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Becoming *Eudaimōn*:

Plato and Aristotle on Happiness and Human Nature

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ABSTRACT

This thesis defends the claim that we have much to learn from the ancient Greek moral philosophers' notion of *eudaimonia* and their shared attempts to outline a flourishing way of life for humanity.

In examining the ancient Greek notion of *eudaimonia,* I focus primarily on what Plato and Aristotle have to say about the requirements for the good human life. I also examine how the Stoics and the Epicureans receive the teachings of Plato and Aristotle and endeavour to rethink and redevelop the notion *of eudaimonia* so as to make the project of human flourishing more important and relevant for everyone.

In examining these ancient ethical perspectives, I show how these philosophers present quite different accounts of the requirements for *eudaimonia* and the relations between morality, luck and happiness. I also explain how these differences influence their perspectives on the extent to which we may regard happiness as the sort of thing that is essentially 'up to us' and the prospects for widespread human flourishing.

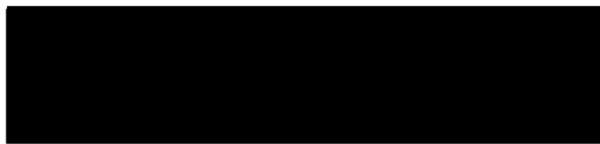
Having noted these differences, I point out that there is nonetheless a common theme which runs throughout both the classical and Hellenistic schools of ancient Greek philosophy and their shared attempts to account for the requirements of a good human life. This theme relates to these philosophers* shared attempts to outline a way of life that will capture and remain true to both those mortal and *finite* aspects of human nature, and those aspects within us which enable us to aspire to great heights and *transcend* the existing boundaries of human expression, experience and understanding. This, in torn, relates to their shared attempts to reconcile certain formal conditions for happiness, such as 'completeness' and 'self-sufficiency'.

I argue that this central theme reveals a significant source of tension which runs throughout both the classical and Hellenistic schools of philosophy and lies at the heart of the project of *eudaimonia.* Moreover, it helps to explain why the Stoics and Epicureans ultimately agree with Plato and Aristotle's decision that the kind of human

life that is rightly referred to as a 'happy' one will only ever be rarely enjoyed. And yet, this kind of tension is both insightful and instructive, rather than problematic. For it serves to explain not only the two competing concerns which lie at the heart of the notion of *eudaimonia,* but also the challenge which we ourselves face in thinking about what we regard as most important and valuable in a human life in the context of our own awareness of the dynamic aspects of human nature.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.



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INTRODUCTION

Part I: An Overview

I intend to examine the ancient Greek notion of *eudaimonia,* otherwise known and referred to as 'happiness', 'human flourishing' or 'the good human life'. Throughout the course of the next seven chapters, I shall endeavour to provide an account of what the various schools of ancient Greek philosophy regard as the essential conditions or requirements for *eudaimonia* and discuss how their views compare on issues such as the relations between morality, luck and happiness and the connections between happiness and human nature. In doing so, I shall consider what each of these schools of ancient Greek philosophy have to say about the importance of such things as virtue, character and wisdom in the good human life and discuss their views on the availability of the good human life and, hence, the kinds of lives which they, themselves, prescribe for humanity.

My examination will focus primarily on what Plato and Aristotle have to contribute to this debate about the nature and requirements of *eudaimonia.* However, in order to understand the significance of their views and the ways in which other ancient Greek moral philosophers approach the project of *eudaimonia,* I shall also make reference to what the Stoics and Epicureans have to say on these matters and, more importantly, how these Hellenistic philosophers react to Plato and Aristotle's Views on the nature and availability of human flourishing. In this way, my examination will serve to demonstrate not only the ways in which Plato's and Aristotle's views on the good human life develop and influence their own outlooks on the prospects for wide-spread human flourishing, but also the ways in which some of the most important and influential moral philosophers of the Hellenistic era receive their ideas, and continue to work with the notion *of eudaimonia,* but do all that they can to *rethink* and *redevelop* this notioi. in order to make the project of human flourishing more important and relevant for everyone.

In examining these schools of ancient Greek philosophy and their perspectives on the nature and availability of human flourishing, I will address what each of them has

to say about the kinds of things that are essentially 'up to us' in the search for a good human life and what each of them regard as being *outside* the scope of our own individual efforts or control. In doing so, I shall provide an account of their views on the nature and importance of particular external goods and the need for certain social or political conditions to be met. I shall also explain how their views compare on the power and universality of human reason and the potential for moral philosophy to alleviate the suffering of ordinary human beings. In this way, we shall also see how their views compare on what the genuinely *eudaimōn* person will inevitably *focus on, secure* and *enjoy* when he or she manages to attain a life of genuine happiness.

Having considered the differences between these ancient Greek ethical perspectives, I will discuss what I regard as a central theme which runs throughout both these classical and Hellenistic schools of philosophy, and serves to illustrate what is both common in these approaches to the project of human flourishing and significant about the notion of *eudaimonia.* In the light of this central theme, I will also attempt to assess the merits and contemporary relevance of these ancient ethical perspectives on the issue of happiness and human nature, and show how they may aid our own efforts to decide what is important and valuable in a flourishing human life.

Part II: Chapter Outline

In Chapter 1, we begin our examination of these ancient ethical perspectives on the nature and availability of happiness by considering the mature ethical views of Plato in the dialogues of his middle period, such as *Republic* and *Phaedo.* There, we see how Plato comes to think of the best human life as something for which the majority of human beings will be *unfit.* And in attempting to isolate the reasons why Plato adopts this pessimistic view on the prospects for widespread human flourishing and the potential for moral philosophy to address the needs of ordinary human beings, our examination focuses on the nature of virtue and wisdom in Plato's middle dialogues.

In examining these two important aspects of Plato's mature conception of the requirements for *eudaimonia,* I argue that whereas Plato's early and transitional works imply that something akin to true belief is sufficient for the kind of wisdom that

generates virtue and paves the way to a life of genuine happiness, his middle dialogues suggest that nothing less than a kind of expert and infallible wisdom will suffice for the kind of rational and moral development that is acquired by the genuine philosopher. On this basis, I offer a number of models to understand how Plato's views on the connection between virtue and wisdom develop. I also discuss the implications of Socrates' insistence that the virtue of the non-philosopher is either 'illogical' or 'illusory', highlight the importance of Plato's distinction between 'civic' and 'genuine' virtue in dialogues such as *Republic* and *Phaedo.* And, in doing so, I show how Plato's insistence on the need for individuals to be endowed with a kind of 'constitutive luck', to receive an early and on-going form of rigorous and highly specialised training, and to occupy the right kind of position and occupation in society, ultimately transform his beliefs regarding the relations between morality, luck and happiness, the availability of the good human life, and the extent to which we may regard happiness as the sort of thing which is essentially up to us. To conclude this discussion, I also take a look at how Plato's views on virtue and happiness in these dialogues compare with what he has to say about these matters in *Laws.*

In Chapter 2,1 take a closer look at what Plato has to say about the relations between virtue, wisdom and happiness in the dialogues of his early and transitional periods. This provides a more comprehensive account of his earlier perspective on the sort of wisdom that is required for a life of genuine virtue and happiness. In doing so, I recognise that in so far as Plato regards the Socrates portrayed in these earlier dialogues as the paragon of virtue, wisdom and human flourishing, the key to this puzzle lies in an understanding of the kind of wisdom that Socrates himself has, and what he appears to be searching for during the course of his dealings with the stubborn and wily interlocutors who feature in dialogues such as *Laches, Charmides* and *Euthyphro.* I also recognise that in order to understand this, we must first address what have become known as the 'Socratic fallacy', the Merio paradox, and the problems that are associated with Socrates' disavowal of knowledge in these early Platonic dialogues. Accordingly, I begin by discussing these issues and examining what I regard as four of the most popular and plausible solutions to these problems. After considering the merits and utility of these solutions, I conclude that the kind of wisdom that Plato regards as essential for genuine virtue and happiness in these earlier works is best characterised as a kind of non-expert moral knowledge.

Having addressed these issues, I then consider what we can say about this kind of knowledge and what it tells us about the perspective from which Plato first considers the questions of what it takes for a human being to flourish and who ought reasonably to expect to succeed in such endeavours. I provide four observations regarding the nature of this particular kind of wisdom. I also emphasise the importance of Socrates' distinction in *Apology* between a kind of 'human wisdom' for which we are destined and a kind of 'more than human wisdom' which lies forever beyond our mortal grasp. And, on the basis of this, I conclude that Plato's works emerge from a rather more humble and optimistic beginning in so far as they support Socrates' efforts to adopt more *modest* philosophical ambitions and encourage individuals to strive for a level of virtue and wisdom that is open and available to ordinary human beings.

In Chapter 3,1 take on the challenge to determine what kind of audience Plato's Socrates seeks to address in his efforts to cultivate this kind of non-expert moral knowledge and what sort of character, or personal qualities, one appears to need in these early and transitional works in order to benefit from Socrates' elenctic enquiries and develop the kind of wisdom that is required for virtue and *eudaimonia.* In doing so, I argue that although it is difficult to determine whether Socrates means to engage anyone and everyone in his elenctic pursuits or, as Alexander Nehamas suggests, prefers to restrict his audience to those who show exceptional promise or talent, what we *can* say about these earlier works is that they clearly indicate that unless one possesses certain fundamental personal qualities, such as sincerity, stamina, courage and humility, one will *not* have what it takes to cultivate the kinds of virtue and wisdom that are required for *eudaimonia.*

I also argue that, as a consequence, two important aspects of Plato's perspective on virtue and happiness in these early and transitional dialogues have been largely overlooked. The first is that although these early and transitional works do not appear to support Plato's extreme view in *Republic* and *Phaedo* regarding the need for one to belong to a certain type or class of people, namely, the philosopher-rulers, in order to live the best possible human life, they do suggest that a certain type of character is required for happiness. More importantly, they suggest that even some of the most talented individuals will fall short of this requirement for happiness. The second is that, in so far as this means that Plato's earlier works *do* in fact recognise important links

between character, wisdom, virtue and happiness, Aristotle's suggestion that the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of virtue 'does away with the irrational part of the soul, and with passion and character' is actually mistaken, and belies a common misconception in both ancient Greek scholarship and contemporary ethical debates. On this basis, I point out the need for us to adopt a more cautious approach to the task of accounting for Plato's perspective on virtue, wisdom, and the availability of human flourishing within this earlier period. I also recognise that, due to the limited scope of Socrates' concerns within these earlier works, *this* Socrates, unlike the one who features in Plato's middle dialogues, fails to tell us whether his stubborn and wily interlocutors fall short of this mark, and fail to develop the requisite kind of personal qualities, because they are simply *unwilling,* or actually *incapable,* of doing so.

In Chapter 4, we turn to Aristotle's perspective on *eudaimonia* and the nature and availability of human flourishing. Over the next two chapters I develop an account of the sorts of things that Aristotle regards as being essentially up to us in our search for happiness, and those which he takes to be either antecedent to, or independent from, our own actions, efforts and intentions. Taking the latter first, this chapter endeavours to provide an account of the role of luck in Aristotle's account of the good human life and attempts to explore the ways in which Aristotle believes that our efforts to live and do well may be impeded or prevented.

Having outlined the various types of moral luck, I point out the need for us to recognise that there are two important 'moral links' that may be said to be governed by luck. The first of these relates to the kinds of things that may impede, or prevent, our performance of moral *actions.* The second of these relates to contingent factors that may play a role in the development of moral *agency.* I argue that whereas a great deal of attention has been paid in recent debates to what Aristotle has to say in relation to the *first* of these moral links, his views in relation to the *second* moral link have been largely ignored or misunderstood. I also point out that part of the reason for this is that commentators have often considered Aristotle's views in the *Ethics* on the importance of particular external goods and the need for certain social and political conditions to be met *in isolation* from the things that he has to say about these matters in *Politics.*

In an attempt to restore some of the balance in this debate, I examine what Aristotle has to say in relation to *both* of these moral links and offer my perspective on issues such as the role of the external goods in Aristotle's conception of happiness and the challenge which lies behind Aristotle's attempts to explain how the good human life can be both 'complete' and 'self-sufficient'. I also examine what Aristotle has to say on these matters in both his ethical and political writings in an effort to show how some of Aristotle's remarks in *Politics* effectively *widen* the scope for luck to impede one's moral progress in a way which demonstrates the need for us to both qualify some of his earlier remarks in the *Ethics,* and acknowledge the fact that the role of luck in Aristotle's account of the good human life is more *complex* than often thought.

In Chapter 5, we turn to those aspects of the good human life that Aristotle takes to be essentially up to us. There, our examination focuses on the role of *phronēsis,* or practical wisdom, and the relation between *phronēsis* and character in Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia.* By focusing on these two aspects of Aristotle's account of the good human life, we begin to see that although Aristotle shares some of Plato's mature views on the importance of an early education, the necessity of particular external goods, and the need for us to enjoy certain social and political conditions, his conception of the kind of practical wisdom and moral virtues that are required for *eudaimonia* leaves considerable scope for individual choice and personal responsibility. In this way, we also begin to see why Aristotle claims that we are jointly responsible for the kind of character that we develop, and the sort of life that flows from it, and understand why he insists that we must think of *eudaimonia* not as a direct 'gift' from the gods that is simply given to those few who are naturally lucky or divinely favoured, but as a 'prize' that each individual must *earn* and 'win' on the basis of much hard work, and much effort and persistence.

In discussing the significance of Aristotle's suggestions that we must contend with a certain degree of imprecision in ethical inquiries, and think of practical wisdom as a form of perception or practical syllogism which enables us to generate only *general* moral 'rules of thumb' and a kind of moral wisdom that is both *relative* to our specific species and stands in need of constant *revision,* I argue that Aristotle's conception of *phronēsis* has strong links with the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of moral wisdom. And in examining what Aristotle describes as the non-rational or *alogos*

components of the soul, and the role he sees for them in enabling the virtuous person to both *develop* and *exercise* practical wisdom, I also show how Aristotle's conception of the relation between *phronēsis* and character has strong links with Socrates' outlook in Plato's early and transitional dialogues regarding the need for us to possess certain fundamental personal qualities.

In Chapter 6, we turn to the Stoics' and Epicureans' conceptions of happiness and consider how these important and influential philosophers of the Hellenistic era receive the classical accounts of *eudaimonia* and react to some of Plato and Aristotle's views on the importance of particular external goods and the need for us to enjoy certain social and political conditions. I argue that the Stoics and Epicureans adopt a shared commitment to a project of 'self-sufficiency' and effectively eliminate the role of luck and the external goods which Plato and Aristotle saw as so important for human flourishing. In this way, it becomes clear that these philosophers of the Hellenistic era approach the task of *eudaimonia* with a different sense of what philosophy *can* and *should* do for us, and what sorts of assumptions about human nature ought to *inform* this important moral project. It also becomes clear that, in rejecting Plato and Aristotle's emphasis on the importance of certain external goods and relations, and recognising both the power and universality of human reason and the utility of moral philosophy as a means for *all* individuals to both *understand* and *eradicate* the source of human suffering, the Stoics and Epicureans mean to suggest that a kind of secure and self-sufficient moral life, namely, the good human life, is essentially open and available to *every* human being.

Finally, in Chapter 7,1 conclude my examination of these ancient ethical perspectives on *eudaimonia,* by outlining and evaluating what I regard as a central theme which runs throughout both the classical and Hellenistic schools of ancient Greek philosophy and their attempts to provide an account of happiness and its requirements. I begin by observing that, despite the renewed sense of urgency and optimism that the Stoics and Epicureans display regarding the project *of eudaimonia* and the potential for moral philosophy to alleviate the suffering of ordinary human beings, these Hellenistic philosophers ultimately agree that most people *will fail* in their attempts to secure the kind of life which they prescribe. I point out that this essentially means that they too come to think of the good human life as something which will prove to be too *difficult*

for ?«05/ human beings to achieve. And, having acknowledged these important points, I attempt to offer some explanation for why these ancient Greek moral philosophers may have come to think about happiness in this way, and what we, as modern thinkers, may learn from this.

