

# SOCIETY FOR ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Founded 1953

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## NEWSLETTER 2009/10.1

You are cordially invited to the meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy with the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association Sunday, December 27, 2009, 6:30-9:30 p.m., in New York City:

Chair: Tony Preus, *Binghamton University*

Anne Wiles, *James Madison University*, "Plato on Truth and Falsehood"

Jerry Green, *Texas Tech University*, "Protagoras was not a Relativist to Me"

Lawrence Jost, *University of Cincinnati*, "*Theoria, Theos and Therapeia* in Aristotle's Ethical Endings"

These papers are attached.

### SAGP Meetings for 2010:

Saturday, January 9, 2010, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., with the American Philological Association, in Anaheim California.

Chair: Elizabeth Asmis

Mason Marshall, *Pepperdine University*, "A Problem for the Political Reading of Plato's *Republic*"

Lewis Cassity, *Binghamton University*, "Empirical and Dialogical Proofs of God's Existence in *Laws 10*."

George Boger, *Canisius College*, "On 'haplos pas sullogismos' in Prior Analytics A23"

These papers will be distributed separately.

Friday, February 19, 2010, 7:15-10:15 P.M., with the Central Division, in Chicago

Chair: Fred D. Miller, Jr., *Bowling Green State University*

J. Clerk Shaw, *University of Tennessee*, "On Some Hedonist Interpretations of Plato's *Protagoras*"

May Sim, *College of the Holy Cross*, "What Aristotle Should Have Said About *Megalopsychia*"

Octavian Gabor, *Purdue University*, "Species Souls and Particular Souls"

March 31 - April 4, 2010, with the Pacific Division, at the Westin St Francis, San Francisco

Chair: Mark Wheeler, *San Diego State University*

Joel E. Mann, *St. Norbert College*, "Causation, Agency, and Law in Antiphon: On some subtleties in the second Tetralogy"

John Thorp, *University of Western Ontario*, "Intelligible Matter in Aristotle"

John Bowin, *UC Santa Cruz*, "Aristotle on Learning in *De Anima* II 5"

October 15-17, 2010, Fordham University Lincoln Center: Annual joint meeting with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science, and other groups. A CFP will be forthcoming later.

December 27-30, 2010, with the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association, Boston MA at the Copley Connection

### **SAGP Meetings for 2011:**

January 6-9, 2011, with the American Philological Association, in San Antonio, TX

Central Division:

Pacific Division: April 20 – 23, 2011, San Diego

### **SAGP DUES**

Dues for electronic receipt of the papers are \$10 per year US. Dues for hard copy receipt of papers are \$20 per year US. Make out your check to SAGP. We honor multi-year dues payments. Those who do not have a US funds checking account are especially encouraged to pay by credit card, since that avoids bank charges.

### **SAGP Speaker Policy**

The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy sponsors sessions with the annual meetings of the Eastern, Central, and Pacific Divisions of the American Philosophical Association, and the annual meeting of the American Philological Association. There is also an annual meeting with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science and other groups. Occasionally the SAGP meets with various other societies. Those wishing to present a paper at any meeting of the SAGP are requested to contact [apreus@binghamton.edu](mailto:apreus@binghamton.edu). Membership in SAGP is required for consideration of papers by the SAGP program committees.

Submitters of papers for the meetings with the two APAs should include their name and address directly below the title of the paper on a separate title page, and nowhere else; that allows for anonymous review by the Program Committee. Submitters should also include a cover message indicating the meeting(s) of the Society at which they would like, or be willing, to present the paper. We very much prefer electronic submissions; make the email message itself the “cover page”, and attach the paper. We prefer attachments in Word (“.doc”) or “Rich Text Format” (“.RTF”); if you have some other program that you want to use, please contact [apreus@binghamton.edu](mailto:apreus@binghamton.edu) first. A word to the wise – electronic transmission tends to garble Greek (because not all the reviewers have the same Greek fonts installed), so please transliterate. **The Program Committee has requested that submissions be limited to 3000 words MAX, and suggests that submissions less than 1000 words are too short to be evaluated effectively.** Accepted papers may be revised up to a max of 5000 words for distribution.

### **Deadlines:**

**February 1** for Eastern Division meeting following December and/or the American Philological Association meeting the following January.

**June 1** for the annual SAGP/SSIPS meeting, held in October of each year, scheduled for Oct. 15, 16, 17 2010, at Fordham Lincoln Center. A CFP will be forthcoming soon.

**August 1** for Pacific and Central subsequent Spring Semester.

These deadlines reflect the necessity for a month turnaround to the Program Committee and a month to put the program together. Submitters should expect a response about six weeks after each of the deadline dates. The members of the Program Committee are: the President (Deborah Modrak) and Secretary (A. Preus), ex officio; John Anton, Elizabeth Asmis, Fred Miller, Mark Wheeler, and Thomas M. Robinson.

### **Society Web Site:**

We are very pleased to announce that the SAGP Web Site is functioning well, thanks to our Webmaster, Chris Tennberg. The URL is <<http://www.societyforancientgreekphilosophy.com/>>. It appears quickly on Google.

## Plato on Truth and Falsehood

Anne Wiles, James Madison University [wilesam@jmu.edu]

*Presented to the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy*

*With the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association*

*December 27, 2009*

In the *Republic* (389b-c), Plato endorses for the guardians of his ideal polis, the principle of the medicinal lie. The principle can be briefly stated as: “It is appropriate for the guardians to lie to the citizens for the benefit of the polis, but it is subversive and destructive for anyone else in the polis to lie.” Given that the ideal polis Plato is describing is a just state, a morally healthy state, some writers with a post-Kantian moral sensibility have criticized his position as being both inconsistent and dishonest.<sup>1</sup>

The argument of this paper is that Plato’s position is neither dishonest nor inconsistent, but that when adequately understood in its context, the account Plato gives of truth and falsehood offers valuable insights into the nature of each and the role both play in the moral life of the individual and state. In order to concentrate on the positive account of truth and falsehood found primarily in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, this paper will treat only briefly the criticisms of Plato’s position

To understand medicinal lying in its proper perspective, we must keep in mind certain obvious, but often overlooked, aspects of the *Republic*. First, the *Republic* is an imaginative construct and as Plato (592 a-b) suggests, the ideal does not and perhaps cannot exist anywhere as an historical state. What is important is to understand the principle of medicinal lying so that one can reflect on whether it can be applied in various moral contexts, and the criteria for applying it. The consideration of possible contexts of application is, of course, beyond the scope of this paper.

Second, the justification for the medicinal lie occurs within the wider discussion of the definition of justice. A fundamental insight is that justice must give to each person his due and that persons differ widely in their native capabilities. Also central to the account of justice is the metaphysics of the person, that a human being is a composite of a reasoning capacity, **thumos** (emotions or passion) and appetite. Justice within a person is a harmony in which each of these aspects is doing its own job well, so that reason is giving good rules for the conduct of life, with the **thumos** supporting the dictates of reason and the appetites obeying the rules. Similarly, in the just state the reasoning function is making good laws, the protective function ensuring they are carried out, and the productive function following the laws. In the *Republic* the rulers have a wisdom that is lacking in the other citizens. The philosopher-king, qua philosopher, is depicted as a lover of **aletheia** (truth or realities), as knowing both what should be achieved in the polis and how to achieve it, and, qua ruler, as having the power to put in place the means to achieve it.

The distinction in the *Republic* (382 b-d) between two kinds of falsehood is pivotal for understanding Plato’s views on truth and falsehood. Essential falsehood which is ignorance or deception in the soul about realities is loathed by both gods and by men. Falsehood in words is loathed by the gods, but serviceable to men in three instances when it may be used without deserving our abhorrence: against enemies, against **philo**i to avert some evil arising from their madness or folly, and when used in edifying tales.

Thus, there are two types of falsehood, the veritable lie and the verbal lie. There are also two corresponding types of truth: essential or veritable truth when the soul apprehends **aletheia**

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Gregory Vlastos, “The Theory of Social Justice within the Polis in Plato’s *Republic*,” *Interpretations of Plato*, ed. H.F. North (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J.Brill, 1977) questions whether a social system which entails the duty of lying deserves to survive, and Karl Popper. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p.138, sees the principle of medicinal lying recommended by Plato as a principle of “political expediency” and “totalitarian morality.”

(truth or reality); and truth in words or verbal truth that occurs when words accurately reflect how one thing is related to another.

Love of **aletheia** is characteristic of the philosopher, but to achieve clarity about truth and reality is a condition not readily attainable. Given the differences among persons in native ability, clearly indicated by Plato throughout the *Republic*, and captured in the Myth of the Metals (414b-415e), it is also not a condition that can be reached by everyone. People differ drastically in wisdom, in their understanding of the nature of things and of how healthy change can best be effected to bring a person or a state closer to the ideal of justice. This is a truth Plato recognizes, and it is a truth still.

Wisdom alone is not enough to bring about a just state. One may be wise and willing to help establish justice and yet fail, as Plato discovered in Syracuse, where the long delayed and inadequate education of Dionysius II and political intrigues defeated Plato's efforts. Nonetheless, the principle is correct: people with native ability, given appropriate education, are wiser than others, and part of their wisdom is knowing the character of persons and situations.

In Book 1 of the *Republic*, there is an adumbration of the nature of the medicinal lie and its relation to the principle of justice. Here (331c), Cephalus and Socrates agree that truth-telling and paying back what one has received do not define justice since each of these actions may sometimes be just and sometimes unjust. Verbal truth, in and of itself, is not a fundamental moral principle; it must be further evaluated in light of the principle of justice. In brief, verbal lying, being context dependent, has an inconstant value and justice as a moral principle trumps truth telling.

In the *Statesman*, as in the *Republic*, the statesman is said to be analogous to the physician. Plato claims that what is true of the physician is also true of the statesman:

So long as they control our health on a scientific basis they may purge and reduce us or they may build us up, but they still remain doctors. The one essential condition is that they act for the good of our bodies to make them better instead of worse, and treat men's ailments in every case as healers acting to preserve life. We must insist that in this disinterested scientific ability we see the distinguishing mark of true authority in medicine and of true authority everywhere else as well (*Statesman*, 293 b-d).

In the polis, the medicinal lie must be administered on the basis of scientific knowledge, i.e., by one who understands the nature of health in a state and how to obtain it. A corollary is that it should not be administered by one who does not have a proper knowledge of statesmanship, and therefore should be administered by no one except the rulers. Hence the inequality by virtue of which rulers may, under certain conditions, lie to citizens, but not vice versa. The lie must be such as to preserve the state and make it (morally) better, not worse.

Plato describes two cases in which he thinks the use of the medicinal lie would be justifiable. In the first case (459c-460a), concerning marriage regulations, he specifically invokes the principle of the medicinal lie, "It seems likely that our rulers will have to make considerable use of falsehood and deception for the benefit of their subjects. We said, I believe, that the use of that sort of thing was in the category of medicine." In order to achieve as many marriages as possible between the best people and the fewest between the worst with the least possible dissension, the rulers are to determine how many marriages there are to be and which persons are to marry, but are to use a system of "ingenious" lots so that "the inferior man at each conjugation may blame chance and not the rulers."

In the second case (414b-415e), Plato recommends that the rulers contrive a 'noble' lie, which, if it does not persuade the rulers, might at least persuade the rest of the city. The story, or myth, to be told is that all the citizens are children of the same mother, Earth. Although they are siblings, God mingled gold in the generation of the rulers, silver in the auxiliaries, and iron and brass in the farmers and other craftsmen as a consequence of which their natural abilities differ.

Each person should be assigned status in the state on the basis of his nature. Included in the myth is the oracle that “the state shall be overthrown when the man of iron or brass is its guardian.” Such a story, if believed in later generations, would have the good effect of making the citizens more inclined to care for the state and for one another.

Critics of Plato’s view have centered especially on the ingenious marriage lots, a device which some have claimed violates Plato’s own criteria of when a verbal lie is justified: it is not an edifying fable, it is not used against enemies, and the young guardians with whom it is used are neither mad nor foolish. Now, while it is true that the young guardians are neither mad nor foolish, they are yet *young* guardians who lack experience and in whom the sense of honor is strong. If some among them were told outright they were less worthy than others to breed with the best mates and that they should produce fewer children, this could understandably lead to their resenting both those making the regulations and those more favored. The result would be disharmony and strife within the guardian class. This would not be for the advantage of the polis, which advantage we recall, is the only reason statesmen are permitted to lie. On the other hand, the marriage lots device will let those not allowed to marry or procreate believe this to be a result of chance, the luck of the draw, and not a deliberate decision that highlights their (relative) inferiority. The device, a medicinal lie, prevents unnecessary resentment and disharmony among the guardians, and being for the advantage of the state, is therefore, on Plato’s own principles, justifiable.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of the *Republic*, the medicinal lie would be justifiable if and only if it is instrumental in producing an essential harmony in the state (social justice) and personal justice in the individual. Education develops this harmony. Edifying fables, songs, and other types of “enchantments,” for example, the preambles in the *Laws*, are all components of the musical *paideia* which persuades citizens to learn to like what the law enjoins and dislike what it forbids.

