibilities. This is the notion that takes us away from repetition and linearity into domains of the differential, the multiple and the tabular and that demonstrates that humans can cope if they can mobilise myth and reason by eliminating the deficiencies and focus on the positive moments. This mobilising mode of understanding is what the Greeks called *nous*; it is *nous* that is in the process of being rediscovered and that should be explored and exploited more intelligently and inventively. This mode of understanding and being qualifies the human being to inventively respond to the challenges of our time and to give meaning to our lives and to make sense of our world (Nancy 2001) in the age of globalisation.

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