I argue that, far from leaving us with a shared approach to human happiness that is *fundamentally flawed,* in so far as it encourages humans to aspire toward a way of life for which the majority of humanity is *unfit,* this general and unanimous concession in ancient Greek moral philosophy nighlights a central theme which gives us a *valuable insight* into human nature and happiness, and perhaps even the human condition. This ancient view provides the groundwork for us to develop a more comprehensive account of the link between our understanding of human nature and our conception of human flourishing. I argue that these ancient Greek philosophers attempt to outline a way of life that will essentially capture and remain true to both those mortal and *finite* aspects of human nature *and* those aspects of human nature which enable us to *transcend* the existing boundaries of human expression, experience and understanding. I also argue that, in doing so, they reveal not only the competing concerns which lie at the heart of the project *ofeudaimonia,* but a'iso the challenge which we ourselves face in thinking about what we regard as most important and valuable in a human life in the context of our own awareness and appreciation of the *dynamic* aspects of human nature.

Part III: My Approach

For the purpose of my discussion in each of the following chapters, I will take for granted a more or less standard chronology of Plato's works.[1] 1 will assume that Plato's

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'In doing so, I will assume that Plato's works can be grouped as follows:
Group I: The dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods:
The early, or elencti'v dialogues: *Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthyphro, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Protagoras, Rep~ I;*
The transitional dialogues: *Euthydemus, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Lysis, Menexenus, Meno;*
Group II: The dialogues of Plato's middle period:
Cratylus, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic II-X, *Phaednis, Parmenides, Theatetus;*
Group III: The dialogues of Plato's latest period:
Timaeus, Critias, Sophist, Politicus, Philebus, Laws
This is the breakdown of Plato's works that Gregory Vlastos provides in Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher,* Cambridge University Press, U.S.A., 1991, on pp. 46-47. For a similar account of the chronology of Plato's works, see Leonard Brandwood, 'Stylometry and Chronology', Richard Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato,* Cambridge University Press, U.S.A., pp. 90-120.

dialogues are supposed to serve as vehicles for the communication of certain philosophical views. These views may not always be Plato's own views, but they are nevertheless deemed to be transparent to the author himself. I will assume that an orthodox developmentalist approach to explaining the differences between the views that the author seems to favour provides us with the best means to distinguish between Plato's early, middle and late dialogues. I will also assume that this sort of approach to Plato's works helps us to account for the apparent transition in Plato's thought from his earlier or initial perspective on morality and happiness to his more mature perspective on the nature and availability of human flourishing.

To add to this, I will also assume that we can determine what philosophical views Plato means to communicate by focusing on what Plato's Socrates has to say within the Platonic dialogues. In effect, this means that I will often refer to 'Plato's views' and 'Socrate's views' interchangeably. However, in doing so, I do acknowledge the important point that there may be some instances in Plato's dialogues in which Plato uses his leading character to present certain views that are contrary to Plato's own. In these instances Socrates may well be *exploring* certain philosophical ideas, rather than *endorsing* them, due to the dialectical context in which his philosophical discussions take place. More importantly, I also mean to acknowledge the point that there may be some discrepancies between what Plato's Socrates has to say in the Platonic dialogues and what the historical Socrates actually said and thought. Indeed, we may face great difficulties in establishing whether any of the views that Plato's Socrates expresses accurately fit what the real Socrates is known to have said and believed.[2] For this reasor, I will leave aside the question of whether Plato's Socrates actually supports the views that the historical Socrates held. And, in this way, I will proceed with the assumption that those views which Plato's leading character seems to consistently uphold are the views which Plato himself means to convey to his audience as the best answers to the questions posed throughout his works.

[2]This is especially so in the light of what Xenophon has to say about Socrates in *Socrates'Defence:* 1-32 and how Aristophanes chooses to characterise Socrates in *The Clouds.* For there we find accounts of the sorts of ideas that the historical Socrates stood for that are quite different to the ones which Plato provides and Aristotle supports. For more on this, see Hugh Tredennick and Robin Waterfield (trans.), *Xenophon Conversations of Socrates,* Penguin Books, England, 1990, pp. 41-49; and Alan H. Sommerstein (trans.), *Aristophanes. The Archamians. The Clouds,* Penguin Books, England, 1973, pp. 121-133. Cf. Aristotle's discussion in *Metaphysics:* Book I: 987b 1-3; and *Magna Moralia:* Book I: 1182a 15-17.

CHAPTER ONE

PLATO'S OUTLOOK ON THE NATURE AND AVAILABILITY OF HUMAN FLOURISHING IN *REPUBLIC* AND *PHAEDO*

Part I: Introduction

Throughout his dialogues, Plato speaks of ways of life that enable human beings to prosper, to flourish, or to become *eudaimōn.* For Plato, these ways of life enable individuals to experience the good human life. They also enable them to become genuinely happy and, thus, to 'truly live and grow'.[3] For the purpose of this chapter, I shall begin our examination of the notion of *eudaimonia* and its use in the various schools of ancient Greek philosophy by considering the mature ethical views of Plato in some of the key dialogues of his middle period. In this way, we shall see what Plato comes to regard as the essential conditions or requirements for one to become *eudaimōn.* We shall also see what this says about the perspective from which Plato eventually judges both the potential for moral philosophy to alleviate the suffering of ordinary human beings, and the prospects for moral philosophy to bring about the advent of widespread human flourishing.

During the course of my examination, I shall focus primarily on what Plato has to say about the nature and availability of human flourishing in *Phaedo* and *Republic.* I will also restrict the main part of my discussion to two central aspects of Plato's mature conception *of eudaimonia* and divide my discussion accordingly. The first of these will relate to what Plato has to say in these specific dialogues regarding happiness and the kind of life that is enjoyed by the genuine philosopher. The second of these will relate to the relation that exists between virtue and wisdom within these key dialogues of Plato's middle period, and the implications this may have for Plato's mature conception of the links between virtue, wisdom and happiness, and the availability of human flourishing.

In Part II, I will take up the first of these aspects and show how Plato's discussion in *Phaedo* and *Republic* suggests that one way to attain happiness is to live the life of a

philosopher. I will point out that there is some reason to believe that Plato's *Republic* means to suggest that non-philosophers may also attain *some* level of happiness. But I will also point out that both *Republic* and *Phaedo* clearly suggest that the kind of happiness that is open and available to these individuals falls far short of what the philosophers themselves are said to enjoy. From this perspective, I will put aside the question of whether there might be lives that are *less eudaimōn* than the philosophers' lives that may nonetheless be appropriately described as happy ones. Focussing on what Plato has to say about the very *best* kind of human life and the philosopher's experience of this way of life, I will discuss what these dialogues suggest are the pre-conditions for the philosophical way of life. And in doing so, we shall see the importance of Plato's remarks regarding the need for one to be born with a particular kind of nature, to receive the right sort of education, and to enjoy a privileged position in society in order to *be* or *become* a genuine philosopher.

In Part III, I will consider the second of these aspects of Plato's mature conception of happiness. I will focus on the question of what it is about being a philosopher that Plato thinks contributes to an individual's happiness. In doing so, I will focus on the importance of the philosophers' contemplation of the Forms and the philosopher's particular kind of moral virtue. I will also argue that whereas Plato's early and transitional works imply that something akin to true belief is sufficient for the kind of wisdom that generates genuine virtue and happiness, these key dialogues of Plato's middle period suggest that nothing less than a kind of expert and infallible wisdom will suffice for the kind of happiness that the philosophers are said to enjoy. On this basis, I will provide a number of models (outlined in APPENDIX) to understand how Plato's views on the connection between virtue and wisdom may differ or develop. And, in discussing the implications of Socrates' insistence that the virtue of the non-philosopher is either 'illogical' or 'illusory', I will highlight the importance of Plato's distinction between 'civic' and 'genuine' virtue in *Republic* and *Phaedo.*

In Part IV, I will conclude this discussion with an examination of how Plato's views on virtue and happiness in these key middle dialogues compare with what he has to say about these matters in *Laws.*

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[3]See *Republic:* Book VI: 490b.

In pursuing these lines of enquiry, I will attempt to explain how Plato's mature conception of the requirements for a philosophical way life leads him to think of the philosopher's state of happiness, that is to say, the highest degree of human flourishing, as something for which the majority of human beings will be *unfit.* I shall also attempt to explain how Plato's insistence on the need for individuals to be endowed with a kind of'constitutive luck', to receive an early and on-going form of rigorous and highly specialised training, and to occupy the right kind of position and occupation in society, ultimately transform his beliefs regarding the relations between morality, luck and happiness, the availability of human flourishing, and the extent to which we may regard happiness as the sort of thing that is essentially up to us. And, in this way, we shall also begin to see why Plato ultimately adopts a pessimistic view on the prospects for widespread human flourishing and, in this, his darkest hour, presents such a grim depiction of the potential for moral philosophy to address the needs and concerns of ordinary human beings.

Part II: Plato's outlook on the relation between happiness and the philosophical way of life

Section 1: The philosopher's enjoyment of the very best human life

Throughout his discussion of justice in *Republic,* Plato has Socrates present several arguments to show how the philosophical way of life provides us with one way to attain happiness, or *eudaimonia.* He also has Socrates present several arguments to show that this way of life provides as with the greatest level of human flourishing and, hence, the best, the most pleasant and the happiest of all possible human lives. These arguments arise in the context of his discussion of the superior nature with which certain types of people are born in Book II and his account of the tripartite nature of the human soul in Book IV. They also arise in his discussion of the degenerate forms of human nature and corresponding types of city-states in Book VIII and his account of the rewards that await true lovers of wisdom, both in this life and the next, in Book X in the Myth of Er. But nowhere is Plato's emphasis on the superiority of the philosopher's life more apparent than in his discussion in Book IX of *Republic.* For, there, Plato insists that the life of the philosopher - that is to say, the life of the truly wise, virtuous and happy

individual - provides not only a greater or more genuine form of pleasure,[4] but the only real vantage point from which the truth about happiness and human nature can be adequately understood and assessed.[5] In this way, Plato insists that only the genuine philosopher is in a position to say what happiness requires, and that only the life which he or she enjoys will be aptly described as 'the most happy' and, therefore, 'the best possible human life'.

Having discussed those aspects of the philosopher's life that he thinks make it more fulfilling than any other human life, Plato argues that only this way of life allows one to 'beget intelligence and truth, attain to knowledge, and truly live and grow.'[6] Again, in the concluding remarks of *Republic,* he has Socrates remind us that if we are to 'receive our rewards' and to 'do well and be happy', we must acquire a life of this sort of excellence, and '...always hold to the upward path, practicing justice with reason in every way.'[7] And on this basis, we may conclude that, according to Plato's view in *Republic,* the key to understanding what it takes to live the very best human life lies in an understanding of the pre-conditions for the philosophical way of life.

When we turn to *Phaedo,* we find similar results regarding the connection between the life of the genuine philosopher and the highest degree of human happiness. For, in this middle dialogue, Plato also has Socrates reiterate the point about the excellence and superiority of the philosophic part of our natures and the philosopher's way of life. Accordingly, Socrates proclaims that, 'no one may join the company of the gods who has not practiced philosophy and is not completely pure when he departs from life, no one but the lover of learning.'[8] To attain this state of purity, he maintains that one must cleave to the rational and intelligible aspects of human nature and experience,

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[4]On this basis, Plato likens the pleasure-seeking activities of the masses to the manner in which cattle '...feed, fatten, and fornicate' See *Republic:* Book IX: 585e-586b.

[5]See *Republic:* Book IX: 586e-587a, 577b and 582a-d. There, Socrates states that the philosopher is 'far superior' to other human beings in his or her experience of the kinds of pleasures that human beings seek. He also suggests that because the philosopher 'has of necessity tasted the other pleasures since childhood', but the pleasure acquired from his or her studies 'cannot be tasted by anyone except a philosopher', this individual will be in the best position to judge the truest form of pleasure and to speak with authority when praising his or her own way of life. See also *Republic:* Book VI: 505b-506a and Book III: 409d-e, where Socrates tells Glaucon, 'A vicious person would never know either himself or a virtuous one, whereas a naturally virtuous person, when educated, will in time acquire knowledge of both virtue and vice.'

^*Republic:* Book VI: 490b.

''*See Republic:* Book X: 621c-d.

[8]See *Phaedo:* 82b-c.

and withdraw from all that is sensible and visible or connected with the kinds of pleasures and emotions that 'tie the soul to the body'.[9] In this way, he also insists that only 'the soul of the philosopher achieves a calm from such emotions; it follows reason and ever stays in contemplating the true, the divine, which is not the object of opinion.'[10] And, 'nurtured by this', the philosopher alone manages to overcome the sources of ignorance and vice and, thereby, 'escape from human evils.'[1] *

Now, it must be said that one important way in which Plato's *Republic* differs from *Phaedo* is that it seems to allow for the possibility that non-philosophers may also enjoy a certain level of happiness. In this way, Plato's discussion in *Republic* also seems to reflect the view that *eudaimonia* may actually admit of degrees. This is evident in the light of the discussion in Book IX *of Republic,* where Socrates speaks of the extent to which the life of the philosopher may be said to be *happier* than the lives of the 'victory-loving' and 'profit-loving' masses.[12] It is also evident in the light of the discussion in Book VIII *oi Republic,* where Socrates refers to the lives of oligarchs and democrats as being *more eudaimōn* than the ones that are experienced by people who have succumbed to the ways of a tyrant.[13] This implies that non-philosophers may indeed experience some degree of flourishing and success notwithstanding the fact that they do not share the philosopher's way of life. It also contrasts with Socrates' account in *Phaedo* regarding the completely illusory and empty lives that await non-philosophers due to their inability to rid themselves of bodily demands and distractions. And, to add to this picture, it raises an important question regarding whether Plato's middle dialogues mean to suggest that only the lives of the philosophers may be aptly described as *genuinely* happy ones.

However, notwithstanding these uncertainties regarding Plato's mature conception of the nature and availability *oi genuine* human flourishing, we may observe that both *Republic* and *Phaedo* clearly reflect the view that the philosopher will experience a *greater* level of human happiness than any other human being. We may also observe that, in this way, these dialogues clearly reflect the view that the best

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[9]See *Phaedo:* 83a-e.
[10]See *Phaedo:* 84a-b.
"ibid.
[12]See *Republic:* Book IX: 580b-c, 581c and 587e-588a.
[13]See *Republic:* Book VIII: 545a-c. See also Book IX: 576a-577e.

possible human life will be *reseived* for genuine philosophers. This is evident in the light of the fact that both *Republic* and *Phaedo* refer to the genuine philosopher as one who is as happy as any human being can be. For this reason, 1 propose to put aside the question of whether there might be lives that are *less eudaimōn* than the philosopher's life that may nonetheless be appropriately described as happy ones in order to pursue the question of what Plato eventually takes to be necessary for one to live *the very best* human life. In this way, our discussion will focus on what Plato takes to be so important about the philosopher's way of life, and what he thinks individuals require in order to attain what he describes as their superior state of happiness and fulfilment.

Section 2: The requirements to be or become a genuine philosopher

Having observed these remarks in *Republic* and *Phaedo* regarding the connection between the life of the philosopher and the very best h man life, we must consider what Plato regards as the essential conditions or requirements for one to *be* or *become* a genuine philosopher. Only then will we be in a position to understand the role of luck and the external goods in Plato's mature conception of the good human life, and how these aspects of Plato's account of happiness ultimately influence his outlook on the potential for most human beings to share in the highest degree of human flourishing. To do this, we need to focus on what Plato has to say in *Republic* and *Phaedo* regarding the sort of nature and education one must have in order to develop the kind of virtue and wisdom that is characteristic of the genuine philosopher. We must also see what he has to say in these works regarding the kind of position and occupation these individuals must occupy within their own city-state or community. In pursuing these lines of enquiry, we will see that there are some significant differences between these two dialogues, and the ways in which Plato discusses these issues within them. However, these differences do not detract from our ability to notice their general support for the claim that only some human beings will have what it takes to be or become a philosopher. So, let us take a closer look at what Plato has to say on these particular matters within these two specific dialogues.

Section 3: The philosopher's natural talents and abilities

In Book II *of Republic,* Socrates invites Glaucon and Adeimantus to think about what sort of person might be best suited to the philosophical way of life. Together they explore possibilities for the most natural 'lover of wisdom' and consider what sort of person one would need to be to best fit this description. After some deliberation they agree that to be a genuine philosopher one must possess a certain kind of nature from birth. This kind of nature, they contend, demands that the candidate for the life of a genuine philosopher be 'a lover of learning and wisdom.'[14] It also demands that he, or she,[15] possess a 'high spirit'; a kind of'quickness'; an exceptional memory; a natural inclination 'to praise beautiful things and disapprove of the ugly'; a 'well-ordered soul'; a kind of'gentleness'; and a certain kind of'natural physical strength'.[16] Having agreed on these points, these interlocutors conclude that 'philosophy, spirit, speed, and strength must all, then, be combined in the nature of anyone who is to be a fine and good guardian of our city.'[17] And they also agree that these are the kind of'traits' that a potential philosopher 'would need to have at the outset.'[18]

To add to this picture, Plato's discussion in *Phaedo* points to the need for this kind of person to possess a natural aptitude for certain kinds of abstract and theoretical contemplation. Both Socrates and his interlocutors agree that philosophers are required to rid themselves of all 'bodily distractions'.[19] And on this basis, they also agree that the soul of the genuine philosopher must be one which '...most disdains the body, flees from it and seeks to be by itself.'[20]

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[14]See *Republic:* Book II: 376b-c. See also *Republic:* Book V: 479e-480a, where Socrates compares this type of person with 'the lover of sights and sounds...' and distinguishes philosophers from non-philosophers on the basis of their ontological commitments.