The noble lie clearly falls under the category of edifying fables. Music is education for the soul and is to begin, in the form of tales or fables, earlier than gymnastic. The educator will make use of one sort of false tale, namely, the fable, which “taken as a whole is false, but which contains truth also” (*Republic*, 377 a) and will scrupulously avoid another sort of false tale, namely the sort which Homer, Hesiod and other poets relate to us containing false pictures of the gods. The lie is “not a pretty one when anyone images badly in his speech the true nature of gods and heroes, like a painter whose portraits bear no resemblance to his models” (377 d-e). Fables of the first sort are familiar to anyone who has read Aesop. Fables of the second sort should be banned because they are false in every way, and can do moral harm to one who hears and accepts them.

There is more to edifying fables and other methods of persuasion than first meets the eye. Their use in education of the moral sentiments rests ultimately on the metaphysics of the person. A person is not a disembodied intellect but a delicately balanced composite of both reasoning and affective aspects. As Plato shows in the third speech in the *Phaedrus* (243 e-257 b), the most effective persuasion is that which appeals to the reason by stating what is true and to the emotions by presenting the truth beautifully.

It is on this basis that Plato in the *Laws*<sup>3</sup> speaks frequently of “persuading,” “charming,” or “enchanting”<sup>4</sup> the citizens in order to produce a concord between reason and emotion.

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<sup>2</sup>For an elaboration of this rationale, and for a review of well known criticisms of Plato’s views on lying, see Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, “Justice and Dishonesty in Plato’s Republic,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.21, pp.79-96, Spring, 1983.

<sup>3</sup>For example at *Laws*, 659 d-e; See also 664 b, 665 c, 670 c, 671 a, 773 d, 812 c, 873 e, 887 d, 903 b and 944 b.

<sup>4</sup>Glenn Morrow, “Plato’s Conception of Persuasion,” *Philosophical Review*, 1953, pp.238-239, discusses the term ‘enchantment’ and its connection with education. “Education [in the *Laws*] is essentially a training of the sentiments, from earliest years onward, into accord with the standards set by the law (653 b-c). But in the later work we are given a clearer view of what Plato thought this training involves. He calls it explicitly and repeatedly a process of “enchantment” ....In order to produce this effect, chants [**odai**] appear to have been invented, which are really

Plato(781 b) comments on persuasion, "...the laws' method will be partly persuasion and partly (when they have to deal with characters that defy persuasion) compulsion and chastisement..." Popper sees this persuasion as "largely lying propaganda,"<sup>5</sup> but this interpretation is flawed because the "charms" which Plato is recommending in this passage and in the passages immediately following are not *lies* in any sense, but are merely attractive presentations of the truth.

Concerning persuasion, the Athenian (*Laws* 664 a) declares that the legislator can persuade the young of anything, "...the youthful mind will be persuaded of anything, if one will take the trouble to persuade it," Even if, *per impossible*,<sup>6</sup> there could be a strong argument showing that for the individual who gets away with injustice, the unjust life is more pleasant than the just one, the legislator could still consistently recommend that the just life be *presented* as the happy and pleasant life. But why? Because believing that the just life is a pleasant and happy life will induce the citizens to practice justice thus, on the whole, bringing about the greatest good and happiness to the state and to the citizen.

In introducing the three choirs which are to "enchant the souls of children," (664 b-c), the Athenian says,

I maintain that our choruses—all three of them—should charm the souls of the children while still young and tender, and uphold all the admirable doctrines we have already formulated, and any we may formulate in the future. We must insist, as the central point of these doctrines, that the gods say the best life does in fact bring most pleasure. If we do that we shall be telling the plain truth, and we shall convince those whom we have to convince more effectively than if we advanced any other doctrine.

The remaining comments we find in the *Laws* on lying condemn it. In the preamble to commercial law (916e-917), the citizens are enjoined not to cheat each other, not to swear false oaths, and not to lie to superiors. They should not break their word or contract (920 e- 921 a). There are also injunctions against bearing false witness in a court proceeding (937c). Finally, Plato quotes Hesiod, this time with approval, "Justice is the daughter of Respect and both are the natural scourges of falsehood" (916 e).

In the persuasive, but not lying, general preamble to the legal code, Plato moreover provides a beautiful tribute to truth:

Truth heads the list of all things good, for gods and men alike. Let anyone who intends to be happy and blessed be its partner from the start, so that he may live as much of his life as possible a man of truth. You can trust a man like that, but not the man who is fond of telling deliberate lies (and anyone who is happy to go on producing falsehoods in ignorance of the truth is an idiot). Neither state is anything to envy.

This encomium does not say that one must *always* tell the truth; it says that anyone who wants to be happy and blessed should live *as much of his life as possible* as a person of truth. The point is that, on the whole and in general, telling the truth is morally and socially preferable to telling a lie. If we love essential truth, we will abhor and try to avoid the essential falsehood, or ignorance of soul. This love of **aletheia** will help bring about one's own moral and intellectual development. But *telling* the (verbal) truth also has a positive social value. One trusts a person

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enchantments [**epodai**], and are designed to implant the harmony of which we speak (659 d-e). But the word, **epodai**, and its cognates appear with notable frequency in all later discussions of education, and we can only conclude that Plato is deliberately emphasizing a definite technique. And this is strange, for **epodai** are most commonly connected, elsewhere in Plato and in Greek writers generally, with magic or sorcery. They are the spells with which the sorcerer charms snakes, or drives away diseases, or averts divine wrath.

<sup>5</sup> Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, pp.270-271, notes 5-10, especially note 5.

<sup>6</sup> This sort of case is considered at *Laws*, 663 e.

who tells the truth, and trust is an important, rather essential, element in uniting persons to form a stable social unit.

When all these threads are pulled together, we are left with a picture of statesmen who love **aletheia**, and who, while they must make considerable use of the verbal (medicinal) lie, are yet not habitual liars, i.e., they do not lie because they are fond of lying, but in every instance only for the good of the state. They recognize and encourage truth-telling as essential among citizens carrying out various legal, social and contractual obligations. They condemn any lie that presents the gods or heroes as evil.

In contemporary moral discourse there has been a tendency to treat all instances of lying as morally objectionable. The aversion most of us feel to lying has been justified on the basis that there is something inherently wrong in lying. Kant, for example, holds that it is always a duty to oneself to tell the truth since, "A lie is an abandonment, or as it were, an annihilation of the dignity of man."<sup>7</sup> Is it possible that the modern critic who emphasizes the "dishonesty" of Plato's view on lying is falling into the very fault that Plato identifies and describes in the Republic? "Just as too great a devotion to either music or gymnastic causes an undesirable imbalance in the soul," he says, "so too, in respect of truth, we shall regard as maimed in precisely the same way that soul that hates the voluntary lie and is greatly angered by it in others, but cheerfully accepts the involuntary falsehood and is not distressed when convicted of lack of knowledge" (535 e).

The judicious Sidgwick, in *The Methods of Ethics*,<sup>8</sup> observes that the absolutist position that holds a lie is never justifiable is difficult to maintain for there are circumstances under which honorable persons would think it right to lie. Plato also takes this position. In the political dialogues examined here, he offers a nuanced treatment of the topic by distinguishing different types of truth and emphasizing how one can be persuaded to love truth. While his position cannot, strictly speaking, be classified as either utilitarian or consequentialist, it nonetheless allows for important contextual features to be part of the moral calculation. Clearly one should love essential truth, and verbal truth as a general rule; the difficult task, for those not perfectly wise, is to determine when the verbal truth should not be told.

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<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant. *The Doctrine of Virtue*. trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Harper and Row, 1964). P.92.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Sidgwick. *The Methods of Ethics* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1907), pp.312-319, discusses the so-called duty of veracity.

# Protagoras was not a Relativist to Me

Jerry Green, Texas Tech University [jerry.green@ttu.edu]  
Presented to the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy  
With the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association  
December 27, 2009

## Introduction

Scholarship on Protagoras and his notorious Measure Doctrine (MD) has undergone a resurgence in recent years. These works tend to take one of three forms: some scholars have questioned the logical structure of the MD, namely that it is self-refuting;<sup>1</sup> others have discussed the historical and philosophical impact of Protagoras' theory, inquiring into what it can tell us about ancient and contemporary responses to the subject;<sup>2</sup> and still others have discussed Protagoras' views in commentaries on Plato's dialogues.<sup>3</sup> Virtually every work dealing with Protagoras assumes that Plato's interpretation of the MD was accurate and goes on to discuss the ramifications of Protagoras' position.<sup>4</sup> I want to question that assumption. I argue that the evidence suggests Plato's depiction of Protagoras was not accurate.

The MD as interpreted in the *Theaetetus* has been read to express one of two positions. The first of these is relativism, which can be stated 'For any subject *S* and any belief *p*, if *S* believes *p* then *p* is true for *S*.' The second position is subjectivism or infallibilism, which states 'For any subject *S* and any belief *p*, if *S* believes *p* then *p* is true, *simpliciter*.' I believe that our evidence discounts either of these theories as genuinely Protagorean, as I shall soon argue. But for brevity's sake I shall concentrate on relativism, as it is the more popular interpretation of Protagoras, and because my arguments against relativism will count *a fortiori* against infallibilism.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Miles Burnyeat, "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Later Greek Philosophy", *The Philosophical Review* 85 (1976): 44-69, and "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Plato's *Theaetetus*", *The Philosophical Review* 86 (1976): 172-195; T.D.J. Chappel, "Does Protagoras Refute Himself?", *The Classical Quarterly* 2 (1995): 333-338; Eylólfur Kjalar Emilsson, "Plato's Self-Refutation Argument in *Theaetetus* 171a-c Revisited", *Phronesis* 39 (1994): 136-149; Gail Fine, "Relativism and Self-Refutation: Plato, Protagoras, and Burnyeat", in *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Jyl Gentzler (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), p. 137-164, "Protagorean Relativisms" in *Plato on Knowledge and Forms: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), p. 132-159, "Plato's Refutation of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*" in *Plato on Knowledge and Forms: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) p. 184-212; Alex Long, "Refutation and Relativism in *Theaetetus* 161-171", *Phronesis* 49 (2004), p. 24-40.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Mi-Kyoung Lee, *Epistemology after Protagoras: Responses to Relativism in Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005); Michael Mendelson, *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002); Edward Schiappa, *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); Ugo Zilioli, *Protagoras and the Challenge of Relativism: Plato's Subtlest Enemy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Most notable are David Bostock, *Plato's Theaetetus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Miles Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1990); John McDowell, *Theaetetus* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973); David Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); C.C.W. Taylor, *Protagoras* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991)

<sup>4</sup> Two notable exceptions are S. Moser & G.L. Kustas, "A Comment on the 'Relativism' of the 'Protagoras,'" *Phoenix* 20(1966): 111-115; and Laszlo Versenyi, "Protagoras' Man-Measure Fragment," *The American Journal of Philology* 83 (1962): 178-184.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout I will discuss only the position of cognitive relativism, *not* the independent thesis of value relativism. The *Protagoras* indicates that Protagoras was in fact a value relativist, though with value relative to the community, not the individual. I know of no evidence to suggest that the attribution of value relativism to Protagoras is unwarranted.

My argument against Protagorean relativism is this: A close reading of Plato's *Theaetetus* reveals that Plato was very careful not to attribute his rendering of the MD to Protagoras himself, repeatedly trying to distance Socrates' interpretation from what Protagoras may have actually thought. Further, in his defense of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates gives an account which would be incoherent if relativism were true. This conclusion is collaborated by examination of Protagoras' few extant fragments and his portrayal in the dialogue *Protagoras*; both sources make claims that are either unintelligible or inconsistent if relativism is assumed. Thus we have no good reason to believe that Protagoras was a relativist.<sup>6</sup>

### I. The *Theaetetus*

The *Theaetetus*, like many Platonic dialogues, is an aporetic attempt at conceptual analysis. The target of the inquiry is knowledge, and three definitions are examined and ultimately rejected: knowledge as perception, knowledge as true belief, and knowledge as true belief with a *logos*. When Theaetetus first suggests that knowledge is perception, Socrates equates this position with Protagoras' MD, which reads, "Man is the measure of all things: of the things that exist, that/how they exist; of the things that do not exist, that/how they do not exist."<sup>7</sup> Socrates then explains the *homo mensura*, asking "Is this not what he means, that as each thing appears to me, so it is for me, and as each thing appears to you, so it is to you?"<sup>8</sup> Socrates begins by discussing the wind, noting how the same wind can feel hot and cold to different people.<sup>9</sup> Though he begins with perception, Socrates expands the idea to pleasures and pains, desires and fears, and eventually opinions, judgments and beliefs.<sup>10</sup> Plato goes on to argue that the MD is self-defeating. But rather than get bogged down in the details of how to best reconstruct Protagoras' theory and Plato's critique, I want to ask whether we are meant to believe that the theory Plato evaluates is really Protagoras'.