[15]On this issue of Plato's inclusion of women in the class of the guardians, or philosopher-rulers, see *Republic:* Book V: 451c-452a and Book VII: 540c.

[16]See *Republic:* Book II: 374c and 376a-c. See also *Republic:* Book III: 402c-d and Book VI: 485a-e, 487a and 535a-c.

[17]See *Republic:* Book II: 376c.

[18]See *Republic:* Book II: 376c; and Book VI: 490a.

[19]See/V/ae</o:83a-e.

[20]See *Phaedo:* 65a-d. See also Socrates remarks at 66b, where he tells Simmias, 'All these things will necessarily make the true philosophers believe and say to each other something like this: "There is likely to be something such as a path to guide us out of our confusion, because as long as we have a body and our soul is fused with such an evil we shall never adequately attain what we desire, which we affirm to be the truth.""

Section 4: The philosopher's early education and training

Having considered the sort of nature one must be born with to have a chance of becoming a genuine philosopher, Plato turns to the question of the sort of education one must receive in order to become a complete or fully-fledged philosopher. Thus, in Book II of *Republic,* Socrates begins the arduous task of outlining all the activities a potential philosopher must undergo in order to develop the kiud of physical, intellectual, moral and psychological abilities that define a life of human excellence or success, and are characteristic of the genuine philosopher. In the course of this discussion, Socrates points out the need for this kind of formal training to be highly specialised and focused. He also indicates that this form of education or training will require a great deal of discipline, dedication and commitment on the behalf of those individuals who are fortunate enough to be both willing and able to endure it. Indeed, in Book VII of *Republic,* Plato has Socrates go so far as to suggest that this kind of education must not only begin at a very early stage of a potential philosopher's life, but take no less than fifty whole years for one to complete.[21]

In considering the content of the philosopher's education, Plato's discussion emphasises the need for educators to strike the right balance between those aspects of the philosopher's training that enable individuals to develop on a cultural and intellectual level, and those aspects that encourage them to focus on improving their levels of physical strength. Socrates maintains that it is essential for educators to achieve this balance for the very reason that, 'those who devote themselves exclusively to physical training turn out to be more savage than they should, while those who devote themselves to music and poetry turn out to be softer than is good for them.'[22] Accordingly, he suggests that the philosopher's education must provide the impetus for both intellectual and physical development, lest our focus on only one of these aspects produce 'savagery and toughness in the one case and softness and overcultivation on the other.'[23] In discussing the need for these individuals to develop a kind of harmony between their values or judgments and their bodily impulses, Socrates also suggests that

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[21] See *Republic:* Book VII: 540a.

[22] See *Republic:* Book VII: 540a and 353d. For an interesting discussion of this aspect of Plato's conception of the philosopher's education, see Alexander Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999, pp. 322-325.

[23] See *Republic:* Book III: 410d and 41 Id.

there is a link between the physical components of the philosopher's education and one's development of the virtues of courage and temperance, *or* moderation.[24]

When considering the reasons for including a physical component in the philosopher's education, Socrates also maintains that the physical and intellectual aspects of the philosopher's training will not only be mutually reinforcing, and, therefore, interdependent, but also form part of the larger or more holistic approach to the philosopher's education. This approach is shown to be geared towards the potential philosopher's development of a greater level of psychic unity or harmony.[25] And this kind of unity or harmony in the philosopher's soul is regarded as essential for both the kind of discipline and order that characterises the internal state of the genuine philosopher, and the kind of focus or unity of purpose that enables the philosopher to best serve his or her community. In this way, Socrates demonstrates that a kind of uni-dimensional and fully-integrated approach to the philosopher's education is important to enable these talented young individuals to develop the levels of rational and moral maturity that mark the work and lives of genuine philosophers.

Accordingly, in Book II of *Republic,* Socrates begins his discussion of the kind of education that is required to transform the naturally talented into genuine philosophers by declaring that our potential philosophers will need '...physical training for bodies and music and poetry for the soul.'[26] He maintains that education in music must commence before physical training,[27] and that poetry must also be included in one's early introduction to the arts.[28] On this basis, Socrates insists that we must tell stories to the most talented of our small children before physical training begins, and have them listen to fine examples of music, so as to enable them to develop the kind of rhythm and harmony within their souls that makes further moral and intellectual development possible.[29] He also points out that we must select the stories that we tell

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[24]For more on this, see *Republic:* Book III: 403c-404e and 41 la-c and Book IV: 429e-430a.

[25]More specifically, Socrates suggests that this will produce a kind of harmony between 'the spirited and wisdom-loving parts of the soul' in so far as these elements will be 'stretched and relaxed to the appropriate degree.' He also suggests that, as a result, '...the most courageous and most rational soul is least disturbed or altered by any outside affection' and '...admits least of being changed by anything.' See *Republic:* Book III: 41 le and 381a-b.

[26]See *Republic:* Book II: 376e.

[27]ibid.

[28]See *Republic:* Book II: 377a.

[29]See *Republic:* Book III: 401 d- 402d.

these promising young individuals very carefully, indeed. For, given that these individuals will have young and impressionable minds, they will need to hear only those kinds of stories that send the right message about virtue and the role that it plays in human lives and happiness. Accordingly, Socrates suggests that, 'if they are to honour the gods and their parents and not take friendship with one another lightly', some form of censorship will be necessary. He also insists that we will need to 'supervise the storytellers'; to 'select their stories whenever they are fine or beautiful and reject them when they aren't', and, most importantly, to 'persuade nurses and mothers to tell their children the ones we have selected, since they will shape their children's souls with stories much more than they shape their bodies by handling them.' And, from this perspective, Socrates also concludes that, 'Many of the stories they tell now, however, must be thrown out.'[30]

In discussing the kinds of stories that future generations of philosophers should and should not hear, and those forms of poetry that will best reflect the truth about what is important and valuable in human lives, Plato has Socrates rule out those kinds of poetry that depict the gods as somehow lacking in happiness, sincerity or virtue. In doing so, he declares that we should never accept from anyone 'the foolish mistake that Homer makes when he speaks about the gods' and portrays their lives as ones which regularly involve 'foul play' and a kind of'meddling interference' in the lives and affairs of mortals.[31] He also speaks of a form of poetry or storytelling that encourages individuals to pursue the mere imitation, rather than actual cultivation, of the sort of virtues and values that characterise the life of the genuine philosopher.[32] This form of art is also ruled out and deemed to be subversive to the potential philosopher's moral and intellectual development. And on this basis, Plato has Socrates emphasise the importance of the cultural and intellectual components of the philosopher's education moulding the minds of these talented young individuals in the right way, and guiding them along the appropriate paths so as to hftv-3 them not only pursue the best sorts of

[30]See *Republic:* Book II: 377b-c.
[3']See *Republic:* Book II: 379c-d and Book III: 387e-394e.
[32]See *Republic:* Book III: 387e-394e and Book X: 595a-607e. For an excellent discussion on this aspect of Plato's philosophy, see Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness, Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 122-135.

activities, but to do so with the right set of values, the best of intentions and the appropriate kind of pleasures and motivations.[33]

Finally, in Books VI and VII of *Republic,* Plato's discussion turns to the kind of training these potential philosophers must receive in order to develop the sort of wisdom regarding 'being and becoming', and other metaphysical matters, that sets the genuine philosophers' wisdom apart from that of all other human beings. There, Socrates discusses the need for these naturally talented individuals to eventually undertake a course in 'the power of dialectic', and other subjects that he describes as 'useful in the search for the beautiful and the good.'[34] And, on this basis, Socrates also declares that, '..calculation, geometry, and all the preliminary education required for dialectic must be offered to the future rulers in childhood.'[35] Thus, in Book VI of *Republic,* Socrates invokes the analogy of the Line in order to show how the potential philosopher must eventually master various metaphysical distinctions, and how he or she must progress, or move up the scale of human wisdom and experience - from imagination *(eikasia)* and belief *(pistis)* to thought *(dianoia)* and, ultimately, to true wisdom (or *sophia)* - in order to glimpse the true realities that are known to us as the Forms.[36] And again, in Books VI and VII of *Republic,* Socrates invokes the analogy of the Cave and the analogy of the Sun to show what our current states of human ignorance and complacency regarding such matters resemble, and how potential philosophers must rise above them in order to understand the difference between 'truth and untruth' and to see, for the first time, the Form of the Good which provides the true source of all moral and intellectual enlightenment.[37]

In *Phaedo,* Socrates appears to have less to say about the specific details of the potential philosopher's education or development. However, in emphasising the need for philosophers to both be and become primarily interested in that which is akin to the purely divine, invisible and intelligible aspects of human nature and experience, this key dialogue of Plato's middle period also shows support for the idea that studies in

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[33]Thus, in Book III of *Republic,* at 395d, Socrates and Adeimantus agree that, '...imitations practiced from youth become part of nature and settle into habits of gesture, voice and thought...'

[34]See *Republic:* Book VI: 513b and Book VII: 53 lc.

[35]See *Republic:* Book VII: 536d.

[36]See *Republic:* Book VI: 509d-513e.

[37]See *Republic:* Book VI: 507b-509d and Book VII: 514a-518c and 532a; and *Phaedo:* 99d-e and 109d-110a.

dialectic, and various metaphysical distinctions, will form an essential component of the potential philosophers' development.[38] In focusing on this aspect of the philosopher's maturity, *Phaedo* also reiterates Plato's message in *Republic* regarding the need for these individuals to generate a high level of internal order and self-discipline. In this way, although Socrates may have different things to say in this dialogue regarding the attitude with which a potential philosopher must treat the physical aspects of human nature, it is clear that *Phaedo* supports Plato's general outlook in *Republic* regarding the need for the philosopher's development to flow in the direction of greater psychic harmony and unity.[39] It is also clear that this key dialogue of Plato's middle period supports the idea that this kind of unity or harmony will be essential for these talented young individuals to develop the capacity that is required to act more reliably on their naturally virtuous impulses, and to perform moral actions that are inspired by the right sorts of values, intentions, pleasures and motivations.[40]

Section 5: The philosopher's position and occupation in society

Having considered the kind of person one must *be* and *become* in order to live the life of a genuine philosopher, Socrates also speaks about the need for this type of person to occupy the right kind of position and occupation in society. Accordingly, he suggests that, 'Anyone who is tested in this way as a child, youth and adult, and always comes out of it untainted, is to be made a ruler as well as a guardian...'[41] And in describing the kind of work that these individuals must do in this capacity, Plato has Socrates demonstrate the importance of this extra pre-condition for the philosopher's state of happiness. Thus, in Book IV *of Republic,* Socrates provides an account of the various 'types of people' that are said to correspond to the various 'types of work' that are to be performed by the members of the ideal city. In this part of Plato's dialogue on the nature and value of justice, Socrates also indicates that the division of labour in society must be based on the natural capacities of each human being. From this perspective, he tells Glaucon that, '.,„.everyone must practice one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited.'[42] He also defines the virtue of justice as

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[38]See *Phaedo:* 65d-66d.

[39]See *Phaedo:* 65c and 69a-d.

[40]Sec *Phaedo:* 69a-c.

[41]?.ee *Republic:* Book III: 413e-414a.

[47] See *Republic:* Book IV: 433a.

something which occurs when every person focuses on his or her designated sphere of activity and, thus, '...every child, woman, slave, freeman, craftsman, ruler, and ruled each does his own work and doesn't meddle with what is other people's.'[43] And on this basis, Socrates suggests that the well being and unity of the city-state will depend on the co-operation of each and every one of its members and demand that they all stick to the kind of labour they have been allocated on the basis of their natural capacities and talents.

In Book IV of *Republic,* Socrates declares that the philosophers are the types of people who are 'naturally suited' to rule, or to act as 'guardians' for the other classes of citizens. This is deemed to be so for the very reason that they alone possess the kind of intellectual, moral and psychological capacities that enable individuals to determine what is most important and valuable in human lives, and the levels of virtue and wisdom that provide human beings with an insight into what is best for different individuals. Accordingly, the philosophers are given complete responsibility to decide how the city will be arranged and how the various types of people will fit into its social and political structure.[44] From this perspective, Socrates insists that, '...our guardians must be kept away from all other crafts so as to be the craftsmen of the city's freedom, and be exclusively that, and do nothing at all except what contributes to it' and, in this-way, 'they must neither do nor imitate anything else...'[45] He also explains that the rest of society will be divided up into the class of people who are naturally suited to defend or protect the city in the capacity of the guardians' 'auxiliaries', and those who will make up the bulk of society and are naturally suited to be 'wage-earners' and to earn their keep as artisans, farmers or labourers. These three classes of citizens, or types of people, are said to be distinguished on the basis of the kind of intellectual, moral and psychological capacities which define their members.[46] It's also suggested that these types of human beings will differ with respect to the part of the human soul that takes control within them and finds its natural fulfilment within these respective classes of people. In this way, the rational, or philosophic part of the human soul is said to rule naturally in the soul of the genuine philosopher; the spirited part of the soul is thought

[43]See *Republic:* Book III: 433d.
[44]See *Republic:* Book VI: 487a.
[45]See *Republic:* Book III: 395b-c.
[46]From this perspective, Socrates declares that the guardians, or philosophers, will be 'the best of the citizens.' See *Republic:* Book V: 456e.

to dominate naturally in the psyche of the auxiliary, and the appetitive component of the soul is believed to naturally take control in the soul of the wage-earner and to explain why most human beings choose to pursue the kind of pleasure-seeking activities that they do.[47]

Accordingly, Plato's discussion in Book IV *of Republic* demands that those who are to live the life of a genuine philosopher must also possess a unique position and occupation in society. Socrates points out that these potential philosophers will need to take on a particular role in the city-state and to ensure that the social and political organisations of that state provide them with the opportunities to engage in the highest levels of decision-making over matters of civic service and public policy. This unique position in society is said to reflect the superior capacities for virtue and wisdom that certain members of society possess as a result of their nature, or constitutive luck, and the form of rigorous and highly specialised education and training they were fortunate enough to receive. But, more importantly, Socrates" arguments in Book IV, and also Book VII, *of Republic* also suggest that this unique position and occupation in society will reflect the kind of social and political conditions that need to be met in order for these exemplary individuals to engage in the kind of social and political activities that enable them to fully *exercise* their superior moral and intellectual capacities.

And, in this way, Plato's matuie conception of the good human life suggests that the potential philosopher's ability to join the ranks of the fully-fledged philosopher-rulers will also play a vital role in determining whether or not an individual has what it takes to live the very best kind of human life. Indeed, it goes so far as to suggest that unless the education and training that these individuals undergo culminates in the actual business of governing, these guardians will *not* achieve the kind of happiness that they seek. This is clear in the light of Socrates' discussion in Book VII of *Republic,* where he invokes the analogy of the Cave. For there, Socrates suggests that once these individuals have glimpsed the true realities that are known to us as the Forms, they must be made to go back down into the cave to offer their services and insights to their fellow human beings.[48] It is also clear in the light of Socrates' discussion on the Beautiful and the Good in *Symposium.* For there, Socrates suggests that it is not enough for an individual

[47]See *Republic:* Book IV: 43be-441b and Book VI: 493b-c.
[48]See *Republic:* Book VII: 539e-540a.

to simply know the Beautiful and the Good. On the contrary, one must use this knowledge to generate the kind of offspring which upholds the vision and values of the Beautiful and the Good. For if one fails to fulfil one's 'natural desire to give birth', and to give this kind of practical and ethical effect to one's knowledge of the Forms, one will fall short of a truly flourishing human life.[49]

Section 6: The prospects for the majority of human beings to enjoy the very best human life

In examining Plato's discussion in *Republic* and *Phaedo* we have seen how Plato comes to believe that if one is to acquire the best possible human life, one must live the life of a genuine philosopher. We have also seen how these key dialogues of Plato's middle period demonstrate the need for one to be blessed with a particular kind of nature, to receive an early and on-going form of rigorous and highly specialised training, and to possess a unique and privileged position and occupation within an exceptionally well-regulated society in order to *be* or *become* a genuine philosopher. Having examined these remarks, we are now in a position to see why Plato thinks the philosophical way of life will be superior to all other human jives. We are also in a position to see what Plato's mature outlook on the requirements for human flourishing has to say about the role of luck and the external goods in the good human life, and the extent to which he thinks we may regard happiness as the sort of thing which is essentially up to us. For it is clear that in suggesting that an individual must satisfy all three of these conditions or requirements in order to live as happily as any human being can live, Plato's mature conception of happiness demands that an individual achieve the most exceptional levels of intellectual and moral development. It is also clear that in acknowledging the role of constitutive luck, the need to receive a particular kind of education, and the requirement that certain social and political conditions be met,

[49]See *Symposium:* 206b-e and 210a-212c. There, Socrates recalls the words of Diotima: '"...But how would it be, in our view", she said, "if someone got to see the Beautiful itself, absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colours or any other great nonsense of mortality, but if he could see the divine Beauty itself in its one form? Do you think it would be a poor life for a human being to look there and to behold it by that which he ought, and to be with it? Or haven't you remembered", she said, "that in that life alone, when he looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen - only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he is in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is touch with the true Beauty). The love of the gods belongs to anyone who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it, and if any human being could become immortal, it would be he."'