In bringing Plato's interpretation of the MD into question, the first feature of the dialogue to notice is the narrative distance between Socrates and Protagoras' theory. Socrates repeatedly reminds us that he has no authority to speak on Protagoras' behalf, that Protagoras could do a better job of explaining the theory than Socrates can, and that they are "abusing the orphan" that is Protagoras' view.<sup>11</sup> Rather than discuss how Protagoras would answer, Socrates often asks what someone speaking for him would say, even if it is the un-Protagorean Theodorus.<sup>12</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> Strictly speaking, our options are broader than this. We can continue to believe Protagoras was a relativist despite evidence to the contrary, we can hold that Protagoras was quite philosophically inconsistent, or we can conclude that Protagoras' MD was meant to express a position other than relativism. Given that the first option is epistemically irresponsible and the second flies in the face of Protagoras' reputation as one of the wisest thinkers in Greece (a reputation with which Socrates seems to have agreed), the preferred option is to reject the belief in Protagorean relativism.

<sup>7</sup> TH 152a. There is some dispute in translation of the fragment. This dispute revolves primarily around the terms *chrēmatōn*, *anthrōpon*, and *hōs*. It would be easy to beg the question about the fragment's meaning by translating these terms in certain ways. I hope my translation is as neutral as possible (translations here are my own unless otherwise noted). It should be noted that the difference between, for example, 'that' and 'how' were likely not clearly delineated in the Greek mind's understanding of 'hōs'. See Versenyi (1962) for a word-by-word analysis of the fragment, and R.F. Holland, "On Making Sense of a Philosophical Fragment" in *The Classical Quarterly* 6 (1956): 215-220 for an argument against this strategy. See also Schiappa (1994).

<sup>8</sup> TH 152a

<sup>9</sup> TH 152b

<sup>10</sup> TH 156b; TH 157e; TH 161d; TH 170d

<sup>11</sup> E.g., TH 157c8-9, 164e4, 168c4-6, 169e, 171d4. The notion of 'abusing the orphan' (164e4) is a reference to Socrates' metaphor of the philosopher as midwife from earlier in the dialogue. For a discussion of the *Theaetetus* centering on this metaphor, see Sedley (2004).

<sup>12</sup> For example, "from the things we said Protagoras says" (*eks hōn ton Prōtagoran phamen legein*) (TH 155d7); "Protagoras, or someone speaking on his behalf, will say" (*erei Prōtagoras ē tis allos huper autou*) (TH 162d6); "Let's ask Protagoras or some other of those who says these things (*erōtōmen Prōtagoran ē allon tina tōn ekeinōi ta auta legontōn*) (TH 178b2). I say that Theodorus is un-Protagorean because Theodorus studied mathematics, which Protagoras did not take seriously. Theodorus admits to being a friend of Protagoras (TH 162a4), but claims

theory which Socrates discusses is labeled the ‘Forbidden’ or ‘Secret’ Doctrine taught to his students in private, and not to the public; the theory is also called ‘hidden’ (*apokekrummenēn*), ‘secret rites’ (*ta mustēria*), and a ‘myth’ (*muthos*).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the very notion that the MD express the theory that knowledge is perception is cast into doubt when Socrates introduces it saying Protagoras “express these matters, but in a different way.”<sup>14</sup> This would all be very strange if Plato intended to give an accurate account of Protagoras’ theory. It is frequently suggested to the reader that what Plato writes may not be exactly what Protagoras meant.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the narrative distance, Plato makes several puzzling argumentative moves. The first, as just mentioned, is the equation of the MD with Theaetetus’ suggestion that knowledge is perception. On the face of it, the words of the MD do not obviously say anything about either knowledge or perception. Though it isn’t an impossible reading of the maxim, it doesn’t seem to be the only possible reading. But things get less obvious yet. Socrates takes *anthrōpon* to mean ‘individual human’ and then relativizes appearances to each individual.<sup>16</sup> But *anthrōpon* could just as easily mean ‘mankind’, and there is nothing in the words of the MD itself to entail relativism to the individual.<sup>17</sup> But by far the most baffling move Socrates makes is to equate the MD with Heraclitean Flux, the theory that everything is always in motion.<sup>18</sup> There is simply nothing in the MD which requires or even suggests a theory of flux, especially not the theories are equivalent, as Socrates seems to think.<sup>19</sup> What we have then, is Plato equating ‘knowledge is perception’ with the MD, which he then equates with the theory of flux. His final argument against the thesis that knowledge is perception is that whether you following Heraclitus or Parmenides (who thought flux was impossible), knowledge cannot be perception.<sup>20</sup> What this has to do with the MD is unclear.<sup>21</sup>

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not to be the guardian of Protagoras’ works (164e9). (Interestingly, Theodorus says that the real guardian of Protagoras’ work is Callias, the host of the gathering of sophists which is the scene for the *Protagoras*, who was said to have spent more money on sophists than anyone (*Apology* 20a)). Theodorus then says that he abandoned discussion (*filōn logōn*) for geometry. But Protagoras seems to have been no fan of mathematics. Though he did have a book titled *Peri tōn Mathēmatōn* (DK 80 A.1) and was reported to have a position regarding the tangent of a circle (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 997b32), he was reported to have claimed of mathematics that it is unknowable and has repugnant terminology (DK 80 B.7). He also dismisses of the study of mathematics in favor of *politikē technē* in the *Protagoras* (PR 318e).

<sup>13</sup> (*tois de mathētais en aporrētōi tēn alētheian elegen*) TH 152c10; 155e2; 156a2; 164d9, 164e3;

<sup>14</sup> *all’ hon elege kai Prōtagoran. Tropon de tina allon eirēke ta auta tauta* (TH 152a2)

<sup>15</sup> This suggestion is strengthened by Socrates’ defense of Protagoras from TH 164e-168c. Socrates essentially accuses himself, through Protagoras, of acting like a sophist rather than a true philosopher. He denies that Protagoras has really been refuted simply because Theaetetus was led to answer as he was. If another person’s answers are different than what Protagoras would answer, it is the other person, not Protagoras, who is proven wrong (166a) By arguing from common people’s confused use of ordinary language (168c) Socrates does not proceed as he should: from principle (*ex archēs*), and with an opposing theory (*antidiexelthōn*), or through questioning (*di’ erōtēseōn*) (167d). By implying that a pig or baboon could be the measure of all things (166c), by taking Protagoras too literally (166e), by pandering to the crowd (162e) and by arguing in jest and in competition (*tōi paizēi te kai sphallēi*) rather than in earnest (*tōi spoudazēi*) (167e), Socrates will behave unjustly (167e) and will lead his students to hate philosophy (168a). I take this passage to indicate, among other things, that what preceded was not to be taken seriously, and what follows should not be taken seriously insofar as it commits the wrongs Protagoras has described.

<sup>16</sup> TH 152a7-10

<sup>17</sup> For example, there are no words in the dative case and no relativizing prepositions.

<sup>18</sup> TH 152d-153d

<sup>19</sup> TH 160d5-e4)

<sup>20</sup> TH 182e-183c, 186d-e

<sup>21</sup> This suggests that Plato is after something other than simply disproving that knowledge is perception. To refute this theory, he could have argued that it is incompatible with the metaphysical theories of Heraclitus and Parmenides, which Plato seems to regard as jointly exhaustive. Or, he could have quickly supplied counter-examples, which are mentioned in passing. At TH 157e, Socrates argues that some perceptions, namely dreams and illusions, are false. Knowledge cannot be false, ergo knowledge cannot be perception. At 164a, Socrates supplies another counter-example: one can have knowledge while not simultaneously perceiving (e.g., with one’s eyes closed). At 165b-e, yet another problem is suggested, that one can perceive in varying degrees, durations, etc., while knowledge is

Given these oddities, we may be inclined to reject anything Plato says about Protagoras. If so, I've made my case, as our strongest evidence that Protagoras was a relativist is thrown out.<sup>22</sup> But this may be too hasty, as there does seem to be one part of the *Theaetetus* where Protagoras' position is defended more charitably. If we are to take anything in the dialogue as genuine Protagoras (other than the MD itself, of course), it is this apology given by Socrates at *TH* 166a-168c. But the theory outline here, I argue, cannot be a relativist theory.

There are two relevant claims which Socrates makes on Protagoras' behalf. First, Socrates gives an account of Protagoras' theory of wisdom. A wise man is someone capable of making good things appear to people, rather than bad. Wisdom, he claims, has several domains: doctor cause beneficial change in health with drugs, sophists or educators cause beneficial change in belief with words, farmers cause beneficial change in plants, and so on. This suggests a substantive account of wisdom as beneficial knowledge or skill, but the details need not concern us here. What is relevant is that this Protagorean account of wisdom requires the possibility of mistaken belief, where 'mistaken' means not 'false', but rather 'disadvantageous', 'unhealthy', or simply 'bad'. This account of wisdom is incompatible with relativism. For relativism will say that whatever appears beneficial to you is in fact beneficial for you. This would imply that there is no need to change things from a bad state to a better state, because whatever state you think is good for is already good for you. This entails that there is no wisdom in Protagoras' sense of the term. Thus it follows from relativism a conclusion that Protagoras would explicitly reject.

The second important feature of Socrates' defense of Protagoras is the interesting line "and as for you, whether you like it or not, it is necessary to tolerate being a measure."<sup>23</sup> This is a flat-out rejection of the idea that the MD is relative. One premise in Plato's self-refutation argument is that many people believe that MD is false. But Protagoras seems to think that this simply doesn't matter. However we are to understand the MD, we are not to take it to mean that each is a measure only if the MD is true for that person. Protagoras would claim instead that if you don't think you're a measure, you're simply mistaken; you're a measure regardless. There could be no clearer statement of non-relativist thinking.<sup>24</sup> Now, as with the rest of the dialogue, this information comes from Socrates, not Protagoras. But as I mentioned earlier, we have two options: Since this passage may be accurate, it can be cautiously accepted as Protagorean and count against a relativist reading of the MD. Or, we can discount its accuracy along with the rest of the *Theaetetus*, in which case we lose our evidence for a relativist reading altogether. Either way, our main source indicates that Protagoras was not a relativist.

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bivalent. Bringing Protagoras into the picture seems superfluous, which indicates that Plato was not discussing Protagoras in order to discuss the thesis that knowledge is perception.

Though mostly speculation, what I believe Plato is up to is a defense of philosophy as a practice from sophistry. The self-refutation argument against the MD claims that absolutely no one believes it, not even Protagoras, which is a rather harsh and bold conclusion. Further, in the long and seemingly out-of-place digression from *TH* 172d-177b, Socrates gives a dramatic exposition of the virtues of philosophy and the vices of sophistry, appearances and common opinion to the contrary. This indicates that Plato may have used the *Theaetetus* as an opportunity or even an excuse to discredit one of the most reputable sophists, who was, in Zioli's words, Socrates' and Plato's "subtlest enemy". In so doing, Plato could simultaneously defend his mentor and his profession against their rivals.

<sup>22</sup> To be completely thorough, I would also have to address later writers and doxographers who mention Protagoras. The first step in such a project would be to point out that many later writers were doubtlessly influenced by Plato's depiction of the sophist, and further that not all their writings on Protagoras need be read to entail relativism. Such a project is, I believe, feasible, though outside the scope of the present paper.

<sup>23</sup> *kai soi, ean te boulēi, ean te mē, anekteon onti metrōi* (*TH* 167d2-3)

<sup>24</sup> One might defend Plato here by arguing that relativism is in fact a consequence of the MD, and Protagoras was simply mistaken about the commitments of his theory. But to do so would require us to interpret the MD such that relativism follows. Since the very issue at hand is how to interpret the MD (or better, how *not* to interpret it), this response would require outside collaboration to avoid begging the question. But there is very little outside the *Theaetetus*, and as I will argue, what there is does not entail, and in some cases is incompatible with relativism. It is far simpler to conclude that Protagoras understood how the MD ought to be interpreted.

## II. The Fragments

Having closely examined the *Theaetetus*, we can see that the relativism which Plato has attributed to Protagoras is unlikely to be Protagoras' actual view. Now we can turn to Protagoras' own words. Though too sparse to reconstruct what Protagoras actually thought, the fragments are clear on what Protagoras did not think. As I shall argue, no relativist would have claimed what Protagoras claimed.

The first set of fragments concerns rhetoric. The first is the "Two *logoi*" fragment, claiming that there are two (opposing) *logoi* for every issue.<sup>25</sup> The other is the "Weaker *logos*" fragment, a claim about making the weaker argument the stronger.<sup>26</sup> These fragments have been taken to indicate that Protagoras, as a relativist unconcerned with objective truth, would argue for "false" positions as fit the situation. But these two fragments may just as easily express merely the nature of rhetoric. After all, sophists often promised to make his students capable speakers in their cities,<sup>27</sup> which meant, for democracies like Athens, swaying opinion in the courts and assembly. Deliberative democracy is premised on two sides bringing claims against each other. But this does not entail that both sides are equally valid, only that both sides can, and will, be argued.<sup>28</sup> As for the "Weaker *logos*" fragment, it need not be the nefarious claim of making the false argument seem true.<sup>29</sup> The weaker position could simply be counter-intuitive or popularly rejected, as Socrates' ideas often were. Making a position stronger could mean simply developing good arguments for it.<sup>30</sup> In training with weaker positions, Protagoras' students would have been better prepared to perform in the public arena, the very reason for which they studied under him.<sup>31</sup> I do not mean to claim that this is exactly what Protagoras meant, but it is just as plausible a reading as a relativist one. More evidence is needed to convict Protagoras of relativism.