Plato's mature conception of the role of virtue and wisdom in happiness suggests that the best human life will not be something that many human beings ought reasonably expect to be able to acquire. Indeed, it is fair to say that in both *Republic* and *Phaedo,* Plato's depiction of the conditions or requirements for the philosophical way of life indicate that the best human life will prove to be too difficult for *most* human beings to achieve. And this appears to be something that Plato is both ready and willing to admit.

Accordingly, in Book VI of *Republic,* Plato has Socrates declare that due to the exceptional levels of virtue and wisdom that philosophers must achieve, and trie sorts of things that make the philosophical way of life possible, the best human life is something for which the majority of human beings will be *unfit.* From this perspective, Socrates tells Adeimantus, 'I suppose that everyone would agree that only a few natures possess all the qualities that we just now said were essential to becoming a complete philosopher and that seldom occur naturally among human beings...'[50] In this way, he also suggests that, '...you should understand that there will probably be only a few of them, for they have to have the nature we described, and its parts mostly grow in separation and are rarely found in the same person.'[51] And in considering the extent to which philosophy may suit or serve the interests of ordinary human beings, Socrates points out that because the majority of people cannot '...in any way tolerate or accept the reality of the beautiful itself, as opposed to the many beautiful things, or the reality of each thing itself, as opposed to the corresponding many', we must conclude that '...the majority cannot be philosophic.'[52]

To add to this picture, Socrates' discussion in Books IV and VI of *Republic* suggests that most human beings should not even *attempt* to engage in philosophical activities, nor try to acquire the life of happiness which is reserved for genuine philosophers. On the contrary, he makes it painfully clear that most human beings will be both unfit and 'unworthy' of the challenges that are posed by moral philosophy and the pursuit of their way of life.[53] In this way, he also suggests that if those who are naturally suited to serve their community as auxiliaries or wage-earners take on such activities and endeavours, this will result in a kind of'meddling and exchange between

[50]See *Republic:* Book VI: 491 a-b.

[51]See *Republic:* Book VI: 503b.

[52]See *Republic:* Book VI: 493e-494a.

these three classes' that will revoke the natural order and balance within the social and political hierarchy and, thereby, produce '...the greatest harm that can happen to the city and [what] would rightly be called the worst thing that someone could do to it.'[54] In the light of these remarks, Socrates also tells Adeimantus that although, '...many people with defective natures desire to possess her, even though their souls are cramped and spoiled by the mechanical nature of their work, in just the way that their bodies are mutilated by their crafts and labours', philosophy is 'still more high-minded' than these people, and the crafts for which they are naturally suited.[55] And, on this basis, he concludes that we must recognise that there remains, 'only a very small group who consort with philosophy in a way that's worthy of her...'[56]

Again, in Book V, Socrates remarks that when we speak of 'philosophers', we are referring to these types of human beings who '...are fitted by nature both to engage in philosophy and to rule the city, while the rest are naturally fitted to leave philosophy alone and follow their leader.'[57] And in Book VII of *Republic,* he also points out that, '...the present error, which as we said before explains why philosophy isn't valued, is that she's taken up by people who are unworthy of her, for illegitimate students shouldn't be allowed to take her up, but only legitimate ones.'[58]

This kind of willingness to have Socrates admit that most human beings will not have what it takes to benefit from an education in philosophy, and, thus acquire the highest level of human happiness, is also apparent in *Phaedo* and some of the other works and dialogues of Plato's middle period. Accordingly, in *Phaedo* Plato has Socrates suggest that those who are 'uneducated' will not only 'engage in argument about anything' and 'give no thought to the truth about the subject of discussion' but also demonstrate in the process that they are obviously 'only eager that those present will accept the position they have set forth.'[59] Again, in *Phaedrus,* Plato has Socrates point out that although the dialectician can plant and sow within an individual the kind of discourse that is accompanied by knowledge, and '...renders the man who has it as

[53]See *Republic:* Book VI: 496a.
[54]See *Republic:* Book IV: 434b-c.
[55]ibid.
[56]See *Republic:* Book VI: 495c-4y6b.
[57] See *Republic:* Book V: 474b-c.
[58]See *Republic:* Book VII: 353c. See also *Republic:* Book VI: 491a.

happy as any human being can be', it is imperative that the dialectician first 'chooses a proper soul.'[60] And in *Seventh Letter*- a work often linked to Plato's personal attempts to educate Dionysius - we are told that, 'Those who are really not philosophers but have only a coating of opinions, like men whose bodies are tanned by the sun, when they see how much learning is required, and how great the labour, and how orderly their daily lives must be to suit the subject they are pursuing, conclude that the task is too difficult for their powers; and rightly so, for they are not equipped for this pursuit.'[61] There we are also told that because most human beings have a 'defective' nature and '...no man who is not naturally inclined and akin to justice and all other forms of excellence...will ever attain the truth that is attainable about virtue', the examination of philosophical questions will not be of benefit to anyone 'except to a few, ie., to those who could with a little guidance discover the truth for themselves.'[62] For, 'of the rest, some would be filled with an ill-founded and quite unbecoming disdain, and some with an exaggerated and foolish elation, as if they had learned something grand.'[63]

Section 7: Summary

Having examined these remarks, together with Plato's mature conception of the essential conditions or requirements for the best human life, we can now see how Plato's mature outlook on the nature of virtue and wisdom leads him to think of the best human life as something for which the majority of human beings will be *unfit.* We can also see how Plato's insistence on the need for individuals to be endowed with a kind of constitutive luck or natural capacity for virtue and wisdom, to receive an early and on-going form of rigorous and highly specialised training, and to occupy the right kind of position and occupation in society, ultimately transform his beliefs regarding the relations between morality, luck and happiness, the availability of the good human life, and the extent to which we may regard happiness as the sort of thing which is essentially up to us. And this, in turn, helps to explain why Plato ultimately adopts such

[59]See *Phaedo:* 91a.

[60]See *Phaedrus:* 276e-277a.

[61]See *Seventh Letter:* 340d-341a.

[62]See *Seventh Letter.* 343e-344b and 341e.

[63]See *Seventh Letter:* 341e. Even if one is sceptical about the authenticity of *Seventh Letter,* one must admit that these remarks about the elite nature of philosophical inquiry are consonant with the remarks in *Republic, Phaedo* and *Phaedrus.* Accordingly, if the author of this letter is not Plato himself, it is one who is attuned to this recurrent theme in the dialogues of Plato's middle period.

a pessimistic view of the potential for moral philosophy to address the needs and concerns of ordinary human beings, and in this, his darkest hour, presents such a grim depiction of the prospects for moral philosophy, together with the kind of life which he himself prescribes_/br humanity, to bring about the advent of widespread human flourishing.

Part III: Plato's outlook on the relation between virtue and wisdom in *Republic* and *Phaedo*

Section 1: Key issues for determining Plato's outlook on the availability of the very best human life

In Part II, we saw how Plato comes to believe that one way to attain happiness, or *eudaimonia,* is to adopt the philosopher's way of life. We also saw that both *Republic* and *Phaedo* mean to suggest that the highest level of human flourishing is reserved for those who take up this way of life. These key dialogues of Plato's middle period reflect the view that the philosopher's way of life is more happy than any other way of human life, and this is so because of the kinds of rational and moral development that are said to characterise the life of the philosopher. They also reflect the view that the philosopher's kinds of rational and moral development are made possible by a rare combination of nature, or constitutive luck, education and training, and social or political circumstances.

In this part of our examination, we need to consider the relation that exists between virtue and wisdom in *Republic* and *Phaedo,* and the implications this may have for Plato's mature conception of the links between virtue, wisdom and happiness, and the availability of the best human life. More specifically, we need to take a closer look at what it is about being a philosopher thai Plato thinks contributes to an individual's happiness. We also need to reflect on what Pla.:> has to say about the importance of the philosopher's contemplation of the Forms and the difference between the kinds of genuine and civic virtue of which human beings are capable. Only then will we be in a position to understand how Plato's mature conception of human flourishing differs from his earlier perspective on the kinds of virtue and wisdom that are required for happiness,

and what this tells us about the perspective from which Plato comes to think about the potential for ordinary human beings to live as happily as any human beings can live.

Section 2: The relation between virtue and happiness

To begin, we may observe that both *Republic* and *Phaedo* clearly support the view that virtue is at least a *necessary* condition for happiness. This is an idea that is generally endorsed throughout all of Plato's dialogues. Whether these middle dialogues also regard virtue as *sufficient* for *eudaimonia,* however, is a question that remains open to debate.[64] All we can say for certain about this matter is that these dialogues clearly support the notion that those individuals who do not attain *some* kind of virtue will not have what it takes to secure *any* kind of life that may be rightly referred to as a 'happy' one. And this does not seem like such an unreasonable idea. For Plato regards happiness as living well and the virtues are said to be the things which enable us to do something well. Thus, the virtues may be understood as things which will enable us to live a human life well.

Having acknowledged these points about the relation between virtue and happiness, however, we are left with two important questions. The first relates to the kind of knowledge that Plato regards as necessary for genuine virtue and happiness in the dialogues of his middle period. The second relates to the way in which this kind of knowledge is said to contribute to the philosopher's happiness and, thus, provide for the best possible human life. To answer these questions, I shall focus on what Plato has to say about virtue and knowledge in *Phaedo* and *Republic.* I shall also begin by outlining what Plato has to say about these matters in *Meno,* so as to provide some context for the development of Plato's views.

[64]This is a consequence of the fact that Plato's position in *Republic* has been taken to support both a 'comparative thesis' and a 'sufficiency thesis' regarding virtue and its relation to human flourishing. Whereas scholars such as Martha Nussbaum have generally supported the sufficiency thesis - arguing that, in *Republic,* this is all that Plato takes to be necessary for one to acquire and maintain a life of *eudaimonia* - others like Terence Irwin have argued that the more modest comparative thesis best fits what Plato has to say about the role of virtue in *Republic.* For more on this, see Nussbaum (1986), pp. 84, 319 and 329; and Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics,* Oxford University Press, New York, U.S.A., 1995, pp. 181-201 and 244-251.

Section 3: Virtue and knowledge in *Meno*

In *Meno,* a dialogue of Plato's early or transitional period, Plato has Socrates suggest that although some people may possess moral *knowledge,* others have nothing more than true beliefs or opinions to guide them when they make their moral decisions. Contrary to Socrates' suggestions in other Platonic dialogues, here Socrates also suggests that when we understand the true relation that exists between wisdom, virtue and happiness, we will realise that, 'true opinion is as good a guide as knowledge for the purpose of acting rightly."'[65] What this view amounts to is best represented by Model I[66]. This model reflects a uni-dimensional account of virtue, in so far as it suggests that there is a kind of virtue that is open and available to all human beings. This model also reflects the fact that although Plato distinguishes two routes to virtue, namely, one via knowledge and one via true belief, nothing in this dialogue suggests that these paths will lead to different types of virtue.[67]

It is important to note that in *Meno* Plato has Socrates suggest that true beliefs may be less reliable than knowledge, in so far as they lack the stability of knowledge and are, therefore, prone 'to run away from a man's mind.'[68] However, in so far as Plato also has Socrates maintain that true beliefs are 'no less useful than knowledge' and, when governing one's course of action, produce 'as good a result as knowledge', it is clear that he means to suggest that genuine virtue may derive from either knowledge or true belief.[69] In this way, it is also clear that *Meno* does not restrict genuine virtue and happiness to those who are specifically philosophically-minded. In fact, the discussion in this dialogue regarding the prospects for ordinary human beings to acquire the kind of wisdom that is required for virtue and happiness, is so optimistic that we are shown how even a slave can be successful in using true beliefs as a guide to right action when such beliefs are aroused by the right sort of questioning.[70]

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[65]See *Meno:* 97a-c.

[66]See APPENDIX for details regarding each of these models of virtue.

[67]On this point, see also *Meno:* 72d. There, Plato has Socrates suggest that there is not a plurality of different kinds of virtues, as justice is one and the same thing in men and women alike.

[68]See *Meno:* 97e-98a.

[69]Sec *Meno:* 98b-c.

[70]See *Meno:* 82b- 86.

Section 4: Virtue &.,d knowledge in *Phaedo*

When we turn to Plato's discussion in *Phaedo,* we see quite a different perspective on the kind of wisdom that is required for virtue and happiness and what hope ordinary human beings have of acquiring it. There, Plato has Socrates invoke the distinction between philosophers and non-philosophers, and attribute different kinds of intellectual capacities to each of them. He also has Socrates insist that the intellectual capacities of the latter will not be sufficient to generate the kind of wisdom and virtue that are required for genuine happiness. Part of the reason for this relates to Plato's belief that only those with the intellectual insights of the philosopher will have what it takes to pursue the right kinds of activities, and to do this with the right sorts of values, intentions, pleasures and motivations. Another reason for this relates to Plato's view that, although philosophers will be able to engage in virtuous activities in a manner which reflects the fact that they are free from, or oblivious to, all distractions of the body, non-philosophers will only ever manage to do this when a kind of fear or desire *compels* them to do so.[71]

This outlook in *Phaedo* regarding the relation that exists between virtue and wisdom, and the kinds of virtue that are available to human beings, is best represented by Model 2. This model reflects the fact that although Plato initially has Socrates suggest that virtue belongs 'primarily' to the philosophers, or the philosophical disposition,[72] within a couple of lines of the dialogue he has Socrates and Simmias agree that virtue is *only* acquired by philosophers, or 'those who regard the body with the greatest indifference and spend their lives in philosophy.'[73] It also reflects the fact that although a kind of virtue is initially attributed to non-philosophers, Socrates ultimately exposes this kind of virtue as something which is 'illogical' or 'illusory'[74] in

[71] See *Phaedo* 67c-d, 69a-c, 80e and 82c. There, Socrates appears to present two different accounts of the philosopher's attitude towards the distractions of the body. On the one hand, he suggests that, in so far as the philosopher's virtue is grounded in actual wisdom, 'the presence or absence of pleasures and fears and other such feelings makes no difference at all' in a way which suggests that such feelings may still arise but fail to influence the philosopher's decision-making process. On the other hand, he speaks of'the true moral ideal' to which the philosopher aspires as a disposition which amounts to a kind of 'purgation' or 'purification' from such bodily distractions and emotions in a way which suggests that once the philosopher has acquired a genuinely virtuous disposition, he or she will have *overcome* the demands or distractions of the body.
[72] See *Phaedo:* 68c.
[73] ibid.
[74] See *Phaedo:* 68d.

nature, in so far as it results from a kind of compulsion or confusion, and, thus, denounces it as 'a thoroughly vulgar conception which has nothing sound in it and nothing true.'[75]

On this basis, we can see that *Phaedo* provides us with a dualistic account of virtue. Socrates suggests that there is one type of virtue that is acquired by the non-philosopher, and another which is reserved for the genuine philosopher. In recognising the important differences between these two types of virtue, however, and the need for the virtuous actions of an individual to spring from a deeper level of moral insight and motivation, rather than simply produce 'the right results', Plato's discussion suggests that there is really only one type that is worthy of the name 'virtue'. This is the kind of virtue that is open and available to the genuine philosopher and results from the kind of moral insights and motivations that only the philosopher is capable of developing. Consequently, we may observe that in *Phaedo,* Plato's account of the relation between virtue and wisdom, and the kind of wisdom that is required for genuine virtue and happiness, precludes ordinary human beings from acquiring the good human life.

Section 5: Virtue and knowledge in *Republic.* Vlastos' interpretation

When we turn to *Republic,* however, we find that Plato's outlook on the relations that exist between virtue, wisdom and happiness is not so easy to determine. Indeed, there has been considerable debate over what Plato has to say in Book IV of *Republic,* and whether he means to suggest that the kinds of virtue and true beliefs of which the wage-earners and auxiliaries are capable will prove to be sufficient for these individuals to acquire the same level of happiness that the philosophers enjoy.

In *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher,* Gregory Vlastos has argued that by the time Plato comes to write *Republic,* he no longer subscribes to the kind of elitist perspective that he expresses in *Phaedo.* Vlastos maintains that in *Republic* Plato develops 'a new conception* of the relation between virtue, wisdom and happiness and, thus, moves on from what he de.-÷.dbes as 'the imperfect understanding of the topic

[75]See *Phaedo:* 69b.

Plato had achieved at the beginning of his middle period.'[76] He also contends that part of what it means for us to understand the development in Plato's thought from *Phaedo* to *Republic* is to grasp the fundamental point that by the time Plato writes *Republic,* he holds the view that when virtue is 'internally motivated', that is to say, brought about by the right sort of training or education, 'it does not require 'knowledge" of the good...'[77]

What Vlastos has to say on these matters is based on Plato's discussion in Book IV of the *Republic.* There, Plato does in fact attribute a kind of virtue to the auxiliaries who protect the city and wage war on its behalf[78] More specifically, Plato has Socrates suggests that what makes non-philosophers, such as the auxiliaries, *brave* is their ability to conserve the true belief that has been inculcated in them through their education regarding things which are and are not to be feared.[79] In this way, he suggests that true beliefs are the kinds of rules or principles that these individuals have been brought up to preserve without fail. And on this basis, he also suggests that the city will be brave or courageous itself *because* of what the auxiliaries do to protect it.[80] From this perspective, Vlastos argues that Book IV of *Republic* does not suggest that only those who achieve the levels of virtue and wisdom that are characteristic of the genuine philosopher will have what it takes to become fully *eudaimōn.* On the contrary, he insists that this part *of Republic* provides us with clear evidence of the fact that Plato eventually comes to believe that those who cultivate true beliefs via the right sort of training or education will have what it takes to enjoy a level of happiness that is akin to what the philosophers themselves enjoy.[81]

Vlastos' interpretation of Plato's outlook in *Republic* regarding the types of virtue that are available to human beings is best represented by Model 3. This

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[76]See Vlastos (1991), p. 89: n. 32. There, Vlastos also contrasts this 'new conception' with what he regards as the 'intellectualist account' of virtue that appears in what are commonly known as Plato's early, or Socratic, dialogues.

[77]See ibid., p. 89: n. 30.

[78]See *Republic:* Book IV: 429a.

[79]See *Republic:* Book IV: 430c-d.

[80]See *Republic:* Book IV: 429b-c. For more discussion on Plato's account of the virtue of courage or bravery in Book IV *of Republic,* and a similar strategy for attributing non-philosophers with the virtues of moderation and justice, see Terence Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory. The Early and Middle Dialogues,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 329-331; Irwin (1995), pp. 229-230; C.D.C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings. The Argument of Plato's Republic,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, p. 310; and John Cooper, 'The Psychology of Justice in Plato', *American Philosophical Quarterly,* Vol. 14. No. 2., April. 1977, p. 153.

[81]See Vlastos (1991), pp. 88-89.

model is similar to Model 1, in so far as it indicates that there are two different routes to virtue, namely, one via actual knowledge and one via true belief. It is also similar to Model 1 in so far as it indicates that these two routes will lead to one and the same kind of virtue. The only significant differences relate to the qualification that Vlastos refers to regarding the need for true beliefs to be grounded in the right sort of education or training,[82] and the distinction that Vlastos invokes regarding the difference between philosophers and non-philosophers and the kinds of intellectual capacities that are said to be natural for each of them.

Section 6: An assessment of Vlastos' interpretation

Now, if Viastos' interpretation of Plato's outlook in Book IV of *Republic* were correct, we would have good reason to believe that this key dialogue of Plato's middle period has more affinity with *Meno,* and its emphasis on the need for individuals to simply get the right results via true beliefs, than it does with *Phaedo,* and its emphasis on the importance of moral agents actually performing virtuous actions with the right kind of moral insights and motivations through an understanding which derives from knowledge and contemplation of the Forms. We would also have good reason to believe that Plato intended to abandon his earlier elitist perspective on the prospects for widespread access to the best possible human life.[83] But there is evidence to suggest that this interpretation is *not* correct. We can see this when we consider Plato's distinction in

[82]VIastos interprets Plato's position in *Republic* as one which suggests that if anyone misses out on this sort of education or training, even if they manage to acquire true beliefs later on in life, the kind of courage they will develop will be nothing but 'a cheap imitation of the real thing' which ought not to be even called by the name 'courage'. He also suggests that, for Plato, this education must take place while the auxiliaries are still in their youth for the very reason that any attempt to do so at a later stage in lives will only result in the kind of training which produces too little too late.' These modifications do have important implications for Plato's mature conception of the nature and availability of human flourishing. For Plato's account in *Meno,* as represented by Model 1, allows for the possibility that individuals may acquire their true beliefs through any means, such as life experience or even sheer luck. By contrast, Vlastos' account of Plato's view in *Republic,* as represented by Model 3, suggests that only those who acquire their true beliefs as a result of the right sort of education and training will have what it takes to cultivate genuine virtue and happiness. See ibid; and also *Republic:* Book VII: 536c-d, where Socrates tells Glaucon, '...we mustn't believe Solon when he says that as someone grows older he's able to learn a lot.'

[83]Indeed, Vlastos thinks that on the basis of Plato's discussion in Book IV *of Republic,* we have reason to believe that Plato means to abandon his earlier demand for individuals to maintain an autonomous hold over the extent and content of their own rational deliberations. Accordingly, he suggests that, 'if true opinion without knowledge does suffice to guide action aright, then the mass of men and women may be spared the pain and hazards of the 'examined' life.' For more on this, and a criticism of Vlastos' failure to recognise the importance of this kind of autonomy in Plato's mature conception of the requirements for *eudaimonia,* see Vlastos (1991), p. 125; and Irwin (1995), pp. 293 and 296.

Republic and *Phaedo* regarding the kinds of genuine and civic virtue of which human beings are capable. And in considering this evidence, we can also see why Plato comes to regard the philosopher's kind of expert or infallible wisdom as so important, and what this tells us about the way in which he thinks the philosopher's contemplation of the Forms and unique moral virtue will ultimately contribute more to an individual's state of happiness.

Section 7: Plato's distinction between 'genuine' and 'civic' virtue

Before we proceed we should note that, in discussing the connection between true beliefs and one's ability to live some sort of rational and moral life, Vlastos is right to point out that Book IV of Plato's *Republic* allows the possibility that non-philosophers may actually develop a kind of virtue and, therefore, possibly a kind of happiness as well. But having acknowledged this important point we must also acknowledge the fact that in suggesting that Book IV *of Republic* negates Plato's earlier suggestion that individuals require a kind of expert or infallible wisdom in order to enjoy the philosopher's level of happiness, Vlastos overlooks one very important aspect of Plato's mature conception of the relations between virtue, knowledge and happiness. This aspect relates to Plato's distinction between the kinds of genuine and civic virtues of which human beings are capable. It also relates to Vlastos' failure to consider the question of whether these two kinds of virtue could ever enrich our lives in the same way, or provide the same degree of insights and understanding that enable us to perform certain activities well and, thus live a whole human life well.

Section 8: The significance of Plato's distinction between genuine and civic virtue

Plato invokes the distinction between genuine and civic virtue in Book IV of *Republic.* He does this when he has Socrates and Simmias agree that, 'mere right opinion about the same matters not produced by education, that which manifests itself in a beast or a slave...have little or nothing to do with the law' and ought to be called 'by another name than courage.'[84] He also makes reference to these two types of virtue when he has Simmias accept the disposition referred to as the 'unfailing conservation of

[84]See *Republic:* Book IV: 430b.

right and lawful belief about things to be and not to be feared" *as* courage, but has Socrates tell him directly after, 'Do so...and you will be right, with the reservation that it is the courage of a citizen.'[85]

To my mind, these remarks reflect the fact that Plato's discussion in *Republic* is grounded in the assumption that we must always keep in mind the differences between the virtue of the philosophers and the virtue of the non-philosophers. More importantly, they also reflect the fact that in *Republic,* as in *Phaedo,* Plato's discussion of the types of virtue that are available to human beings is grounded in the assumption that the virtue of the genuine philosopher will always be superior to, or more complete than, the kind of virtue that is open and available to the majority of human beings who do not share the philosophical way of life.[86] As we have seen in Part II, this is said to be so because of the very nature, nurture and privileged positions and occupations that these individuals are fortunate enough to receive or possess, and because of the kind of moral insights and motivations that are said to flow from these aspects of the philosophical way of life.

But having noted these general points about Plato's outlook on philosophical virtue in *Republic* and *Phaedo,* we need to reflect on the ways in which *this* kind of virtue, that is to say, the kind of virtue that is based on expert or infallible knowledge rather than mere true belief, may actually contribute to an individual's happiness in a different way and on an essentially deeper level. We also need to ask whether the kind of civic virtue that Plato reserves for non-philosophers could ever promote an individuals' happiness in the same way that the philosopher's genuine virtue is said to do. And in asking this question, we need to recognise that there is good reason to think that it could not. For, unlike the virtue of the philosopher, which derives from knowledge and contemplation of the Forms and complete psychic harmony and discipline, *civic* virtue is based on an understanding that is essentially blind to the *truth* about the moral virtues and the ways in which they connect with all that is valuable in a human life. In this way, those who possess civic virtue will remain dependent upon the

[85]See *Republic:* Book IV: 430c. For evidence of Plato's continued support for this kind of distinction, see also *Laws:* Book XII: 968a. There, Plato has his spokesperson suggest that the philosopher is required to '...rise above the level of ordinary virtues.'

[86]This idea also seems to be supported by the fact that Plato uses the same Greek adjective, namely, *politiken,* to describe the kinds of temperance and justice that are available to non-philosophers in both *Phaedo* and *Republic.* On this point, see also Plato's choice of terminology in *Statesman,* at 309e.

reason or *logismoi aitiai* of the philosophers themselves. They will also need to look to the philosophers to verify their own moral beliefs and justify their own moral actions. And this is quite significant. For it means that the wage-earners and auxiliaries that Plato speaks of in Book IV *of Republic* will not have the means to generate their own understanding of *what* it is that they are doing when they act virtuously, and *how* they will benefit themselves and others when they engage in these activities.[87] It also means that the kind of virtue they are capable of developing will fail to provide them with the moral and intellectual insights that underpin the philosopher's values, intentions, pleasures and motivations. And, in this way, these non-philosophers will miss out on an essential psychological and intellectual component of the philosophers lives which informs the philosophers' activities and enriches those individuals' lives.

For these reasons, we must observe that the kind of genuine virtue that is reserved for the philosophers in Plato's middle dialogues ultimately contributes to an individual's state of happiness in a way that the virtue of the non-philosophers can not. We must also conclude that although civic virtue may lead to *some* kind of rational and happy human life,[88] it will not provide an individual with access to the kind of happiness that the philosopher is said to enjoy, nor contribute to an individual's happiness in the same way that the philosopher's virtue does. For Plato's discussion in *Republic* and *Phaedo* clearly suggests that only genuine virtue, that is to say, the kind of virtue that is based on expert or infallible knowledge and derives from knowledge and contemplation of the Forms, will enable individuals to experience the highest degree of happiness and, hence, the very best human life.

[87]For an interesting discussion in support of this idea, see Terence Irwin's discussion in Irwin (1995), pp. 195 and 232-236. There, Irwin points out the importance of the genuine philosopher's virtue providing individuals with *counter/actual,* rather than merely *empirical,* reliability. He also points out that the auxiliaries that Plato speaks about in Book IV *of Republic* are simply 'fed' true beliefs as to what is and what is not to be feared, and simply take the word of the philosophers on such matters as truths. As a result, he suggests that these individuals will obviously fail to apprehend the *non-instrumental* good, or *intrinsic* worth, of the deeds that they perform and, thereby, also lack the levels of moral insight and motivation that inform the genuine philosopher's actions and decisions.

Section 9: Alternative ways ofinterpreting Plato's views in *Republic*

Having considered the significance of this distinction between civic and genuine virtue in the key dialogues of Plato's middle period, we may observe that Plato's outlook on the relation between virtue, knowledge and happiness in Book IV of *Republic* lends itself to a number of alternative interpretive models.

One of the ways we could go in marking out this distinction is represented by Model 4. On this model, we must acknowledge that there are three distinct kinds of virtue: one that is based on the true beliefs of those who are *uneducated;* one that is based on the true beliefs of those who are *educated',* and one that is based on actual knowledge and is acquired by a genuine philosopher. This model collapses into Model 5 when we grant Plato his point regarding the need for true beliefs to be brought about by the right sort of education or training, rather than simply being the product of an individual's life experience or good fortune. In this way, the third kind of virtue in this model is exposed as something that is essentially illusory in much the same way as the second kind of virtue is exposed as illusory in relation to Model 2, and our initial trichotomy is, thereby, reduced to a dichotomy.

Another way we could go in marking out this distinction between civic and genuine virtue in Book IV of *Republic* is represented by Model 6. On this model, we must acknowledge that the kind of virtue that is accessible to the philosopher ranks higher up on the scale of virtue than does the virtue that is natural for, and accessible to, the majority of human beings who do not share the philosopher's way of life. Here, on this model, the difference between the two types of virtue in question is taken to be one of degree rather than kind. This model may allow for the possibility that a non-philosopher can eventually progress, or move up the scale of virtue, towards the complete or genuine kind that is enjoyed by the genuine philosopher. In this respect, one could increase one's chances of gaining access the best human life with every development in moral insight and motivation that accompanies one's intellectual development. In this way, this model may also provide us with a new way of thinking

[88]Of course, this will ultimately depend on whether one takes this kind of intellectual component to be a necessary condition for *any* kind of genuinely happy life. It will also depend on whether one believes that other necessary conditions must be met, such as the right kind of social and political conditions.

about what Plato has to say in Books VI and VII *of Republic* regarding the analogies of the Sun, the Line and the Cave. However, in the light of our discussion in Part II, regarding Plato's view of the pre-conditions that make this kind of progress possible, it is most likely that Plato's *Republic* means to suggest that this kind of ascent will be impossible for most human beings to achieve.

Section 10: Conclusion

In deciding which one of these models to adopt, we need to think carefully about the relation that exists between virtue and happiness, and what Plato's dialogues have to say about the essential components of *any* genuinely happy human life. We must also choose a model that best reflects the importance of Plato's distinction between the kinds of civic and genuine virtue of which human beings are capable, and the different ways in which these virtues may contribute to an individual's happiness. And, in doing so, we must observe the fact that, although Plato's discussion in *Meno* implies that true beliefs may provide sufficient means for individuals to acquire genuine virtue and happiness, his discussion in *Republic* and *Phaedo* clearly suggests that the best kinds of virtue and happiness will be reserved for those who take up the philosopher's way of life and acquire their unique form of expert or infallible wisdom.

Accordingly, we must also observe that, although both *Republic* and *Phaedo* allow non-philosophers access to a kind of demotic or civic virtue, or the sort of 'goodness of an ordinary citizen' that is produced 'by habit and practice, without the help of philosophy and reason'[89] and, thereby, to *some* measure of moral understanding and happiness[90], this ultimately provides the majority of humanity with little consolatio.i.[91] For if it is *expert* or *infallible* wisdom and *genuine* virtue that human

[89]See *Phaedo:* 82b.

[90]In this respect, Irwin is right to point out that we need not think that Plato's outlook on the nature and availability of human flourishing in *Republic* implies that the majority of human beings might as well give up their attempts to be good and take on a life of'license and lawlessness'. For this work clearly indicates that some level of morality and well-being *is* available to these kinds of people, and that they are still obliged to comply with certain standards of moral behaviour. For more discussion on this point, see Irwin (1995), pp. 228-230.