The second set of fragments from Protagoras is about education.<sup>32</sup> Like the account of wisdom in Socrates' defense of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*, education is based on adding to or changing one's beliefs. If relativism were true, it is not clear what the motive would be for adding or changing beliefs. For relativism states that whatever beliefs seem true (or beneficial, as Protagoras would apparently say) to a person simply are true (or beneficial) to that person, regardless of what the teacher says. So relativism makes it difficult to explain how one's beliefs could be improved through education. As Socrates rightly asks, if each person is the measure of his own wisdom, how can Protagoras be a wise educator who ignorant students are justified in paying for his services?<sup>33</sup>

Our last fragment is also the most clearly non-relativistic. It reads "Concerning the gods I am unable to know whether they exist or do not exist, nor what they are like. For there are many

<sup>25</sup> DK 80 A.1; DK 80 A.20. In this case even the term 'fragment' may be a stretch. What we really have is a key phrase, "*dissoi logoi*."

<sup>26</sup> "to ton hētō logon kreittō poiein tout' estin." Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1402a23; Eudoxus *Elements* fr. 4 VI 78.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *PR* 318e-319a

<sup>28</sup> Seneca reports Protagoras as saying that both sides of any question can be equally well argued, including the question of whether or not both sides of any question can be equally well argued. (*Letters* 88, 43)

<sup>29</sup> This pejorative understanding of the "Weaker *logos*" fragment is likely influenced by the picture presented by Aristophanes in *The Clouds*, where Strepsiades sends his son to Socrates' "Thinkeria" to learn how to win lawsuits by use of unjust, weaker arguments. See especially *Clouds* 112-118

<sup>30</sup> It is instructive here to remember that Socrates too was accused of making the weaker argument the stronger. This is not enough for us to conclude that Socrates is either relativist or immoral, as some Athenians apparently did (*Apology* 18b).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. DK 80 A.20: "Protagoras...created the weaker and stronger arguments and *taught his pupils* to blame and praise the same person." (emphasis added)

<sup>32</sup> These are: "Teaching requires natural endowment and practice" and "They must learn starting young" (DK 80 B.3), "Art is nothing without practice and practice nothing without art" (DK 80 B.10), and "Education does not sprout in the soul unless one goes to a great depth" (DK 80 B.11).

<sup>33</sup> *TH* 161d9-e4

hindrances to this knowledge, such as its obscurity and the shortness of human life.”<sup>34</sup> Here Protagoras claims that theology is an obscure subject, which humans are unable to discuss with certainty. Given the difficulty, Protagoras is content with agnosticism. Now, one would expect a relativist to say something like ‘I can’t prove the gods exist, but they at least exist for me’, or ‘Since I have no proof of the gods’ existence, they don’t exist for me.’ But Protagoras says instead that he cannot say one way or the other whether the gods exist. In other words, Protagoras refused to use his own knowledge serve as the measure of the gods’ existence. This shows clearly that Protagoras was not a relativist about the existence of the gods, who would clearly fall under the purview of the MD.

By examining Protagoras’ other fragments, we see a far different picture than one which results from taking the MD in isolation. It is difficult to see how one could interpret the MD to express relativism and still include it coherently among Protagoras’ other statements. This may lead us to believe that Protagoras was inconsistent. But I believe that the better interpretation, especially given Protagoras’ reputation for wisdom, is that Protagoras never meant the MD to express relativism.

#### IV. The *Protagoras*

So far we’ve looked at reasons not to accept the main source for Protagorean relativism, the *Theaetetus*, and we’ve seen non-relativist claims in Protagoras’ fragments. These two arguments should be jointly sufficient to discredit the thesis that the MD expresses relativism. But to further strengthen the argument against Protagorean relativism, we may look briefly at Protagoras’ eponymous dialogue.

When Protagoras is asked what he specifically teaches, his response is “sound management: in private affairs, how to best manage the household; and in public affairs, how to be the most capable in both speech and action.”<sup>35</sup> This statement is difficult to reconcile with relativism. For one, there is a standard of judgment implied in *euboulia*, a right and wrong way to manage one’s affairs. If what counts as sound management is whatever one thinks is sound management, then it is unclear how there could be a standard, not to mention how this standard could be taught. And more importantly, the abilities which Protagoras promises to teach are premised on a non-relativist understanding of political power. Power in a *polis* like Athens, where Protagoras frequently taught, was democratic, grounded primarily in the *ekklēsia* and the courts. To become a power player in Athens required one to rally and maintain support for one’s causes. One individual’s beliefs were insignificant, at least until others could be persuaded to share and act on these beliefs. If Protagoras would teach his students to be successful in the political arena, he would have to stress the importance of the community’s opinion in politics over the individual’s opinion, and thus forego relativism.

Later in the dialogue Socrates tries to prove to Protagoras that cowardice is a kind of ignorance, while courage is a kind of knowledge. As they explore this issue, Socrates reports that many say that people know what is good for them but act otherwise because they are overcome with pleasure or pain.<sup>36</sup> To this Protagoras replies, “I think that men say this and many other things that are not correct.”<sup>37</sup> Socrates eventually reasons that the measure must be a science of measurement of pleasures and pains.<sup>38</sup> Protagoras agrees to this proposition. Of particular interest are two more points to which Protagoras agrees. Socrates identifies the science of measurement

<sup>34</sup> *peri men theōn ouk echō eidenai outh’ hōs eidin, outh’ hōs ouk eisin. polla gar ta kōluonta eidenai, hē t’ adēlotēs kai brachus ōn ho bios tou anthrōpou.* (DK 80 A.1) Note his mention of the shortness of human life. It is best to read *anthropos* here as ‘mankind’. This may have some relevance for translating and interpreting the MD.

<sup>35</sup> *to de mathēma estin, euboulia peri te tōn oikeiōn hopōs an arista tēn authou oikian dioikoi, kai peri tōn tēs poleōs, hopōs ta tēs poleōs dumatōtatōs an eiē kai prattein kai legein* (PR 318e6-319a2)

<sup>36</sup> PR 352d

<sup>37</sup> *polla gar oimai...kai alla ouk orthōs legousin hoi anthropoi* (PR 352e)

<sup>38</sup> PR 357a

(*hē metrētikē technē*) and appearance (*hē tou phainomenou*), and asks of the two which a) leads us to have mixed-up (*katō*) beliefs, and which b) reveals the truth.<sup>39</sup> Protagoras agrees with Socrates that it is appearance that leads us astray, and measurement that shows us the truth.<sup>40</sup> Later Socrates defines ignorance as “having false opinion and being deceived about important things,”<sup>41</sup> to which Protagoras agrees.

It is clear that Protagoras’ responses are not those of a relativist. By claiming that people often have false beliefs, by defining the ‘measure’ as a science of pleasures and pains, by claiming that appearances lead to false beliefs, and by defining ignorance as false opinion and deception, Protagoras rejects relativism *and* the thesis that knowledge is perception, while sounding very much like Socrates’ apology in the *Theaetetus*. Of course, Protagoras may be serving only as a foil for Socrates’ exposition in this late point in the dialogue. But even so, Plato wrote these responses for Protagoras. This shows at the very least an inconsistency in Plato’s depiction of Protagoras, casting doubt on the veracity of the *Theaetetus*. But if we assume that the representation of Protagoras in the *Protagoras* is even roughly accurate, then we have yet further evidence that Protagoras was not a relativist.

### Conclusion

I’d like to conclude by briefly considering why it matters that Protagoras was not a relativist. Many scholars have made at least some mention of the distinction between the historical figure and the character in Plato’s dialogues.<sup>42</sup> But the distinction, nearly always an afterthought and quite frequently footnoted, is often blurred if not forgotten.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, even the character “Protagoras” is not easily read as a relativist, if we assume the “Protagoras” in the *Protagoras* and the “Protagoras” in the *Theaetetus* are the same character. In trying to fill in a picture of who the historical Protagoras was, we use all the evidence we have, chief among which are Plato’s dialogues. But in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, I’ve argued, the picture we’re given is not historically accurate. We may still refer to “Protagoras” the character as a relativist, though I believe even that interpretation is inaccurate. But more caution is needed when discussing Protagoras the man, a thinker whose intellectual reputation in his day was at least as great as Socrates. Protagoras was the most influential of the sophists, held in high esteem by his students, his peers, and his antagonists. As befitting that reputation, we are obliged to be as accurate as possible in our discussion of the sophist. I believe that taking Plato’s relativist interpretation of Protagoras as correct prevents us from accurately understanding the real Protagoras’s positions. The belief ‘Protagoras was not a relativist’ is true to me; if I am right, then Protagoras and I would both assert that it is true for everyone.

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<sup>39</sup> PR 356d5

<sup>40</sup> PR 356e5

<sup>41</sup> *to pseudē echein doxan kai epseusthai peri tōn pragmatōn tōn pollou axiōn* (PR 358c6-7)

<sup>42</sup> For instance, “The question of how far Plato gives a faithful account of the teaching of the historical Protagoras need not concern us.” (Burnyeat (1990), p. 7 n.12); “I shall take no stand here on what position the historical Protagoras held: since his works are not extant, it is difficult to be sure about the matter. (Hence, from now on when I speak of Protagoras, I generally mean Protagoras as he is portrayed in the *Theaetetus*.” (Fine (1998), p.137-38); “I should note that my concern throughout this chapter is primarily with Plato’s portrayal of Protagoras, not with the historical Protagoras. However, since Plato is one of our main sources of information about the historical Protagoras, looking at how he portrays Protagoras presumably gives us some indication of Protagoras’ views: though one of course can’t rule out the possibility that Plato misinterpreted him. (Fine (2003), p. 184)

<sup>43</sup> For example, “But the real Protagoras did not hold the subjectivist thesis. As the earlier paper explained, the more authentic interpretation of Protagoras is that given in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, according to which he was a relativist...” (Burnyeat (1976b), p. 172 ; “Plato gives us an eloquent defense of Protagoras, which professes to be authentic, which conforms to every criterion of authenticity we can apply, which makes good sense, and is internally coherent.” (F.C.S. Schiller, “The Humanism of Protagoras”, *Mind* 20, 1911:181-196, p. 184).

***Theoria, Theos and Therapeia in Aristotle's Ethical Endings***  
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For many years now the interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* has been beset with controversy concerning its penultimate chapters, where it clearly emerges that Aristotle endorses as the best life a career devoted as much as humanly possible to *theoria* or intellectual contemplation. When we reach the final act of this ethical drama, we have a veritable “divine intervention” in the form of an appeal to the *energeia* (activity) of divine *theoria* (contemplation), an activity analogized to that of our own *nous* (intellect, understanding, thinking faculty), whose proper employment will constitute complete, perfect (*teleia eudaimonia* (happiness, well-being?) for us humans (1177b24-5). Furthermore, we are immediately informed, somewhat surprisingly, that such a life would be superior to the human level. For someone will live it not insofar as he is a human being, but insofar as he has some divine element in him (*theion ti en hautō*). And the activity of this divine element is as much superior to the activity in accord with the rest of virtue (*ten allen areten*) as this element is superior to the compound (*tou sunthetou*). Hence, if understanding (*ho nous*) is something divine in comparison with a human being, so also will life in accord with understanding be divine in comparison with human life. We ought not to follow the makers of proverbs and ‘Think human, since you are human’, or ‘Think mortal, since you are mortal’. Rather, as far as we can (*eph’ hoson endechetai*), we ought to be pro-immortal (*athanatizein*), and go to all lengths to live a life in accord with our supreme element (*zen kata to kratiston ton en auto*); for, however much this element may lack in bulk, by much more it surpasses everything in power and value (1177b26-1178a2, tr. Irwin).

Now, if we have gotten this far, having begun with the first book’s repeated emphasis on the search for the *human good* (*to anthropinon agathon* - most notably in the formal definition of *eudaimonia* offered as the conclusion of the celebrated function [*ergon*] argument at 1098a16; cf. 1094b7 and 1104a14-15), patiently pursuing the long discussion of the moral virtues, justice, scientific and practical reasoning, pleasure, friendship, etc., we might at least be brought up short by this peremptory appeal to rise above mere mortal concerns and to *athanatizein* – “to immortalize as much as possible”. The problem posed by the apparently extreme version of “intellectualism” defended in Book 10.6-8, when compared with the earlier books of this work is, of course, hardly new, although it seems that of late there has been a gathering consensus that the so-called “dominant-end” reading of it is correct.<sup>1</sup> I can’t go into all the difficulties brought up for this reading by the “inclusivists” who want to interpret the *NE* as a whole as providing for both intellectual and moral virtues in a comprehensive vision of a “mixed-life” that will feature proper pleasures as well as sufficient external goods (e.g. wealth, good looks, friends) to enable someone to flourish. Instead, I wish to highlight the deep connection urged at the end of the *NE* between the best sort of human activity, that of thinking or contemplating, and the only activity worthy of Aristotle’s “philosopher-god”, to borrow Richard Norman’s useful label<sup>2</sup>, especially as that

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<sup>1</sup> The vocabulary of ‘dominant-end’ and ‘inclusive’ as applied to different interpretations of the final end in Aristotle’s ethics was introduced by W.F.R. Hardie in 1965 in his article originally published in *Philosophy*, v. XL, pp. 277-295. It was reprinted in Julius Moravcsik’s inaugural edition in the distinguished series published by Doubleday Anchor whose general editor is Amelie Rorty. See *Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. J.M.E. Moravcsik (Anchor Books, 1967) (pp. 297-322). This article is still very useful, as are the first and last chapters of his *Aristotle’s Ethical Theory* (Oxford, 1968) and in a second edition (1980) with “appended notes”. Subsequent discussion of the problem posed by Hardie has continued ever since and one continues to find partisans on all sides of the question.