[91]at least with respect to their current incarnation. But perhaps Plato means to suggest that one's success in cultivating 'the goodness of an ordinary citizen' may actually help one out in one's next life. For, in *Phaedo,* Plato also has Socrates suggest that those who attain this moral standard may reach 'the best destination' by most likely passing into 'some other kind of social and disciplined creature like bees, wasps, and ants, or even back into the human race again, becoming decent citizens.' Attaining to the

beings require in order to live the best human life, and these key dialogues of Plato's middle period deny the majority of humanity access to *them,* they also preclude the majority of human beings from acquiring the only way of life that will enable them to become as happy as any human being can be.

Part IV: Plato's outlook on virtue and happiness in *Laws*

Section 1: Some similarities between Plato's views on virtue and happiness in *Republic* and *Laws*

When we *tarn* to Plato's *Laws,* the latest and longest of his works, we can see that Plato continues to hold many of the same beliefs about virtue and happiness towards the end of his life. In this way, many of the things that Plato is concerned to emphasise in *Republic* regarding happiness :md its requirements accord with the things that he has to say about these matters in *Laws.*

One of the fundamental points of similarity between these two dialogues is that they both attempt to describe *apolis* where virtue and *eudaimonia* are possible for individuals to achieve. In this respect, *Laws,* just like *Republic,* has the aim of prescribing what conditions need to be met in order to achieve the greatest good within a society, together with a flourishing way of life for its inhabitants.[92] The Athenian spokesman in *Laws* also shares Socrates' view in *Republic* on the need for rulers to look to the well-being of a society as a whole, rather than that of any one particular group of people within it. Thus, he tells Clinias, 'we maintain that laws which are not established for the good of the whole state are bogus laws, and when they favour particular sections of the community, their authors are not citizens hut party-men; and people who say those laws have a claim to be obeyed are wasting their breath.'[93]

'divine nature', however, is said to remain out of reach for these individuals for the very reason that this 'prize' is strictly reserved for those who have lived the philosophical way of life. For more on this, see *Phaedo:* 82a-b; and also *Republic* Book X: 610e-621d, where Socrates provides an account of the immortality of the soul and discusses the Myth of Er.

[92]See *Laws:* Book I: 628c-d.

[93]See *Laws:* Book IV: 715b and 705e.

In describing the kind of society in which the greatest good will be achieved, both dialogues also place an emphasis on strict social order and certain political and economic anangements. In doing so, they insist on the need to regulate all aspects of social and economic activity. This extends to religious practices, the way marriages should be arranged, the way children should be raised, the way citizens should spend their leisure time, the way property should be distributed, and the way labour should be divided.[94] In addition, Plato provides for a comprehensive education program, with both physical and cultural components, and strict instructions regarding the censorship of the arts.[95] All of these measures are supposed to reiterate the importance of a good and well-ordered life, and to allow citizens to develop the kinds of values, intentions, pleasures, and motivations, that are required for virtue and wisdom and, therefore, a flourishing human life.

Both *Republic* and *Laws* also maintain that the best society will be the one which is ruled by those who have glimpsed the true realities, or the Forms, and have, therefore, achieved the highest levels of virtue and wisdom that are possible for human beings. We have seen how Socrates insists on this point in *Republic* in our earlier discussion in this chapter. And we can now see how important it continues to be for Plato in his later works. For in both *Statesman* and *Laws,* Plato refers to the ideal state as one in which the ruler has 'knowledge', or wisdom, of what is best for the people. In *Laws,* this knowledge is referred to as 'true politcal skill'.[96] In *Statesman,* it is referred to as a kind of 'expert knowledge about ruling human beings.'[97] And in both dialogues, it is seen to be tied to the ruler's ability to 'divide' things according to their real kinds - something which would seem to require knowledge of the Forms and, thus, the kind of rigorous and highly specialised training that is given to the philosopher-rulers in *Republic.*[98]

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[94]See *Laws:* Book X: 884aff, Book VI: 769a-771a, Book VII: 793e-794e, Book VII: 802a-804a, Book V: 736a-737a and Book VIII: 846dff.

[95]See *Laws:* Book VII: 793eff and 802a-804a and Book II: 653aff.

[96]See *Laws:* Book IX: 875b.

[97]See *Statesman:* 292c-d.

[98]See *Laws:* Book XII: 965a-e; and *Statesman:* 303b. For an excellent discussion on this point, see also Trevor Saunders, 'Plato's later political thought', Richard Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.467 and p.485: n. 10.

Section 2: An important difference in Plato's outlook on virtue and happiness in *Laws*

However, notwithstanding these similarities, we may also observe an important difference in Plato's outlook on virtue and happiness in *Laws.* This difference relates to the shift that occurs in Plato's discussion from the ideal political model, to what he readily admits is a 'second-best' form of society." And with it we see Plato's loss of confidence in the possibility of ever finding and developing the kind of individual who could rightly be referred to as a philosopher-ruler.

It must be noted that in *Republic,* Plato does have Socrates acknowledge the possibility that the ideal republic he speaks of may prove to be difficult to bring about in reality. Indeed, he has Socrates go so far as to suggest that this form of political rule may *never* actually eventuate.[100] To add to this, Socrates also shows himself to be willing to talk about alternative kinds of political rule.[101] However, nowhere in *Republic* does Socrates suggest that we, as human beings, ought to give up our attempts to attain the ideal political model that he describes, nor settle for second-best. And yet, this is exactly what Plato appears to be suggesting in both *Statesman* and *Laws.*

Accordingly, the discussion that takes place in *Statesman* suggests that the *true* statesman, that is to say the individual who is able 'to acquire this sort of expert knowledge and so govern a city with intelligence', will be, at best, rare.[102] And, in *Laws,* we are presented with an even less optimistic picture of the prospects of ever finding an individual who can rule with this kind of wisdom or moral expertise. For there, the Athenian tells his companions that,'...such a character is nowhere to be found, except a hint of it here and there' and 'that is why we need to choose the second alternative, law and regulation, which embody principles, but cannot provide for every single case.'[103]

"See *Statesman:* 294a-295a for the superiority of the state ruled by someone with 'the political science' to that ruled by law.

[100]See *Republic:* Book VI: 497b-e.

[101]*Ses Republic:* Book: VIII.

[102]See *Statesman:* 296e-297c.

[103]See *Laws:* Book IX: 875a-d.

From this perspective, the discussion in both *Statesman* and *Laws* turns away from what is agreed to be the *best* form of political rule. In *Statesman,* the focus shifts to what Socrates refers to as 'the likenesses towards which we must always compare our kingly rulers.'[104] In *Laws,* the Athenian proceeds to provide a lengthy account of the merits of a system whereby the moral standards of a society are embodied in a code of law and overseen by various levels of civil and legal administration. One of the leading bodies in this system of administration is the 'Nocturnal Council'. The Athenian suggests that the individuals presiding over this council should be selected from the most morally and intellectually advanced members of the community. He also suggests that they are to receive the sort of education that will give them *some* level of moral insight and understanding of the truths regarding morality and other human affairs.[105] However, it is clear from his discussion that these individuals will not receive anything like the kind of rigorous and highly specialised education and training that is prescribed for the philosopher-rulers in *Republic.*™ It is also clear from his discussion that even these most respected individuals will lack any real intellectual freedom. For even though some measure of amendments to the laws will be permitted, even the rulers of this society, just like the rest of its inhabitants, must ultimately show total and unconditional obedience to the laws of the city.[107]

Section 3: A shift in focus towards a kind of 'civic' virtue

With this shift in focus from the best possible form of political rule to the second-best political model comes a shift in Plato's outlook on the kinds of virtue and wisdom that human beings should be encouraged to strive for. In *Laws,* Plato seems to be fairly pessimistic about the number of citizens in a state who might be capable of developing the highest form of virtue spoken about in *Republic.* As a consequence, he promotes a kind of'civic' virtue that is more widely available to the majority of human beings and will be more easily attained in so far as it falls short of the requirements of the kind of'genuine' virtue that the philosopher-rulers are said to enjoy in *Republic.*

[104]See *Statesman: 291 Q.*
[105]See *Laws:* Book XII: 967e-968b.
[106]See *Laws:* Book VII and XII: 965a-966e.
[107]For an interesting discussion on this point, see Saunders (1992), pp. 477 and 490: n. 82.

The discussion in *Laws* suggests that this kind of civic virtue involves a greater level of moral development or maturity than the kind of civic virtue that Socrates discusses in *Republic.* This is because it requires an individual to not only retain the right beliefs, but to also take enjoyment in the right kinds of things. Accordingly, the Athenian spokesman in *Laws* emphasises the need for citizens to attune their sense of pleasure and pain to their understanding of what is right and good.[108] He also emphasises the need for citizens to receive a form of moral conditioning by pleasure and pain that will enable them to establish this kind of harmony.[109] And, from this perspective, he declares that, without this harmony between one's feelings and pleasures and one's rational judgement, even 'the smallest fraction of wisdom' will be 'impossible'.[110]

Plato's discussion in *Laws* also indicates that this kind of civic virtue involves a greater level of moral understanding than the kind of civic virtue that Socrates refers to in *Republic.* As Terence Irwin and Christopher Bobonich have pointed out, this is because, unlike the auxiliaries and wage-earners *of Republic,* these citizens will be provided with an explanation as to why certain things are to be considered right and good.[111] Moreover, these citizens must not only be made to understand the moral principles that lie behind the laws of the city; they must be 'rationally persuaded' about the merits of these laws.[112] In addition, Plato's *Laws* provides for preambles to the laws to be written, and rulers to adopt a particular way of administering the laws, so as to allow these citizens to develop a level of moral understanding that is sufficient for virtue.[113]

As a result, we can see that what the second-best political model in *Laws* prescribes are the social and political arrangement that enable individuals to cultivate a kind of'civic' virtue. This kind of civic virtue may involve greater levels of moral development and understanding than that of the civic virtue spoken about in *Republic.*

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[108]See *Laws:* Book III: 689dff and 696cff. Cf. Socrates' account of civic courage in Book IV *of Republic,* where he suggests that this simply involves the retention of right belief about what is and is not to be feared.

[109]See *Laws:* Book III: 695e-696e and Book VII: 815e-816c.

[110]See *Laws:* Book III: 689d-e.

[1 * ']For more discussion on this point, see *Laws:* Book IV: 719e-720e; Irwin (1995), p. 352; and Christopher Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom in Plato's *Laws',* Gail Fine (ed.), *Plato 2. Ethics, Politics, Religion and the Soul,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 389-402.

[112]ibid.

However, it falls short of the levels of moral insight and maturity that mark the work and lives of the philosopher-rulers in *Republic* and, hence, the kind of'genuine' virtue that they are said to enjoy. With this reduction in the kind of virtue, or moral wisdom, that human beings are encouraged to strive for in *Laws* comes the diminished prospect for individuals to ever experience the *very best* human life. And this also tells us that Plato's latest and longest discussion on the topic of human flourishing presents us with a very different outlook on the requirements for a good human life and who ought reasonably expext to acquire it.

Section 4: A shift in focus towards the social conditions required for virtue and happiness

In promoting this kind of 'civic' virtue, the focus of the discussion in *Laws* shifts to the social conditions that are required for individuals to flourish. And with this shift in focus we see an emphasis on the role of the founders of the state in setting up a good and comprehensive code o.flaws for all citizens to follow. Accordingly, the Athenian spokesman proceeds to discuss all the measures that will be needed to establish the new state of 'Magnesia' and to put in place a new legal code for its citizens.[114] He also spends a great deal of time convassing the many aspects of the citizens' lives that will need to be regulated under this code, and how those who break these laws are to be punished.[115]

Through this discussion on the social conditions that are required for human flourishing, we can see that Plato's *Laws* places less of an emphasis on those aspects of the good human life that are essentially up to the individual. We can also see that it places less of an emphasis on those aspects of the good human life that remain within the control of an individual. In this way, Plato's discussion emphasises the importance of the individual's responsibility in obeying wholeheartedly and unconditionally those laws that have been enshrined, as well as trying to understand and follow the counsel of the rulers who administer those laws. It also highlights the need for individuals to take on the moral education and training that is provided by the state. However, not much

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[113]See *Laws:* Book IV: 718e-723e.
[114]For details of this discussion, see *Laws:* Books IV, V and VI.
[115]SeeLaws: Book: IX: 857a-863e.

more than this seems to be required of the individual. For the discussion in *Laws* seems to suggest that simply taking these responsibilities seriously, and doing one's best to accept and follow the laws that have been established, is sufficient for an individual to secure the kinds of virtue, wisdom and happiness that are provided for under this form of political rule.[116]

Section 5: Implications for our own examination

Having examined these key aspects of Plato's outlook on virtue, wisdom and happiness in *Laws,* we can now see how Plato's later work presents us with a very different picture of the requirements for a good human life and who ought reasonably expect to acquire it. We can also see how Plato's emphasis on the need for society to provide certain conditions for individuals to flourish takes us away from issues concerning the responsibility of the individual. And, in this respect, we may observe that the focus of Plato's discussion of human flourishing in *Laws* flows in the general direction of what Aristotle has to say about these matters in his own political writings.[117]

However, having considered these shifts in Plato's outlook on virtue and happiness in his later work, I would like to set aside those aspects of Plato's mature conception of happiness and its requirements that are expressed in *Laws* and *Statesman.* Instead, I would like to focus my attention on the key moral themes and concerns that we have raised in relation to the key dialogues of Plato's middle period, namely, *Republic* and *Phaedo.* For it is these key themes and concerns that will provide us with the most intersting and competing contrasts for our discussions on Plato's outlook in the dialogues of his early and transitional periods, Aristotle's moral theory, and the writings of the Stoics and Epicureans.

[116]See *Laws:* Book II. At 660e-664e, the Athenian spokesman also assures his companion that this kind of virtue will be unconditionally good for the individuals who acquire it and both necessary and sufficient for their happiness.
[117]We will examine the direction that Aristotle takes in his own political writings in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER TWO

PLATO'S OUTLOOK ON VIRTUE AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE DIALOGUES OF HIS EARLY AND TRANSITIONAL PERIODS

Part I: Introduction

In the last chapter we focused on Plato's views on the nature and availability of human flourishing in *Phaedo* and *Republic.* In doing so, we saw how Plato's mature conception of the conditions or requirements for *eudaimonia* emphasises the need for individuals to *be* or *become* genuine philosophers, and to acquire the levels of virtue and wisdom that mark the works and lives of these rare and fortunate individuals in order to live the best possible human lives. In focusing on the relation that exists between virtue and knowledge in these key dialogues of Plato's middle period, we saw that although Plato's discussion in *Meno* suggests that true beliefs are sufficient means for an individual to live the virtuous and happy life, this is not the case in these key dialogues of his middle period. For Plato's discussion in *Phaedo* and *Republic* regarding the superiority of the philosopher's moral insights and motivations clearly suggests that nothing less than a kind of expert and infallible knowledge will provide an individual with the means to cultivate the philosopher's level of virtue and happiness.

Having examined Plato's mature conception of the requirements for *eudaimonia* in *Phaedo* and *Republic,* we can see how Plato comes to believe that most people will be unfit to acquire the kind of virtue and wisdom that enables one to become as happy as any human being can be. And having briefly discussed Plato's outlook in *Meno,* we can see that Plato did not always believe that individuals require a kind of expert or infallible wisdom to acquire this way of life. Indeed, this earlier work suggests that in so far as something akin to true belief is sufficient for genuine virtue and happiness, and each and every one of us has access to this, we ought to be considerably optimistic about the potential for moral philosophy to alleviate the suffering of ordinary human beings, and the prospects that Plato sees for his own moral philosophy to generate widespread, if not universal, access to the good human life.

More needs to be said, however, about the sort of cognitive state that Plato has in mind when he speaks about these true beliefs. And more needs to be said about how Plato's discussion in the other dialogues of his early and transitional periods adds to this conception of the sort of wisdom that is required for genuine virtue and happiness. Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to take a closer look at the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods in order to develop a more comprehensive account of Plato's earlier outlook on the relation that exists between virtue and knowledge, and the kind of knowledge that individuals require in order to genuinely do well and be happy.

Throughout the course of my examination I shall focus on several key issues and divide my discussion accordingly. In Part II, I will discuss the significance of the fact that Plato portrays Socrates as the paragon of virtue, wisdom and human flourishing within the dialogues of his early and transitional periods. This suggests that the key to understanding Plato's earlier perspective on the sort of wisdom that is required for a life of genuine virtue and happiness lies in an understanding of the kind of wisdom that Socrates is shown to possess within these earlier works. However, this task is made more difficult by the presence of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge within these earlier dialogues. It is also made more difficult by the two philosophical puzzles that arise from this disavowal of knowledge, namely, the 'Socratic fallacy 'and the Meno paradox. Accordingly, I will also point out that we need to address *these* problems in order to fully understand Plato's earlier conception of the relation between virtue and knowledge. For only then can we decide how we can best characterise the kind of knowledge that Plato initially sees as essential for the good human life.

In Part III, I will examine what I consider to be three of the most popular and plausible solutions to these problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox. In Part IV, I will evaluate the merits and utility of these solutions. I will also conclude that the kind of knowledge that Plato initially regards as essential for virtue and happiness within these earlier works is best characterised as a kind of non-expert moral knowledge. In Part V, I will provide four observations regarding the nature of this particular kind of knowledge and, thus, the sort of thing that Socrates appears to be searching for during the course of his dealings with the stubborn and wily interlocutors who feature in dialogues such as *Laches, Channides*

and *Euthyphro.* And, in this way, we will begin to see what this kind of moral knowledge tells us about the perspective from which Plato first considers the questions of what it takes for a human being to flourish and who ought reasonably to expect to succeed in such endeavours.

In doing so, I will emphasise the importance of Socrates' distinction in *Apology* regarding the kind of 'human wisdom' for which we are destined, and the kind of 'more than human wisdom' which he says lies forever beyond our mortal grasp. I will also show how Plato's moral philosophy emerges from a rather more humble and optimistic beginning in so far as these dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods support Socrates' efforts to adopt more *modest* philosophical ambitions, and encourage individuals to strive for a level of virtue and wisdom that is open and available to ordinary human beings.

Part II: Socrates and Plato's early and transitional dialogues

Section 1: The portrayal of Socrates as the paragon of virtue, wisdom and happiness

In examining the question regarding the kind of knowledge that is required for virtue and *eudaimonia* in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, it becomes clear that we must turn our attention to Socrates. For he is not only the one who appears to be the primary spokesperson in these dialogues, but also the one whom Plato portrays within these works as the paragon of virtue, wisdom and human flourishing. Accordingly, in *Apology,* Piato has Socrates confirm the truth of the Delphic oracle which proclaimed him to be the wisest among mortals. He also shows that when Socrates eventually accepted his fate at the hands of his accusers, he took comfort in the fact that having lived a good life, and thus a wise and virtuous one, he could not be harmed in this life or in death.[118] And again, in *Phaedo,* Plato's discussion shows how, in the last days of Socrates' life, he and many of Socrates' other contemporaries came to believe that, of all the people they had known, Socrates was by far 'the best, and also

[118]This is also confirmed by Plato's discussion in *Crito,* at 43b. There, Plato has Crito tell Socrates, 'I have been surprised to see you so peacefully asleep.... Often in the past, throughout my life, I have

the wisest and most upright.'[119] Though none of tb.2 characters in Plato's dialogues explicitly say that Socrates is the happiest of all human beings, this would seem to follow from the view that Socrates himself endorsed in *Euthydemus,* at 282a, together with the premise that he is the wisest.

In this way, we may observe that Plato's portrayal of Socrates as the paragon of virtue, knowledge and human nourishing within these dialogues is quite significant and useful for our examination. For, it gives us an important clue as to the kind of knowledge that Plato initially believed is required for individuals to genuinely do well and be happy. And, in this way, we may surmise that the task at hand appears to be straightforward. All we need to do is to find out what sort of knowledge Socrates appears to possess within these dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods and we will have the answer to our own question regarding the sort of knowledge that Plato initially regarded as necessary for individuals to acquire genuine virtue and happiness. For, after all, it seems reasonable to infer that if Socrates' cognitive achievements proved to be sufficient for *him* to secure a life of genuine virtue and happiness, they will prove to be sufficient for *other* human beings to do so as well.

Section 2: Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the 'Socratic fallacy' and the Meno paradox

However, when we take a closer look at what Plato's Socrates has to say in these dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, it becomes clear that the task of working out the nature of Socrates' cognitive achievements is considerably more difficult than it appears at first glance. For, on the one hand, these earlier works do portray Socrates as one who hafi acquired genuine virtue and happiness and, therefore, the kind of wisdom that is required for both. This is clear from the episodes in *Apology*[120] and *Gorgias*[m] where Socrates speaks of virtue or moral wisdom as the only antidote to genuine harm, and expresses the greatest confidence in his own ability to avoid the kind of evil or suffering that this sort of harm inevitably creates for an

considered the way you live happy, and especially so now that you bear your present misfortune so easily and lightly.'

[119]See *Phaedo:* 118a. See also *Seventh Letter.* 324e. There, Socrates is referred to as '...an old friend of mine whom I should not hesitate to call the wisest and justest man of that time...'

[120]See *Apology:* 28b-c, 30c-d, 37b and 41c-d.

individual. But, on the other hand, these early and transitional dialogues also provide us with repeated instances in which Plato's Socrates insists that he 'does not know' the answers to the moral questions that he raises. And, in this way, the passages in *Apology, Gorgias* and *Phaedo* that testify to Socrates' confidence in his moral and intellectual achievements seem to stand in direct contrast with what Socrates has to say about these matters elsewhere in Plato's early and transitional dialogues.

Accordingly, in *Laches* Socrates responds to his audience's suspicions with the claim that 'if in the conversations we have just had I seem to be knowing and the other two had not, then it would be right to issue a special invitation to me to perform this task', namely, the task of educating Lysimachus' and Melesias' young boys, 'but as the matter stands, we are all in the same difficulty.'[122] Again, in *Channides,*[123] Socrates tells his audience that he does not regard himself as 'competent' to deal with the moral matters under discussion.[124] And in *Gorgias,* Plato has Socrates tell his interlocutors, 'J don't know how these things are.'[125] On the contrary, he proclaims that, 'the things I say I certainly don't say with any knowledge at all; no, I'm searching together with you...'[126] And, in this way, we see how Socrates' disavowal of knowledge arises in a way which not only presents general interpretive problems, but also complicates our own efforts to discern the kind of knowledge that Socrates is shown to possess within these earlier works and Plato means to mark as the kind of intellectual achievement that is required for one to live well and happily.

In the light of these interpretive problems, we may also observe that the presence of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge within these earlier Platonic dialogues gives rise to two philosophical puzzles. These are what have become known as the 'Socratic fallacy' and the Meno paradox.

The Socratic fallacy holds that one cannot say how a thing is *qualified* until one can say what that thing *is.* This essentially means that one cannot give an example of

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[12'] See *Gorgias:* 473b, 508c-e, 523a-524e, and 526d-e.
[122] See£ac//ey:200e.
[123] at 169a-b.
[124] See *Charm ides:* 169a-b, 166dand 176aff.
[125] See *Gorgias:* 509a.
[126] See *Gorgias:* 506a.

something, nor speak of the qualities or attributes that a thing has, until one is able to explain what that thing is. This problem has a particular urgency for the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues since he insists that one cannot know anything about what *x* is like if one does not know what *x* is.[127] It also presents us with a challenge in understanding Socrates' position within the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods because, within them, Socrates clearly wants to state and hold certain convictions about the virtues and the value of the virtuous life, and yet, as we have seen, he also disavows knowledge of the moral matters that he raises. As a result, we are left wondering how Socrates can say the things that he says about the virtues when he maintains that he is unable to say what virtue *is.*

By contrast, the Meno paradox holds that one cannot *enquire* into what a thing is unless one first *knows* what that thing is. Since Peter Geach first introduced the term in 1966,[128] the Meno paradox has been characterised in a variety of ways. However, the central concern that it seeeks to convey can be expressed by way of two key questions. The first question relates to the possibility of Socrates' search succeeding: if Socrates does not know what it is that he is looking for when he asks the 'what is i7'[129] question, then how can lie know when he has found it? The second questions relates to the utility or merit of Socrates' enquiries: if Socrates *does* already know what it, is that he is looking for when he raises the 'what is *f* question, then why is it that he needs to conduct his elenctic enquires at all? For in that case, Socrates must *already* have what he seeks to find by way of the elenchus and, as a result, his search will turn out to be either unnecessary or superfluous.

This second philosophical puzzle appears to be exactly the kind of worry that Socrates is presented with by his interlocutor in *Meno.* For, therein, Meno asks Socrates, 'How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet it, how will

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[127]SeeMe«o:71b.

[128]See Peter Geach, 'Plato's *Euthyphro:* An Analysis and Commentary', *Monist* 50, pp. 369-382, reprinted in William Prior (ed.), *Socrates. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers,* Vol. Ill Socratic Method, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 152-162.

[129]whcther Frefers to 'piety', as it is does in *Euthyphro,* 'temperance' as it does in *Charmides,* 'courage', as it does in *Laches,* or 'justice' as it does in Book I *of Republic,* and so forth.

you know that this is the thing that you did not know?'[130] And, in response, Socrates readily admits that this is not the first time a puzzle of this nature has been raised.[131]

In this way, the Socratic fallacy and Meno paradox present two separate but essentially interrelated philosophical puzzles which arise out of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge within Plato's early and transitional dialogues. The Socratic fallacy is supposed to show that, on the basis of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, Socrates is in no position to speak about what virtue can and cannot contribute to the good human life, nor express his opinion on whether there are separate virtues such as courage, piety and temperance. By contrast, the Meno paradox is supposed to show that, on the basis of Socrates' disavaowal of knowledge, the Socrates of these earlier works cannot seek to find out what virtue is either. For if he truly lacks this knowledge, he also lacks the minimum necessary conditions required to enquire into these moral matters, and if he partakes in an elenctic enquiry his search will yield no new or positive results.

Section 3: The significance of these philosophical puzzles and the solutions for them in the contemporary literature

In the light of the our discussion regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Sooratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, it is clear that the task of discerning what kind of knowledge is required for virtue and *eudaimonia* in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods presents a considerable challenge. It is also clear that we cannot fully meet this challenge, nor appreciate the full import of Plato's message in the dialogues of his early and transitional periods, without confronting these apparent tensions within Plato's earlier works. Accordingly, it is essential for us to recognise that we need to address *these* problems in order to fully understand Plato's earlier conception of the relation that exists between virtue and knowledge, and to decide how we can best characterise the kind of knowledge that Plato initially sees as essential for the good human life.

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[130]SeeMwo:80d.

[131] Accordingly, in *Meno,* at 80e, Socrates says to his companion, 'Do you realise what a debater's argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows - since he knows it, there is no need to search - nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for.'

To do this is, I shall examine what I consider to be three i popular and plausible responses to the problems regarding Socrates' disavow /wledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox. Having considered the merits and utility of these solutions, I shall also decide which one of these solutions provides us with the best way to characterise the kind of knowledge that Plato sees as essential for the good and happy human life within the dialogues of his early and transitional periods.

Each of the solutions to these problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox tries to show how Plato's Socrates employs the term 'knowledge' in two different ways. We shall also see that they mean to suggest that this provides the basis for us to distinguish two levels of cognitive achievements. The first of these is said to relate to the kind of knowledge which Socrates both has and claims to have acquired within these early and transitional dialogues. The second of these is said to relate to the very thing which Socrates disavows when he says that he 'does not know' the answers to the moral questions that he raises. And, on this basis, we shall see how these interpretive strategies employ a distinction of this kind in order to try and make sense of the fact that Socrates both says that he *does* and *does not* know the answers to the moral matters that he pursues, together with the fact that Plato continues to uphold Socrates as his paradigmatic example of the virtuous and happy and, therefore, wise, individual, despite Socrates' repeated efforts to show that he lacks moral wisdom.

Part III: Three solutions to these philosophical puzzles

Section 1: Irwin and Santas' solution

One of the most popular and plausible solutions to the problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, is the one that has been presented by Terence Irwin and Gerasimos Santas.[132] Both Irwin and Santas take the view that in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, Plato's discussion is informed by a distinction between a level of cognitive achievement which

[132]See Irwin (1995), pp. 17-29 and Gerasimos Santas, 'The Socratic Fallacy', William Prior (ed.), *Socrates. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers,* Vol. Ill Socratic Method, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 163-179.

gives rise to true beliefs, and a level of cognitive achievement which gives rise to actual knowledge. They acknowledge that Plato does not draw this distinction in any explicit way until he comes to write Me/20,[133] but they infer that a distinction of this nature is implicit within the works of Plato's early period as well. And, from this perspective, both Irwin and Santas suggest that we can make sense of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, and resolve the problems that are associated v th the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, when we appreciate the fact that when the Socrates of these earlier works sets out to investigate the truth about certain moral matters, he does so in possession of true beliefs, rather than actual knowledge.[134]

This distinction between true beliefs and actual knowledge proved to be important in our examination in Chapter 1. As we observed there, the difference between these two levels of cognitive achievement comes down to the depth of understanding that they yield. In this way, whereas actual knowledge gives rise to the kind of understanding that will hold one in good stead in *any* situation, and rests upon the kind of moral insights and motivations that are said to be enjoyed by the genuine philosopher, tine beliefs give rise to the kind of understanding that enables one to work out what to do in a broad albeit essentially *limited* range of circumstances. True beliefs provide an individual with the ability to simply 'get the right results' when making moral decisions and, thus, only *empirical* reliability. Actual knowledge provides one with a true grasp of the non-instrumental good, or intrinsic worth, of the sorts of moral principles or rules that inform one's moral decision-making process and, thus, *counter/actual* reliability.[135] In this way, the virtue that is based on actual knowledge is said to be more useful and valuable in human experience. This is because it enables an individual to see the principles which lie behind virtuous action and, thus, to see the virtues for what they really are. It is also because it gives one the capacity to know what the virtuous action is in any particular situation, regardless of how novel or unusual that situation is.

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[133]SeeM?/w:96c.

[134]Invin also claims that since Aristotle, following Plato, distinguishes knowledge from mere belief, it is reasonable to attribute a similar distinction to Socrates, since Socrates never says that a definition is required for true beliefs, but only for knowledge about the virtues. See Irwin (1995), p. 28.

[135]Hence Irwin's reference to the *empirical,* rather than *counter/actual,* reliability of the true beliefs that the auxiliaries possess in Book IV *of Republic.* For more on this, see ibid., pp. 193 and 232-236; and also Chapter 1,p. 37: n. 87.

However, in approaching the task of making sense of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge and resolving the problems associated with the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, Irwin and Santas suggest that there is a further feature that marks the difference between true beliefs and knowledge. This is referred to as the 'Socratic definition'. According to Irwin and Santas, the Socratic definition plays an important role in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, and is intended to separate those who 'truly believe' from those who 'actually know'. Irwin and Santas believe this is so for the very reason that in Plato's early dialogues, such as *Laches* and *Charmides,* Plato has Socrates point out the need for individuals to be able to provide 'a full account' of the matter under discussion in order to demonstrate actual knowledge,[136] 'v \u nothing less than an actual *definition* could enable them to do this.[137]

Accordingly, Irwin suggests that in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, Socrates claims to possess true beliefs, but rejects the idea that he has actual knowledge of the moral matters that he pursues because he has not yet found the kinds of definitions that would enable him to provide a full account of these matters and, thus, the definitive answers to the questions that he raises. On this basis, Irwin points out that 'if we assume that knowledge of virtue requires a Socratic definition, we can explain both Socrates' own disavowal of knowledge and his view that his interlocutors lack knowledge.'[138] He also contends that, 'this global disavowal of knowledge is quite reasonable in the light of Socrates' view that knowledge requires Socratic definition.'[139] And, as a result, he concludes that we ought to believe that this is exactly the kind of thing that Socrates and his interlocutors are looking for, but fail to find, in Plato's early and transitional dialogues.[140]

To add to this picture, Irwin suggesis that this distinction between a level of understanding which gives rise to true beliefs and a level of understanding which gives rise to knowledge, together with the notion of the Socratic definition, also provides an

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[136]For evidence of this requirement, see *Laches:* 190b-c; and *Charmides:* 159a and 164a.

[137]Irwin also suggests that Socrates regards definitions as important because they identify a kind of 'property' that one can focus on when one judges whether a given action is virtuous and, in this way, they enable us to understand that 'by which' all virtuous actions *are* virtuous. For more discussion on this point, see Irwin (1995), p. 132.

[138]Irwin(1995),p.28.

[139]ibid.