<sup>2</sup> “Aristotle’s Philosopher-God”, *Phronesis* 14 (1969), pp. 63-74; this essay was re-printed in *Articles on Aristotle 4. Psychology & Aesthetics*, ed. Barnes, Schofield and Sorabji (Duckworth, 1979), 93-102. Further references to this article will be incorporated into the text, with the first number indicating its page in the original and the second keyed to the reprinted version.

divine *energeia* is described in *Metaphysics* Lambda, cc. 7,9. Now, whatever the independent merits of its philosophical theology, it seems to me that any strong parallel between human and divine thinking drawn along Lambda's lines, at least as traditionally understood<sup>3</sup>, will be, at best, an unwarranted intrusion into the otherwise humanistic ethics so long appreciated by lovers of Aristotle.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the strong, intuitive contrast between human and divine happiness<sup>5</sup> could not be highlighted any more graphically than Aristotle himself does at *NE* 10.8.1178b8 ff. when he mockingly observes that it would be absurd to attribute just, brave, generous, and temperate actions to the gods; in short, "anything that concerns actions appears trivial and unworthy of the gods" (b17-18). Indeed! The gods surely don't "muck about" with worldly concerns and yet most of the preceding course of lectures had pre-occupied itself with just such mundane matters in outlining and filling in many of the details of the human good. And, when we do go to *Metaphysics* Lambda 9, we are presented there with a picture of God's thought as focused obsessively on Itself as a "sort of heavenly Narcissus" who finds nothing better to opine than Its own perfect Self, settling "into a posture of permanent self-admiration" (Norman, p. 63 [93]). While many scholars object to this characterization, Jacques Brunschwig, offers a "disarmingly simple" solution to the "age-old 'Narcissus' debate":

"The moral of this story (or novel) is ironic and paradoxical. In the big quarrel about *noesis noeseos* between those who stick to the letter of  $\Lambda$  9 and those who want to give a philosophically respectable face to Aristotle's theology, everybody is right and everybody is wrong.  $\Lambda$  9 is indeed pro-Narcissus, but it is not Aristotle's last word on the matter. It is a kind of thought-experiment, carried with an almost mechanical rigidity to the final step of its dialectical and 'empty' logic. After Aristotle, *noesis noeseos* had a glorious history. Maybe for him, it was only a brilliant and short-lived improvisation".<sup>6</sup>

His interpretation is controversial and its discussion would take us too far into the dense thickets of the most obscure parts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* but it is worth bringing out at least the following from Brunschwig's interpretation. He may be thought to employ a "top-down" strategy insofar as he seeks to articulate the consequences of beginning with a "Perfection Principle" (PP) about divine intellect (*nous*) as the basis of the main argument of ch.9. The PP assumes "that the divine intellect, and more generally the divine being, has a maximal *value*" (p. 277). With the PP as his guide, Brunschwig sees the dialectical method at work in the chapter as "diaporetic" rather than simply 'aporetic"', a remark I interpret as indicating that the author intends to make a thorough examination of a puzzle (*diaporein*) instead of a more perfunctory

<sup>3</sup> A vigorous critique of the traditional finding of a philosophical theology in Aristotle can be found in Richard Bodeus' *Aristotle and the Theology of the Living Immortals* (tr. Jan Garret [SUNY Press, 2000]. Bodeus thinks that Aristotle accepted as part of the *endoxa* or "reputable opinions" very popular ideas about the gods, their gifts to us and concern for us, all of which is far removed from the Unmoved Mover "Narcissus God".

<sup>4</sup> Secular humanists will enjoy an apt observation made in 1867 by a contributor to the *Westminster Review* (v. 87, p. 44): "Let a man once read through the *Ethics* with ordinary intelligence and he can never afterwards countenance the stupid belief in the necessary dependence of morality upon revelation". I came upon this (beloved) quote in Frank Turner's fascinating survey *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (Yale University Press, 1981), p. 357. Of course, to be fair, Aristotle is not appealing to revelation but many of his most fervent later admirers (e.g. Aquinas) would have few qualms in doing so, helping to explain in part the long tradition of commentary that resonates with, rather than resists, the *Nicomachean* appeal to godlike activity.

<sup>5</sup> In yet another disclaimer, I want to beg off here any discussion of whether we should adopt the traditional translation of *eudaimonia* by the English "happiness" or try to defend some other proposal, such as "well-being" or "human flourishing". Such worries, as important as they are in other critical contexts, will be shelved in favor of a simple transliteration of Aristotle's Greek. The very etymology of the key word, of course, immediately raises quasi-theistic concerns but I assume that by Aristotle's time ethicists agreed with Heraclitus that a man's character, and not any divinity, was his *daimon*.

<sup>6</sup> "Metaphysics  $\Lambda$  9: A Short-Lived Thought-Experiment?", *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda: Symposium Aristotelicum*, edd. Frede and Charles (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 275-306. The quote in the text is the last paragraph on p. 306.

treatment. He says that “Aristotle draws up the inventory of all possible answers” and follows this observation with his own solution, which here amounts to seeing the highest divine activity as “thought thinking itself” since its own divine existence is the highest and most worthy in the universe. If we take this Narcissus view of the divine, however, and, having read this conception into the end of the *NE*, try to extrapolate from human thinking, to abstract from “all forms of human cognition from perception to action to thought” (324), *what’s God got to do with it, do with it, do with it ...?* Why should we strive to immortalize, to not think human thoughts if the theological reference as tracked down in Lambda is supposed to offer the distilled essence of contemplation as we humans have come to know and love it and ascribe to God in the very highest degree? Aryeh Kosman, whose interpretation disagrees with Brunschwig<sup>7</sup>, does see many points of contact between human and divine activities; his case is helped by the fact that ch. 7, which he sees as continuous with 9, does see many points of contact between human and divine activities, going so far as to describe God as “being always in that good state in which we sometimes are” (1072b25). This should compel our wonder, we are told. And Aristotle adds: “And God *is* in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God’s essential activity is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this *is* God” (1072b26-30, Ross/Barnes).

This reflects, of course, a traditional style of anthropomorphic theologizing, with special emphasis on the pleasure of thinking, it is true, but fairly clearly an example of what I see as a “bottom-up” strategy. That is, we are to think of thought thinking itself as the most perfect kind of *noesis*, with the most perfect object, providing the most complete pleasure imaginable. My concern about this familiar move remains, however. For, what, after all, does the appeal to god at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> book of the *NE* really add to the appreciation abundantly in evidence in the previous 9 1/2 books of human life and activity in all its richness? Perhaps it would be inspiring to some students, functioning somewhat as the Myth of Er at the end of Plato’s *Republic*, but it really does seem to change the subject rather drastically. Why is the human good to be measured by the admittedly unreachable perfection of divine *Nous*? It is certainly true that such a proposal is a *Platonic* one. David Sedley quotes a passage from the *Laws* (716c4-6), which he sees as an “unmistakable paraphrase of the [earlier] *Theaetetus*: ‘It will be god who, par excellence, is the measure of all things for us, rather than a man, as some people claim’.”<sup>8</sup> But, if we go the other way, with Brunschwig perhaps, and take due note of the conception of divine *Nous* as Narcissistically Self-obsessed, perpetually thinking only itself, an approach stoutly resisted by Kosman, my question again arises. What has the self-absorbed activity of such a perfect being have to do with anything humans *can* or *should* aspire to? For, it is very hard to resist thoughts about the ending of the *NE* such as those offered by Sedley in a fascinating comparative study of Plato and Aristotle on the theme of *homoiosis theoi kata to dunaton* – “becoming like god so far as is possible”<sup>9</sup>. Sedley treats this theme from the *Timaeus* as behind Aristotle’s injunction to “immortalize as much as possible”, which captures “the flavor of the Platonic passage” at the

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<sup>7</sup> Kosman’s paper is noteworthy not only for its sharp variance from Brunschwig’s in the same volume but also for his confident finding of a “similar strategy” in Lambda and the *NE*, one that places our highest activity in contemplation where our “highest happiness” is to be found and that (pure) thinking is what god does. See his chapter in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda*, edd. Frede and Charles (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 311.

<sup>8</sup> *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato’s Theaetetus* (Oxford, 2004) p. 81.

<sup>9</sup> There are two extant versions of this paper to my knowledge. What Sedley calls the “main core” of the later version of 1999 first appeared in the proceedings of the fourth Symposium Platonicum published in 1997: “‘Becoming Like God’ in The *Timaeus* and Aristotle”, *Interpreting The Timaeus-Critias*, edd. T. Calvo and L. Brisson (Akademia Verlag, 1997), pp. 327-339. The reprinted version is entitled “The Ideal of Godlikeness” and appears in Gail Fine’s *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul* (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 309-328. The last paragraph of the original raises, to my mind, such an interesting biographical suggestion about the origin of Aristotle’s pre-occupation with *homoiosis* that I cannot resist quoting it in the text and thus will make specific page references only to the earlier version.

same time that it departs from its own “immediate Aristotelian context”. He adds: “it is far from obvious why human contemplative activity, performed only intermittently and within the confines of a human lifespan, should be thought to achieve even a whiff of immortality. On the face of it, it achieves resemblance to god in respect of god’s characteristic activity, but precisely not in respect of his immortality” (p. 336). To which I might add that, if the Narcissus picture is accurate, an even greater gap yawns between us and god, since we contemplate a multiplicity of things and truths, while god knows only one, admittedly highest, object, viz. itself. Sedley’s diagnosis is that Aristotle is here strongly influenced by Plato’s pre-eminence, going so far as to suggest that, given Aristotle’s marginal political status as a Macedonian metic enthralled by his entry into the Athenian Academy, he was inspired to adopt Plato’s understanding of the cosmos “which located in the activities of the pure intellect the highest and most godlike human achievement, outclassing even the exercise of civic virtue. That Aristotle adopted this view as his own and even constructed his own ethics and cosmology around it should not, given the circumstances of his own life, altogether surprise us” (pp. 338-9)<sup>10</sup>. *Not a surprise, perhaps, but a philosophical disappointment, it could be argued, and a plausible case could be made that it represents a “Platonic lapse”, a veritable “deus ex Platonica” if you will, no matter how familiar and even inspiring to theistically inclined philosophers then and now.*

My basic complaint so far, then, is that it’s not at all obvious that maximizing the theoretical activity of our most divine element does full justice to the richly textured environment provided by the first 9 1/2 books of the *NE*, which seemed to call for focused development of the full range of our human potential, combining moral and intellectual virtues along with provision for adequate supplies of external goods. The older language of the seemingly endless debate about whether or not the *NE* settles for an inclusive or dominant-end conception of *eudaimonia* has been redescribed - in Michael Pakaluk’s new terminology - as the choice between Collection and Selection. Pakaluk sees an almost deliberately sustained ambiguity at the heart of the *NE* in his recent introduction to that work.<sup>11</sup> He concludes his book by saying that both options are embraced in the end, but in an order that is unsatisfying since it does not adequately provide the reasons why contemplation’s credentials for top prize “do not carry over and explain, with complete persuasiveness, why the activities of the other virtues are counted as happiness at all” (p. 329). For, it has been frequently observed that *even if the NE* were to be judged in the end – with Richardson Lear<sup>12</sup>, *et al.* – as selectionist in picking out contemplative *energeia* (*theoria*) as *primary happiness* with the life of that other (i.e. moral) virtue only secondarily *eudaimon*, the same could hardly be said for the *EE*; or, so it would appear...

But, when we get to the *EE*’s last chapter, god pops up again and this time even more obviously as *the object* of our contemplation and service although without all the “bells and whistles” about how superior *theoria* is to *praxis* or any explicit claims that our *nous* is our best part, linking us to the divine. This sudden appearance of god at the end, however, clearly reminds

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<sup>10</sup> Sedley’s recent chapter on Aristotle’s “global teleology” marks “Paid” to the promissory note quoted above in my text about the extent of cosmological inheritance. See pp. 167-204 of *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity* (University of California Press, 2007). At a SAGP session in October of 2008 I presented some doubts about Sedley’s in a paper entitled “Just how Platonist is Aristotelian Teleology? Does Sedley overdo it?” I believe he does.

<sup>11</sup> *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). He introduces this new terminology on p. 9 and employs it in the last chapter. The book as a whole is highly recommended, and not just for those beginning to study the *Ethics*.

<sup>12</sup> Her recent *Happy Lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton, 2004) is both a fresh and very inviting treatment of the familiar debate between selectionists and collectionists aiming to show how the life of the political *phronimos* “approximates” in its secondary way the life led by the philosopher with devotion to the highest activity of contemplation. In her introduction (p. 5) she states that “Aristotle’s philosophical analysis of what makes that happy life happy is, I believe, quite different in the two works” [*NE/EE*]; in particular and most especially in the *EE* she notes (parenthetically) that “even though theoretical virtue holds a special place in the good life, Aristotle thinks that happiness includes moral as well as theoretical virtuous activity”. This seems exactly right to Cooper (her teacher), Kenny, myself, and others.

Kenny of the old Catechism answer to the biggest of why questions. Q: “Why did God make you?” A: “...to know him, love him and serve him in this life, and be happy with him forever in the next”. Kenny went on to remark that the *EE* account, “seems, when decoded, to be remarkably similar: the key to virtue is to know, love and serve God; and that knowledge, love, and service constitute happiness in this life, whether it be mortal or immortal”.<sup>13</sup>

My question, however, is that when we compare the *NE* & *EE* endings with “god-talk” in mind, what differences/similarities show up? How significant are they? If Kenny’s thought here is correct, my earlier reservation about hauling in a *deus ex machina* in the more famous ethical drama, would seem only compounded by the divine entry in the other. So, were I to continue to refer to the *NE* final portrait as a “Platonic lapse”, the *EE* would seem to be still drunk on his great teacher’s brew, just as Werner Jaeger famously held when he declared the *EE* an *Urethik*, dating from an early, “Platonizing” stage, recapitulating the even earlier *Protrepticus* in its understanding of the important concept of *phronesis* or wisdom. Jaeger interprets this, “like Plato”, as “the philosophical faculty that beholds the highest real value, God, in transcendental contemplation, and makes this the standard of will and action”<sup>14</sup>. For Jaeger the “central notion is still God” in the *EE* and [as in the (most agree) early *Protrepticus*] only one aim in life is recognized, viz. “to escape from the sensible and earthly world to God” (p. 240). Jaeger thought that the *EE* reflected the *Prot.* very closely and set out a number of parallel passages that were meant to show that the treatise as we have it is in some ways a re-writing of the youthful, exoteric or popular work.

However influential Jaeger’s picture has proved, in our day we need not take these supposed connections to have been firmly established. As long ago as J. Donald Monan’s 1968 *Moral Knowledge and its Methodology in Aristotle*<sup>15</sup> the opposition to Jaeger’s take on the *EE* vis à vis the *NE* was consolidated, if not vindicated. Fr. Monan’s “Jaeger-Kritik”, while not as well-known as some, is very valuable still, especially considering that it was penned by a Jesuit priest very familiar with Scholastic terminology who nonetheless resisted what he terms “the picture of a ‘theonomic’ morality” based on a superficial reading of *EE* VIII.3. *Contra* Jaeger, Monan maintained: “The perfection of man himself remains intrinsic to him. This being true, it is questionable whether the tag ‘theonomous morality’ is not a misnomer when applied to the *EE*, carrying overtones as it does of a Christian’s view of God’s transcendence that was completely foreign to Aristotle”. For Monan, then, Aristotle’s philosophy should not be seen as containing “a creationism and a theory of a union with God through love” but rather “must logically remain to some extent a type of humanism” (p. 45). He grants that the dispute may appear at first glance to be a merely verbal, terminological one, but he provides ample evidence that substantive issues about the very nature of moral knowledge are at stake in the debate and goes on to deploy some of the moves made earlier by D.J. Allan and Rene Gauthier to good effect. And, when he comes to our target text – *EE* 1249b6-25) - Monan (p.124) warns the unwary not to conclude that Aristotle has abandoned the unified picture of total virtue so carefully cultivated in the earlier portions of the *EE* when the key notion of service and contemplation of God (*ton theon therapeuein kai theorein*) is understood as Jaeger saw it, i.e. as the “ultimate test of virtue’s worth”. This crucial step is of “maximum importance” he says and requires detailed analysis. The

<sup>13</sup> “The Nicomachean Conception of Happiness”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (1991), supp. vol., p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, tr. Richard Robinson (Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 239.

<sup>15</sup> Oxford University Press. This book as a whole should be better known than it is although a few (e.g. Kenny, Broadie, Decarie) have taken it into account. Its style is, perhaps, not “analytic” enough for some philosophical tastes but Monan’s book is very comprehensive in its critique of the “Jaeger-Meister” orthodoxy still apparent even today although the *EE* itself has enjoyed a much more friendly reception since 1968 and is often cited by scholars who would have in effect passed it by without the Allan/Kenny “revolution” and fellow-travelers. Father Monan was another pioneer here.

last 30 lines of the *EE*'s last book – as it has come down to us<sup>16</sup> - *might* be confusing, we are told, especially since they appear to suggest that its author has departed from his earlier view of human happiness as consisting “in a synthesis of [all?] the particular virtues working in unison”. Note the clearly collectionist sound of Monan’s phrasing here; it will be crucial to interpret this last section of the *EE* so as to preserve its inclusivism, especially by contrast with the selectionist, intellectualist *NE*. One key goal of this paper is to flesh out the *EE*'s inclusivism so as to vindicate Cooper’s characterization of “the *Eudemian* theory” as holding that “the person who flourishes actively displays *an excellent developed moral personality* and an *excellent developed intellectual personality*”<sup>17</sup> (my emphasis).

However the attack on Jaeger’s views comes out, when we ourselves examine the *EE*'s last chapter—fragmentary as it is—it is clear that God as *the object of contemplation and service* makes a dramatic appearance here that will strike most readers as reminiscent of the final act of the better known drama. In a recent article, for example, Gabriel Richardson Lear parenthetically remarks that “it is worth remembering the conclusion of the *EE*: truly good people [*kaloï k'agathoi*] make the contemplation of god the target [*skopos*] of all their practical choices” at 1249b16-25, omitting any mention of its almost equal billing for service [*therapeuein*] at b20.<sup>18</sup> Since the exact understanding of what the *EE* is saying about the joint project of contemplating and serving the god will be a main pre-occupation below, we should note that it is by no means uncommon to read the last 30 lines of the *EE* in the glare of the bright light shone on *theoria* in *NE* X.6-8. But, I ask: “*What if we don’t do this and try instead to read it without assuming any detailed congruence with the NE, as Gabriel Richardson Lear et al. seem to require?*”

In this connection, I would urge that we think of the life of the *philosophos*<sup>19</sup> as it was initially described in *EE* I as having a “dominant end” of its own, viz. speculative contemplation of truth on the model of the pre-Socratic Anaxagoras, who seems here to stand in for an otherworldly sort of apprehension of the heavens and the order of the universe to the exclusion of more earthly concerns (1215b6-14, 1216a10-14). For such a philosopher *episteme* or “scientific knowledge” alone is deemed to make life worth living all by itself and, bearing in mind also the strong criticism of Socratic intellectualism at 1216b 4 ff., recalled at VIII.2.1246b32-6<sup>20</sup>, this exclusively intellectualized form of life appears definitely one-sided, although it surely embodies one of the most attractive of the reputable opinions, drawn from the wisest of the wise, perhaps, but for all that *not necessarily* the *EE*'s “final answer”.

Well, when we do go to the last book for the answer it becomes encapsulated in the noun he self-consciously introduces at 1248b10-11, viz. *kalokagathia* (‘nobility-and-goodness’ but simply ‘nobility’ in the Loeb translation). Sir Anthony Kenny sees in this concept

<sup>16</sup> This book seems both incomplete and sketchy and also disconnected from the previous one that dealt with friendship, viz. VII. Woods notes that “the first sentence [of VIII] does not follow on...nor does it introduce a new topic” (p. 158). For these reasons, the last 3 chapters have often been numbered as cc. 13-15 of VII (e.g. Bekker, Barnes) and not a new book (e.g. Susemihl, Walzer/Mingay, Woods). That VIII’s last chapter does not represent a genuine “conclusion of the whole work” has been argued, perhaps most extensively, by Artur von Fragstein; see his *Studien zur Ethik* (Gruener Verlag, 1974), pp. 391 ff. A very concise, judicious and accessible account of these chapters can be found in fn. 48 of Cooper’s *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 135-6.

<sup>17</sup> [1975], p. 134. It is worth noting also Cooper’s critique of Jaegers view as “an over-blown interpretation” that won’t “withstand confrontation with the text itself” (p. 136).

<sup>18</sup> “Aristotle on Moral Virtue and the Fine” in Richard Kraut’s *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (2006) p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> In both ethical works Aristotle compares the famous 3 lives of the pleasure-seeker, politician and philosopher or knowledge-seeker, as candidates for the best possible life and seems to favor the 3<sup>rd</sup> over the others in the *NE* but perhaps not so clearly in the *EE*. The dominant end of the pleasure-seeker would be pleasure, especially of the physical variety, while that of the politician would be civic virtue bringing honor.

<sup>20</sup> Here it is worth noting that Aristotle says Socrates was correct in thinking that nothing stronger than *phronesis* can be found in the ethical sphere; he clearly adds that “when Socrates said this of knowledge [*episteme*] he was wrong. For *phronesis* is an excellence [*arete*] and not a species of *episteme*, but another kind of cognition...” (1246b34-6).

“the union of all excellence in an all-round virtue – a notion quite lacking in the *NE*” but clearly picked up by Arius Didymus, who describes it as “perfect or complete virtue” (*teleia arete*), “a synthesis of all the moral virtues” which “makes expedient goods into noble goods and chooses noble things for their own sake”<sup>21</sup>. What this innovation comes to at the end of the *EE* is disputed but it can be seen as an attempt to combine into one compact formula or concept his inclusivist conception of *eudaimonia* as the combination of all the moral virtues into a life blessed with sufficient external goods to make it a satisfying as well as ennobling one. To capture linguistically this joining of the fine and noble (*kalon*) with “things not fine by nature, but good by nature” (*ta phusei agatha*- 1249a7) he dusts off an old word and uses it for his own purposes: “to the fine-and-good man, the same things are both beneficial and fine” (1249a10-11). This raises a point that the *hoi polloi* don’t seem to appreciate since they cannot see how the familiar external goods such as wealth and power and noble birth are, as it were, “transmogrified” by the *kalokagathos* whose life is one of *eudaimonia* understood as a complete life of virtue adorned with external goods of sufficient quality and quantity to make it well worth living by those who can appreciate the argument of the *EE* as a whole and put it into practice. Thus, the *EE* should be read as consistently inclusivist or collectionist and, when asked to choose between reading both the *NE* and *EE* as either both exclusivist or both inclusivist, I would for my part opt for a view that has the two works defending different positions on this crucial issue. It is true that, with Kenny<sup>22</sup> and some others, I find the inclusivism of the *EE* preferable philosophically to the exclusivism of the *NE* understood as advocating the dominant end of the theoretical life as the primary candidate for the happy life. This, of course, is quite controversial and would take much more work to defend properly.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, as Kenny stressed in concluding *TAE*, judgments of the relative philosophical merits of works such as the ethical writings attributed to Aristotle, are subject to changing fashions in our criteria for excellence as well as being “very much a function of how much a text has been read, analyzed, and meditated upon.”<sup>24</sup> Hence, it would be a

<sup>21</sup> *The Aristotelian Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 20. *Aristotle’s Theory of the Will* appeared a year later. His “trilogy” will be abbreviated ‘*TAE*’, ‘*ATW*’ & ‘*APL*’.

<sup>22</sup> The third part of Kenny’s “*EE* trilogy”, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (Oxford University Press, 1992) discusses how an exclusivist of “dominant-end” reading of the *NE* has been steadily gaining ground of late and he traces, both here and elsewhere, for example, John Cooper’s return to that reading in his later work as well as the interpretation offered by Gabriel Richardson Lear; see her *Happy Lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2004). Kenny also adds further arguments to his own longstanding defense of an inclusivist reading of the *EE*.

<sup>23</sup> John Cooper, before addressing the intellectualism of the *NE* in detail in his 1975 book, clearly claimed that “[t]here is no doubt the *Eudemian* conception of human flourishing is more plausible, because more inclusive, than the intellectualist view” and “makes the use of the mind in reasoning and acting morally a fundamental good, coordinate with the intellectual values realized in excellent theorizing” (p. 119, my emphasis). In his later thoughts on the *EE* Cooper seeks to assimilate its account of *eudaimonia* as “the activity of all the virtues – i.e. virtue as a whole” to his revised version of the *NE*’s views. In both cases, we are told, “the happy life will be devoted to the exercise of virtue as a whole - the moral as well as the intellectual virtues, including the one for ‘contemplation’” (*Knowledge, Nature, and the Good* (Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 294-5, fn. 40). Cooper’s discussion here is a subtle and complicated attempt to overcome the old debate over inclusivism vs. intellectualism and cannot be adequately dealt with in this paper. In his reply to an earlier version of this very paper of Cooper’s, Kenny found himself in much agreement with Cooper’s account of “how contemplation may be related to the activities of the moral virtues in the life of the *Nicomachean* happy person” and welcomes this willingness to consider that in the *NE* “the human good is some single activity, a contemplative one” (p. 149). The *EE* conception, however, remains, for Kenny, inclusivist by contrast: “The perfection of the virtue of a *Eudemian kalokagathos* is both final and complete” final, because...[he] chooses not only virtuous action, but virtue itself for its own sake; complete, because *his happiness consists in the exercise of all the virtues (not just contemplation)*” (see fn. 8 on p. 149 of “Reply to John M. Cooper”, in *Plato and Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. R. Heinaman (Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> *TAE*, p. 238. He goes on to say: “It will only be when the *EE* has been for some time as carefully and widely studied as the *NE* has been for centuries that we shall be able to make an unclouded judgment about their comparative worth”. Since the careful study of the *EE* may be said to have only just begun in the last century and a half, we may not be able to vindicate philosophical preferences for its doctrines compared to those of the *NE* for some time to come, if ever.

mistake to let one's (even considered) judgment that the "inclusivist eudaimonism" of the *EE* is preferable, on philosophical grounds, to the "exclusivist intellectualism" of the *NE* get in the way of our fairly interpreting their contrasting views on the role of *theoria* and *theos* in the good life. I hope I have not been guilty of this, if, of course, these texts really do offer different views on these roles. That particular assessment cannot be taken for granted but I hope to show we should entertain it in spite of the powerful "attractive force" of the much more familiar teaching of the *NE* on our reading of the *EE*. The appearance of *therapeia* as a theme in the *EE*, no matter how *sotto voce* it appears, will help to underscore the differences in ethical endings that I see, if interpreted correctly.

First of all, the very notion of complete virtue (*teleia arete*) is somewhat obscured by the often-noted ambiguity of *teleios*, literally 'endy' or 'end-like'. Does it mean 'complete' as inclusivists or collectionists would have it, or 'perfect' or 'final', à la selectionism? Etymologically, of course, the last choice is the closest – recall that '*finis*' in Latin means 'end' – and Cooper, for one, emphasizes this whenever he is defending a selectionist or dominant-end reading of the *NE*, as he did most strikingly, perhaps, in his 1975 book<sup>25</sup>. Kenny, on the other hand, seems to suggest that we keep all 3 English words in mind when thinking of our target passage: "*Kalokagathia* is perfect virtue. Here 'perfect' must mean not just complete but also final".<sup>26</sup> An important qualification emerges just after this linguistic suggestion, though, when he asserts that *kalokagathia*, while being the most final virtue, is "**not the most final good**" (my emphasis); it is, rather, its **exercise** that merits that title and it "must include both contemplation and morally virtuous activity" (p. 95). In what follows I want to stretch this picture of the exercise of our full range of human potential, perhaps to the breaking point, but the exercise may test the limits of a comprehensive inclusivist picture.

One thought is that we have here a holistic, synthetic view of a life lived with all the virtues, moral and intellectual, working in harmony in the life of a *eudaimon*. It seems to me that the *EE*, by contrast with *NE*, just might be seen as reaching for an ideal unity of theory and practice, contemplation and service, in his time and place, i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> C. Athens. Before rejecting this "proto-Marxian" characterization out of hand as anachronistic on its face, allow me to at least tease out the thought, which will involve extending some familiar ideas from Aristotle's general theory of moral virtue. This will involve linking *NE* VI [=EE V] with *EE* VIII.3 & disconnecting (in a sense) the book on *phronesis* from *NE* X.

Since I believe that Kenny has shown that the most likely original environment for the common books is supplied by the undoubted *Eudemian* and not the distinctively *Nicomachean* books, I will proceed on this assumption, trusting in the results of chi-squared testing, philological sifting and sniffing, and all that battery of arguments to be found in his Aristotelian trilogy.<sup>27</sup> The position I have in mind would be that in *NE* X he quite clearly privileges theoretical thought/activity over the practical varieties, seeing proficiency at the latter as (at best) featuring a

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<sup>25</sup> In *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Harvard University Press, 1975), he clearly saw the *EE* as recommending a "mixed life" in which the flourishing individual is "not merely an intellectual but also an emotional being" (p. 156) while the *NE* ideal is seen as fit for "one who identifies himself wholly with one's intellectual capacities and refuses to accept the physical and emotional capacities and needs which link one to another person as essential and fundamental to what one is..." (pp. 162-3). In 1987 he reconsidered this earlier view and opted instead for a suitably nuanced inclusivism: "complete happiness" is found in excellent contemplative study, but happiness is also found in morally virtuous activity, and the best and happiest life for a human being is a life successfully and effectively led in recognition of the permanent value to a human being of the use of *perfected human reason in all its aspects and functions*" ([1999], p. 235, my emphasis). By 2003/4 Cooper had returned to a suitably nuanced "dominant-end" reading, but one that does not threaten to undermine strictly ethical requirements as the extremely rigorous intellectualism described in his 1975 book seemed to. See now his paper "Plato and Aristotle on 'Finality' and '(Self-)Sufficiency'", in *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good: Essays on Ancient Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 270-308.

<sup>26</sup> *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 94-5.

<sup>27</sup> TAE, ATW, APL.

secondary kind of *eudaimonia* whereas in the *EE* both *theoria* & *praxis* stay (or become?) united in the idea of contemplation and service of god as someone to be imitated as a final cause and neither “an imperative ruler” (1249b14) nor a beneficiary of our actions given the clear statement that “*god* needs nothing (b15). This would, of course, still be bringing in a *deus* but not in the *NE*’s way, where we are told to rise above our natures by becoming as godlike as possible, nor as Jaeger would have it, either, by calling for any “theonomic morality”, with some god laying down the law. In the final chapter of the *EE* the thought seems to be, rather, that we should serve the god in both ways and discipline ourselves to heed the irrational part as little as possible, but still work with it and not against it. We cannot act as though psychic resistance to rational prompting didn’t exist, even as we should remember that the best standard (*horos*) for action is “to perceive the irrational part of the soul, as such, as little as possible” (1249b21-3). Note the contrast with the *NE* where we were told to strive to become immortal and make our *nous* or our true selves the goal of our most important *energeia*. Here, by contrast, in the *EE* we are still composite beings, rational animals with irrational tendencies that need careful monitoring, not haughty neglect in favor of a radical intellectualism that is so reminiscent of Plato’s “strong programme”. Furthermore, it still seems to me, as it did to Kenny, that the last chapter of the *EE* should be seen as providing an answer to the question left hanging back in the common book on *phronesis* about how, exactly, to specify what the *orthos logos* or correct account, correct reason (?) amounts to. At 1138b33-35 Aristotle had sought to get beyond the truism that we should do only what the *orthos logos* prescribes, comparing this to being told to follow a doctor’s advice without being any the wiser about what specific remedies are recommended: “Hence in relation to the dispositions of the soul too what we need is not merely to have said this and said something true; we need also to have determined what ‘the correct prescription’ (*orthos logos*) is, and what the determining mark (*horos*) of this is” (Rowe, tr.). By this (common) book’s end (ch. 13) we are still left more or less where we had started in ch. 1, with no clearer account of the *orthos logos*. This nagging question of the precise nature of the *horos* is, arguably, taken up in much the same terms as *EE* V left it, if we follow Kenny’s interpretation, first advanced most fully in his 1978 book. [There is not space to enter into this discussion here].

To get on, what I need next is to argue that, not only do we get a unity of theory and practice at the very end of the *EE* but, in “clear and profound” contrast with the *NE* finale, we are still being treated to an “inclusive, organic view of happiness ...and [not] the dominant, intellectualist one of the *NE*” [*TAE*, p. 208]; to repeat, as Kenny says, the contrast is “clear and profound” and may withstand the apparent threat to the inclusivist interpretation posed by 1249a21-b23. Recalling Kenny’s reaction to this final page of the *EE*, I confess I don’t see it that way, as “Catechismic”, as it were. For one thing, it won’t be the case that our activities are for the sake of the reward of eternal happiness in a heaven, or even because we were made to know, love and serve God in this life if that is understood as doing what we’ve been commanded to do or were designed to do by a loving creator. As the *EE* makes very clear, *God gives no commands* and *has no need* of our good works or even our rapt attention. Rather, as Kenny himself says (at *APL*, p. 99) god “is not a *raison d’être* whose good is being aimed at but a good whose attainment is the *raison d’être* of *phronesis*’ commands”. A few pages earlier (91 ff.), he had reminded us that what moral virtue requires of each of us varies from individual to individual: “the right number of brave actions, for instance, will be greater for the politician than it will be for the theorizer”. And we are told that *EE* II’s notion of *eudaimonia* as “the exercise of perfect [in the sense of ‘complete’] life in accord with perfect virtue” is the “virtue which is a whole of parts”, which would include both the intellectual and emotional parts of the soul (pp. 93-4). If this is so, how can we synthesize our various capacities so as to achieve the “whole of virtue”, a unity of theoretical and practical wisdom?

William Butler Yeats once wrote a poem entitled “The Choice”.

The intellect of man is forced to choose  
Perfection of the life, or of the work,

And if it take the second must refuse  
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.  
When all that story's finished, what's the news?  
In luck or out the toil has left its mark:  
That old perplexity an empty purse,  
Or the day's vanity, the night's remorse.

The poet is obviously reflecting in a mood of regret that it is very hard to both be a virtuous person and do the work you're called to do, in his case the "accustomed toil" of his "craft of verse". As we sometimes say, ruefully, "you can't have it all"! Still, Aristotle, as I interpret him in the *EE*, surely wants us to shoot for having it all – the full exercise of our talents and potential in the multifarious and diverse ways that flourishing human beings, at their best, exhibit excellence, both intellectual and moral. We are all familiar with the notion of "the mean relative to us" from Aristotle's general theory of *arete* as a mean and this clearly allows for a considerable degree of individual variability in action/feeling/choice. How variable? Well, let's see. Clearly some people are more attractive than others, perhaps more sensual, too. They will have more to worry about in the temperance area when it comes to sexual matters. They should follow the counsel given by the Trojan elders on the walls of Troy, recalled at *NE* 2.9.1109b1ff:

"But we must also consider the things towards which we as individuals are particularly prone. For we each have different natural tendencies, and we can find out what they are by the pain and pleasure that occur in us. And we should drag ourselves in the opposite direction, because we shall arrive at the mean by holding far off from where we would miss the mark, just as people do when straightening warped pieces of wood. In everything, we should be on our guard especially against the pleasant – pleasure, that is – because we are not impartial judges of it. So we should adopt the same attitude to it as the elders did toward Helen, and utter their words<sup>28</sup> in everything we do; for by dismissing pleasure in this way, we shall miss the mark to a lesser degree." (1109b1-12, Crisp tr.)

Now, as far as I can see, there is no reason to think that the *EE* departs from the *NE* on this bit of advice although my case might be strengthened were I to find a similar passage in the undoubted *EE*. The basic notion of "the mean relative to us" occurs in both works, of course, and appears to amount to much the same view, however we elaborate it. All real human beings are "warped pieces of wood," some bent one way, some another. Learning to compensate, then, for our own peculiar foibles and unique dispositions is an important part of Aristotelian self-knowledge, at least as far as our moral lives go. A passage from *EE* II.8 that could be read as highlighting individual variability and exhibiting a certain psychological penetration concerns the pressure of one's own inner compulsions:

A man would appear to be acting under compulsion and involuntarily more when he does so to avoid suffering a severe pain than when he does so to avoid a slight one, and, in general, more when he does so to avoid pain than when he does so to get enjoyment. *For what is in one's power, on which the whole issue turns, is what one's nature is able to withstand (to gar eph'hauto, eis ho anagetai holon, tout' estin ho he autou phusis hoia te pherein) And what it [= one's individual nature?] is not able to withstand, and*

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<sup>28</sup> "They sounded like cicadas in dry summer/" and "watching Helen as she climbed the stair/ in undertones they said to one another": "We cannot rage at her...A goddess the woman is to look at...but still, /still, even so, being all that she is, let her go in the ships/ and take her scourge from us and from our children." (*Iliad* III.151-160, Fitzgerald tr.)

*is not within the scope of one's natural inclination or reasoning, is not in one's power."*  
(Woods tr., 1225a22-27, my emphasis.)

It is worth noting that in his commentary Woods skips over this passage, with no entry between his note on a21 and the next one on a30; see p. 135, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.).

This seems to reflect the same sort of concern we just saw in the Homeric passage about the conflicted Trojan elders, if we take it as getting down to the level of individual variability and not just human nature in general. Clearly, individuals differ in what they can stand in the way of temptation or threats; Jack Bauer's resistance to torture will be stronger than most of those he works for! If the "whole issue" turns on what is or isn't in one's own unique set of powers and dispositions, on what we as individuals can or can't resist, given the concrete particular circumstances we face, then the *EE* can be read as "agent-relative", just as the *NE* is so often interpreted. Paula Gottlieb, for example, in her just published *The Virtues of Aristotle's Ethics*, effectively counters Lesley Brown's "novel reading" of the Milo example in Brown's attempt to show that "the mean for us" just means "relative to us as human beings" and not anything so individualized as I have been stressing. In rebuttal Gottlieb points out that the type of knowledge the *phronimos* needs "is not just general knowledge about what is good or bad for human beings, as in the definition of practical wisdom, but also self-knowledge"; and this sort of *phronesis* is "not a matter of having too much or too little self-knowledge. Rather in order to take advantage of the right things, the good person must neither underestimate or overestimate his own abilities and worth" (my emphases).<sup>29</sup> If I am particularly susceptible to temptations of the flesh I should not overestimate my will-power to resist by carelessly putting myself into those "occasions of sin", as the nuns used to remind me and my mates. The same goes for the risk-takers in dangerous situations, the kind-hearted poor when urged to send money in to worthy causes seen on TV, and so on down the long list of daily decisions the virtuous must make in trying to hit the ethical target squarely. We need not only to assess the situational requirements but our own temperaments and proclivities, all of which is to chime in with a would-be aging rapper's version of Aristotle: "it is hard out there for the good, trying to do what we should, knowing that we could..."

Having insisted on differences in moral personality thus far, the leap imagined here is to go farther in the individual variability line than other commentators, to jump from *moral* to *intellectual personality* in Cooper's happy phrasing. In doing so, I will be going way out on a limb where few may wish to follow, but, here goes. Fairly obviously, people differ in their ability to think, to theorize, to take delight in the life of the mind and so on; if we can adapt what Aristotle says for moral virtue to intellectual virtue, i.e. that what is right for an individual is relative in some respects to individual facts about that person, we might be able to relativize intellectual activity also. There won't be a mean, to be sure, for our intellectual activity in the sense of not too much metaphysics, nor too little biology or psychology, just enough logic, but maybe an attempt to hit the target as specified by individuals who have developed their intellectual abilities in particular directions. Some, who have wide breadth of knowledge and a talent for synthesizing various perspectives and have strongly developed inter-disciplinary interests, might well come to realize that they should accept these facts about themselves, make the most of the self-knowledge they have gained and not try to go deeper in certain very specific directions. They will try to make the most of their talents, as Aristotle reminds us of the good cobbler who works with the leather he has to make the best possible shoe (*NE* 1101a4-5). We, for

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<sup>29</sup> Paula Gottlieb, *The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 35. This passage (in its immediate context) is directed at Michael Woods' remarks about a passage from book 2 of the *EE*, viz. 1221a6-8 but, since it appears near the end of her first chapter which deals critically *inter alia* with Brown's position I take it as safe to assume that its message would be part of her reply to Brown.

our part, will recognize psychological constraints as well as environmental ones. Sometimes it is very important as well as freeing to realize that one will never master statistics, say, no matter how desirable, nor develop a taste for poetry comparable to that of the “art and scope” Shakespeare the sonneteer notices and admires. Others, with highly developed skills in specialized areas, might devote themselves to perfecting such skills by detailed work. I can easily imagine a scholar who has had the good fortune to study paleography with one of those German masters of the art; she can read medieval manuscripts with ease, has a flair for codicology and Lachmann-like stemmatology, knows her water-marks and the various hands of Cardinal Bessarion’s scribes. Such an expert would be ill-advised, I think, to put these rare talents aside in an effort to produce conventional literary analysis of a familiar and well-perused classical text. On the other hand, one might have such skills and use them on texts that some might feel are too trivial for consummate treatment by a great scholar.

Something like this last charge has been leveled at A.E. Housman for devoting such loving attention to preparing a critical edition of Manilius the Stoic’s astrological poem in 5 volumes, even if the Roman writer’s words might be “as sweet as Ovid and more majestic”<sup>30</sup>. A textual critic as gifted as Housman could be expected to have shed much needed light on more significant works; the *EE* itself comes readily to my mind!<sup>31</sup> From this perspective, decisions such as Housman’s *might have been wrong for him*, given his talents and tastes, strengths and weaknesses. He may not have aimed high enough, or it could be argued that he chose easier targets than he might have. With Milo the wrestler in mind, we might wonder whether meatier subjects would have been both more nourishing for him while others could *only set their intellectual set-points lower*.

One clear difficulty in the final remarks of *EE* VIII.3 concerns what precise meaning to attribute to *‘therapeuein’* at 1249b20 where it is allied with *‘theorein’*.<sup>32</sup> Kenny couldn’t see any other way to take it but in the sense of *service to the god*, as it is featured near the end of Plato’s *Euthyphro* (12e-15b) where Socrates presses the beleaguered Euthyphro to explain what he means by *therapeia ton theon* (= service of the gods). Hence, he interprets the passage at the end of the *EE* in the light of this Platonic parallel [cf. *TAE*, p. 102]. On his understanding we have both theory and practice, both done under the *archonship* of God, as it were. On Kenny’s reading, then, the *EE* is collectionist or inclusivist and picks up both *theoria* and *therapeia* under the rubric of *kalokagathia* – nobility and goodness.<sup>33</sup> To redeploy my dramatic conceit, *theoria* plays

<sup>30</sup> Scaliger’s verdict, said to be gaining favor lately according to *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 918].

<sup>31</sup> Barnes, concluding his review of the OCT, complains that the Walzer/Mingay text, while destined to be the standard for decades to come, “all in all is a disappointment.... Recent scholarship has made painfully little progress. WM’s text is, on average, no better and no worse than S[usemihl]’s old Teubner. And as for the *app. crit.*, ‘*slipshod*’ is a generous description” (“An OCT of the *EE*”, *The Classical Review*, v. 42 [1992], pp. 27-31). It is a pity that the OCT’s long delayed appearance in 1991 held Dieter Harlfinger back from undertaking an edition of his own that would have demonstrated that German paleographic expertise celebrated in my text above. Indeed, it was he who identified for me a marginal gloss in a manuscript as having been written by a particular scribe on Bessarion’s team. On my last day at the “Aristoteles-Archiv” Dieter gave me a copy of his *Griechische Kodikologie und Textuerberlieferung* (Darmstadt, 1980) as a going-away present. If only I could make full use of this 700 page collection that he edited of many of the “greatest hits” of the last century’s great paleographers, I might be more sure than I am of the justice of the remarks in the text about what a great scholar should or shouldn’t try to do.

<sup>32</sup> Unless we are to read the *‘kai’* at 1249b20 as epexegetic, as Verdenius suggests we should. In rightly questioning Dirlmeier’s attempt to read ‘god’ out of the passage in favor of *‘nous’* (‘reason’, ‘intellect’, the divine in us), Verdenius claims that Aristotle here “uses a popular phrase (*theon therapeuein*) and adds his own definition (explanatory *kai*)” (see his “Human reason and God in the Eudemean Ethics”, the final article in *Untersuchungen zur Eudemeanen Ethik*, Moraux and Harlfinger (edd) (Berlin: De Gruyter & Co., 1971), p. 294. I myself don’t see how the activity of contemplation, “valued higher than the practice of virtue” according to Verdenius himself on this very page, could be Aristotle’s simple addition to the popular notion of serving a god by offering sacrifices, providing liturgies, etc.. So, I don’t see that the *kai* = ‘i.e.’ in this passage, as, of course, it often does in Aristotle’s usage.

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps Kenny’s fullest discussion of this understanding of *teleia arete* in the ending of the *EE* can be found in *APL*, pp. 93-102.

a similar role in the final act of the *EE* to that of *NE* X.6-8, only now with a supporting role from the moral virtue side of a complete and flourishing life. This is a very reasonable proposal and one may well wonder why it won't suffice. Before an adequate reply to Kenny's "Catechismic" interpretation can be mounted, however, it is important to take note of a striking difference between the "air-time", as it were, given to *theoria* in the final acts of the two works; for, as Sarah Broadie has observed, the *EE* treatment is "low key and laconic to a degree compared with the lengthy fervour of *NE* X.7-8"<sup>34</sup>. This fact alone suggests an important difference and, as noted by Christopher Bobonich, "both the *Protrepticus* and the *NE* give a considerably more prominent role to contemplation" than does the *EE*<sup>35</sup>. As for the proper interpretation of '*therapeia*' and its cognate verb in our text we should note that at *Metaphysics* 981a20-4 Aristotle suggests that the man of experience has the better of one who knows the universal but not the particulars: this latter sort "will often fail in his treatment (*therapeia*); for it is rather the particular" (not the universal) that is treatable (*therapeuton*). This use of both the noun and verbal adjective is much closer to the one I want than 'service of the god' would have it. Since the practical life will go well only when we are experienced and up close and personal with the particulars, it is striking that 'therapy' is used in its medical sense of 'treatment' in the *Metaphysics* passage; for our purposes, however, it must be widened to include all "*phronetic*" activity. The *NE*, in fact, at X.1178b35 is helpful here since it mentions the familiar need for external goods even for the philosopher, who, "being a man will also need external well-being (*euemerias*), since man's nature is not self-sufficient for the activity of contemplation, but he must also have bodily health and a supply of food and other requirements (*ten loipen therapeian huparchein*)"<sup>36</sup>. So, the *EE* passage could just be read along the same lines, an indication of the need for tending to quotidian needs for the theorizer to succeed in his endeavor, with the proviso that in so tending we pay attention to irrational needs as little as possible. This would be a kind of deflationary reading of '*therapeuein*' and not the richly evocative 'cultivation' or 'care' that can be found in the biological writings of both Aristotle<sup>37</sup> and Theophrastus<sup>38</sup>. Still, even in the *NE* chapter there are signs of the more expansive use of '*therapeuon*' at 1179a23: "the man who pursues intellectual activity, and who cultivates his intellect [*touton = nous*] and keeps that in the best condition, seems to be also the man most beloved of the gods" (Rackham, slightly altered; Ross & Crisp also use 'cultivate' while Irwin has 'takes care of understanding').

The possibly useful take-away here is that '*therapeia* and its cognates need not mean 'service' as in the *Euthyphro*. It could be translated quite generally as 'attendance upon' as the Loeb has it in the sense of those with requisite of knowledge of horses, dogs, etc. attend upon the needs of their charges. Since the gods don't need us, remember, we can't attend upon them in this way. But, we can if we are *spoudaioi* – morally serious about our lives – attend to our own human natures as individually variable as they are and with whatever self-understanding we have been able to muster and do the right things, hit the moral targets as regularly as we can, all the time allowing for variation in the specific circumstances. So, my final thought is that *theoria* has an important role to play in the *Eudemian* drama, but, unlike its place in the *NE*, we have a

<sup>34</sup> Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, p. 377.

<sup>35</sup> Kraut (ed.), p. 25c. Bobonich adds that the received chronology *Prot.*->*EE*->*NE* would "seem to have Aristotle changing his mind twice". That is, if we follow Jaeger et al. we have the first (exoteric) work celebrating *theoria* only to tone it down in the *EE* and then ramp it up again in the *NE*. This is, indeed, awkward, and a problem for Jaegerians. In this paper I take no stand on chronological questions and won't play the "dating game".

<sup>36</sup> Irwin translates this as 'the other services provided'. Crisp has 'other care', which is closer to what I need but still could be taken in the deflationary way of the text.

<sup>37</sup> See Bonitz's entries for the noun and verb at *Index Aristotelicus* 325b41-61.

<sup>38</sup> In the latter's botanical works '*therapeia*' and its cognates are regularly used for the cultivation of plants. An example of this usage in the case of animals occurs in Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* V.545b32 where we are informed that the ewe will bear offspring up to eleven years of age "if she be carefully tended". Another example occurs at 760a3 in the *Generation of Animals* where bee-keepers are described as "those occupied with the tendance of these creatures". Bonitz's Index should be consulted for more references.

supporting actor whose role, since we are just human, after all, is that of exhibiting the consummate virtuosity of the fully formed *phronimos*. We surely contemplate the universe and perhaps even the Unmoved Mover but we don't try to rise above our human natures but manage all of this as best we can. *Ton theion therapeuein*, then, "servicing the god" turns out to be *attending* as faithfully and carefully as we can to our own moral development, improving our performance – "self-cultivation", if you will – but always trying to do this better as well as striving to know theoretically what we can if we are so inclined and this, too, to the best of our own unique abilities. The ethical ideal, then, at the end of the *EE* is in all respects an inclusive one, a well-rounded one, and will be uniquely realized in each individual case depending on an agent's appreciation of her or his talents and temperament, and life-long work on "self-improvement".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Various earlier bits of this paper have been presented to audiences at the 2005 Pacific Division Meeting of the *American Philosophical Association*, the 2006 meeting of the *American Catholic Philosophical Association*, at Denison University in November, 2008 and to the Taft Faculty Fellows of the University of Cincinnati in December, 2009. I am especially indebted to the Faculty Board of the Charles Phelps Taft Center for a year-long fellowship which freed me from teaching for 2008/2009 as well as timely earlier support for research over the years. I also wish to acknowledge valuable comments made by Corinne Gartner in San Francisco and Sir Anthony Kenny on several occasions. Fred Miller and Julia Annas have also been especially supportive of my efforts to crack the *EE* puzzles but none of the above should be held accountable for my provisional results.