[140]ibid.

answer to the problems that are associated with the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox. In this way, Irwin follows Aristotle's testimony in *Metaphysics* and accepts the view that when Socrates' asks the 'what is F' question, he is searching for a definition of Z^.[141] He also claims that when we accept this point, along with his own suggestion that in Plato's early and transitional dialogues Plato means to suggest that we require actual definitions for knowledge and that Socrates lacks them both, we must think of Socrates' elenctic enquires as an attempt to secure the kind of Socratic definitions that will enable Socrates to transform his initial true beliefs into actual knowledge. In this sense, we must regard Socrates' true beliefs as the very things which provide Socrates with a *starting point* for the elenctic enquires that he conducts, and, thus, make his search for moral truth both possible and purposeful. Without these, Irwin admits, Socrates would be totally ignorant of what it is that he is looking for when he asks a question such as 'what is piety?' or 'what is temperance?' and employs his elenctic method to seek the answers to these questions. And yet even with them, he contends, Socrates has every reason to pursue his moral investigations because he has not yet acquired the level or depth of understanding that gives rise to actual knowledge of such matters.[142]

Santas also acknowledges the need for Socrates to possess true beliefs, or something akin to this level of understanding, in order to get the elenchus up and running. Accordingly, he suggests that if Socrates and his interlocutors, were 'totally ignorant' of the matters that they raise, and could not even point out an example of the kind of virtue that they mean to define, their elenctic enquires would lead to 'a completely dead end.'[143] For, as he rightly points out, no one in this position could even get their discussion started, and even if that were possible they would be left with no means to test the findings of their elenctic search. From this perspective, Santas observes the significance of the many episodes in Plato's early and transitional dialogues which demonstrate the ability of Socrates and his interlocutors to cite examples of the kind of virtuous behaviour that they seek to define, and to 'judge' and 'believe' certain things about them, despite Socrates' claims not to 'know' the truth

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[141] See *Metaphysics:* 1078b23-30; and Irwin (1995), pp. 25-28. Cf. Terry Penner's position in Terry Penner, 'Socrates and the early dialogues', Richard Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 141-146.

[142] Thus, he suggests that, 'to resolve Meno's Paradox, Socrates needs to say that inquiry requires initial belief, not knowledge, about the object of inquiry.[1] See Irwin (1995), p. 132.

about the matters under discussion.[144] And, on this basis, he supports Irwin's move to solve the problems regarding the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox by attributing the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues with the level of cognitive achievement which gives rise to true beliefs, rather than acknowledge knowledge, and inferring that within these dialogues Plato means to suggest that a Socratic definition is only required for knowledge.

If we follow the approach that Irwin and Santas adopt in their efforts to solve the problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, we must conclude that the cognitive state that Socrates is shown to possess within these early and transitional Platonic dialogues is best described as a form of 'true belief. We may also observe that if this solution proves to be the most useful one, and the one which remains closest to the spirit of Plato's earlier dialogues, we must conclude that in these earlier works Socrates appears to be searching for a definition that will enable him to turn his true beliefs about piety, temperance, and the like, into actual knowledge of such virtues, but remains nonetheless confident about the potential for true beliefs to provide himself and others with sufficient means to live genuinely well and happily.

Section 2: Vlastos' solution

In contrast with Irwin and Santas, Gregory Vlastos suggests that in order to make sense of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge and to solve the problems of the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, we must recognise that in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, Socrates has in mind two different kinds of actual *knowledge.* Accordingly, Vlastos suggests that Socrates uses the term 'knowledge' to refer to both the kind of knowledge which is 'certain' and 'infallible' and the kind of knowledge which he regards as 'radically weaker', in so far as it has been produced and tested by the elenchus, but remains only 'elenctically justifiable'.[145] The first of these

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[143]See Santas (1996), pp. 176-177.
[144]See ibid., p. 177. There, Santas cites *Laches* and *Meno* as two such examples.
[145]See Myles Burnyeat (ed.), *Gregory Vlastos. Socratic Studies,* Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1994, pp. 49-56. In an earlier paper, Vlastos refers to the first kind of knowledge as the sort that implies that when an individual claims 'to know', he or she has 'the conviction that any further investigation would be superfluous.' See Gregory Vlastos, 'Introduction: The Paradox of Socrates', in

kinds of knowledge is referred to by him as 'knowledge C, to denote the kind of certainty or indubitability that goes along with it. The second of these kinds of knowledge is referred to by him as 'knowledge E', to mark the fact that this kind of knowledge can only be developed and defended through Socrates' elenctic method.

Vlastos suggests that when Socrates claims to 'know' the answers to the questions that he raises in Plato's earlier works, he is referring to knowledge E. By contrast, he insists that when Socrates disavows knowledge of these moral matters, he may be referring to some particular bit of knowledge E, or knowledge C in general. This means that when Socrates thinks he has not yet developed even elenctically justifiable views on the matter that is at hand, he will disavow knowledge E. It also means that when Socrates thinks he has developed an elenctically justifiable view on a particular moral matter he will claim to have knowledge E, but continue to distinguish this from knowledge C and deny that he has either possession of, or access to, the latter for the very reason that it lies beyond the scope of the elenchus, and the elenchus is the only method that Socrates employs to develop moral knowledge.[M6] Thus, Vlastos presents his hypothesis in the following way: 'in the domain of morals - the one to which all of his inquiries are confined - when he [Socrates] says he knows something he is referring to knowledge E; when he says he is not aware of knowing anything - absolutely anything, "great or small"... - he refers to knowledge C, and, finally, 'when he says he has no knowledge of a particular topic he may mean eithsr that in this case, as in all others, he has no knowledge C and does not look for any or that what he lacks on that topic is knowledge E, which, with good luck, he might still reach by further searching.'[147]

From this perspective, Ylastos claims that his distinction between knowledge E and knowledge C provides us with a strategy to resolve the problems that are associated with Socrates' disavowal of knowledge and the Socratic fallacy. Accordingly, he

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Gregory Vlastos (ed.), *The Philosophy of Socrates. A Collection of Critical Essays,* Anchor Books Doubleday and Co., Garden City, New York, 1971, p. 10.

[146]In this way, Vlastos also points out that, 'Socrates could not have expected his knowledge E to meet the fantastically strong standards of knowledge C due to the fact that, when it comes to the results of an elenctic search, nothing is ever 'known through itself but only 'through other things'. Moreover, he points out that, in so far as the moral convictions that are produced *by* the elenchus can only ever be justified *through* the elenchus itself, there will be a 'security gap' which lies forever between any one of Socrates' moral beliefs and the reasons that support it. For more on this, see Burnyeat (ed.) (1994), p. 56.

[147]See ibid., p. 58.

suggests that this distinction allows Socrates to say that he does not 'know' the answers to the moral matters that he discusses with any *certainty,* and that in some cases he cannot even say that he has worked out any defensible moral views, whilst it gives him the scope to claim that he *has* worked out defensible moral views in relation to other moral issues, and that this level of moral understanding amounts to 'knowledge' in the 'radically weaker sense'. In the light of this, Vlastos points out that, 'Socrates will not be contradicting himself by saying, or implying, that he both has and hasn't knowledge, for he will not be saying, or implying, that he does and doesn't have knowledge E or that he does or doesn't have knowledge C, but only that he does have knowledge E[148] and does not have knowledge C.'[149] He also suggests that this distinction between knowledge E and knowledge C enables us to see how Socrates can satisfy the minimum necessary conditions for his elencdc inquiries in so far as Plato's earlier works show that Socrates' initial moral convictions are sufficient means for him to get on the path that leads to elenctically justifiable moral knowledge.[150]

On this basis, Vlastos also points out that there is no reason for us to accept the claim that once Socrates has acquired knowledge, his elenctic enquires will no longer serve any useful or meaningful purpose. For, if we agree that the kind of knowledge that Socrates has access to is based on the elenchus, and that the elenchus will not produce knowledge C, nor any 'little hard rocks of certainty',[151] we must also agree that each and every one of the moral convictions that Socrates has will remain open to further eienctic testing. In this way, Socrates will have every reason to continue to search for truth and to test his moral convictions out over and over again in different ways and

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[148] at least in some cases.
[149] See Burnyeat (ed.) (1994), p. 60.
[150] To avoid the misunderstanding that Socrates' elenctic inquiries actually *require* knowledge E - a thesis that would not succeed in overcoming the problem regarding the 'Socratic fallacy', but only push it back a step - Vlastos introduces a distinction between what he takes to be 'presumptive elenctic knowledge' and what he classifies as 'non-presumptive moral knowledge'. In relation to the former, Vlastos has in mind 'untested moral convictions', that is to say, the very ideas that Socrates and his interlocutors *bring to* their discussions and make such discussions, or elenctic pursuits, possible. Vlastos claims that once they have been tested, they will be transformed into the kind of 'non-presumptive elenctic knowledge' that amounts to knowledge E. He also explains that, in this way, 'general propositions like 'virtue is good', 'virtuous action is fine *{kalon)* 'temperance is a virtue', or examples of virtuous action which are regarded as utterly uncontvoversial like 'doing good to one's friends is good and fine' - these form the staple of what the vasl "majority of his fellows take as moral knowledge.' They are accepted by Socrates, not as 'little hard rocks of certainty', but as the kind of'presumptive elenctic knowledge' that can be turned into 'non-presumptive elenctic knowledge' once they have been put to the test by the elenchus. See Additional Notes: 3.1, in Burnyeat (ed.) (1994), p. 138.
[151] See ibid.

with different interlocutors. And, in this sense, we may also observe that if we are to accept Vlastos' distinction, together with his particular solution to the problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, we must think of the kind of knowledge that is required for genuine virtue and happiness within Plato's early and transitional dialogues as one which is acquired by a process of learning that is essentially *on-going* and one which stands in need of being constantly tested or revised in the light of new experiences and ideas.

Section 3: Nehamas, Mahoney and Woodruffs solution

In response to Vlastos' solution to these problems, Alexander Nehamas presents one of his own. This solution is also supported by Timothy Mahoney and Paul Woodruff. Together, Nehamas, Mahoney and Woodruff claim that what Plato has to say in these early dialogues regarding the status of his own knowledge or ignorance regarding moral matters is best explained by an *unstated* albeit *implicit* distinction between 'expert moral knowledge' and 'non-expert moral knowledge'.

Accordingly, Nehamas suggests that in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, Plato's Socrates is convinced that in so far as he lacks the ability to explain exactly *why* the truths that the elenchus yie'ds are in fact truths, and *why* the examples of virtue that he and his interlocutors are able to cite do actually refer to genuine cases of virtue, he lacks the ability to 'transmit'[152] his own moral understanding to other individuals. It is this ability to 'transmit' one's own moral understanding by way of a full explanation or account of the subject matter under discussion that Nehamas thinks Socrates sees as the hallmark of'technical' or 'expert' knowledge. And it is this type of knowledge that Nehamas takes Socrates to be referring to when he claims that he 'does not know' the answers to the moral questions that he raises.[153] In this way, Nehamas suggests that Socrates is quite willing to claim for himself what we

[152]See Nehamas (1999), p. 69. This idea seems to conform with Socrates' remarks in *Apology,* at 33a-b, where he insists that he has never been anyone's teacher, nor managed to teach anyone anything about virtue. It also reflects on the concern Socrates shows in *Protagoras,* at 319e-320b, where he suggests that 'the wisest and best of our citizens are unable to transmit to others the virtues that they possess' and his remark in *Meno,* at 100a, where he claims that if there were such a good and virtuous statesman who could create another like himself, that man would be 'a solid reality among shadows.' Incidentally, this ability to 'transmit' one's own moral understanding to another is exactly the sort of thing that Hippias claims to be able to do in *Hippias Major,* at 284a.
[153]See Nehamas (1999), p. 69.

might regard as 'common, non-technical, or non-expert knowledge of virtue.'[154] He also provides us with a way of understanding why Plato's early Socrates would claim not to *teach* any of the people that he encounters about the matters that he discusses, as the Sophists themselves purported to do.

Nehamas explains that the contrast between expert moral knowledge and non-expert moral knowledge is not so much between a kind of knowledge that is 'dialectical' and a kind of knowledge that is 'certain' or 'apodeictic', as it is between the kind of knowledge that is 'dialectic'[155] and the kind of knowledge that is analogous to a 'craft' (or *technē*).[156] He also points out that whereas non-expert moral knowledge entails 'pure persuasion by means of argument', expert moral knowledge entails 'an authority that can justify itself by its tried and true accomplishments.'[157]

Timothy Mahoney also supports the view that in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, Plato's Socrates means to disavow the kind of knowledge which involves 'expertise' and the ability to provide 'an overall explanation of the subject matter which avoids major puzzles and paradoxes.'[158] He explains the difference between this kind of expert moral knowledge that Socrates disavows, and the kind of non-expert moral knowledge that he claims to have, as one which relates to 'the possession of expert knowledge of a particular discipline or craft' on the one hand, and

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[154] ibid.

[155] in so far as it entails the art of arguing and testing truth by discussion.

[156] Julia Annas also appears to support this suggestion that the kind of knowledge Socrates is concerned with involves progressing towards a greater level *of understanding,* rather than *certainty.* See Julia Annas', *An Introduction to Plato's Republic,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1981, pp. 190-216. Paul Woodruff has pointed out that Plato may actually be working with two different conceptions of *technē* in these earlier works. The first kind relates to the kind of knowledge or expertise that artisans and professionals may possess in relation to their specific trades or crafts. In *Apology,* at 22d, Socrates suggests that this kind *of technē* is not worth having at any cost. The second kind relates to the form of expert moral knowledge that Socrates thinks an individual would need to possess in order to be able to provide a *logos* of the virtue in question and, therefore, 'transmit' one's moral understanding from oneself to another. And this kind is said to be beyond the scope of Socrates' primary interests and philosophical ambitions. For more discussion on this issue, see Paul Woodruff, 'Expert Knowledge in the Apology and Laches: What a General Needs to Know', William Prior (ed.), *Socrates. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers,* Vol. I The Socratic Problem of Ignorance, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 283. On the issue of the virtue/craft analogy, it is also noteworthy that Plato's Socrates emphasises the need for one to be able to show 'the products' of one's moral teachings in order to demonstrate one's own moral expertise in a number of Plato's early and transitional dialogues. For evidence of this, see *Laches:* 185e-l86aff; *Charmides:* 173dff; *Meno:* 94d-e; *Gorgias:* 514b, 515d-e and 521a; *Euthydemtis:* 289a; and *Gorgias:* 511c-513c.

[157] See Nehamas (1999), p. 69.

[158] See Timothy Mahoney, 'The *Charmides:* Socratic *Sophrosunē,* Human *Sophrosunē*\ *The Southern Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. XXXIV, 1996, p. 192.

'knowledge of a number of individual propositions' supported by 'the ability to defend these propositions when they are attacked' on the other.[159] And, on this basis, he also points out that just as one may know certain isolated propositions of physics, such as the notion that 'gravitational attraction varies proportionately with mass', and yet fall short of having the expert knowledge that characterises *a physicist,* we may possess the ability to cite many examples of virtuous behaviour (and even particular truths about the virtues themselves) but still fall short of being moral experts in so far as we do not have the ability to state all there is to know about the virtues.[160]

By way of a similar analysis, Paul Woodruff also concludes that in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, Plato's Socrates has in mind the kind of knowledge that one can acquire *before* one develops the ability to give a definition or full account (or *logos)* of the virtue in question. He also agrees that Socrates recognises that this is not the sort 01' moral knowledge that 'marks an expert.'[161] Accordingly, Woodruff supports Nehamas' and Mahoney's suggestion that although Plato will go on to use 'knowledge' in the sense of 'expert knowledge' in the dialogues of his middle period, such as *Republic,* in these dialogues of his early and transitional periods Plato is clearly intent on showing that both Socrates' elenctic method, and the kind of virtuous and happy life that Socrates enjoys, 'can be based on a sort of knowledge people ordinarily have.'[162] And, in this way, their solution to the problems that are associated with Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox invokes a distinction between two levels of understanding which suggests that although Plato's Socrates is aware that there exists a kind of moral wisdom which surpasses his own, he is also mindful of the fact that neither he nor anyone else needs it in order to do well and live a genuinely virtuous and happy life.[163]

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[159]See ibid., pp. 185 an^ 192.
[160]ibid.,p. 185.
[161]See Woodruff (1996), p. 282.
[162]See ibid., pp. 289 and 296. On this point, Vlastos also notes that what Plato's Socrates has to say in the dialogues of Plato's middle period is '...about as far as it could be from anything we could associate with the Socrates of the elenctic dialogues.' For more on this, see Burnyeat (ed.) (1994), p. 79.
[163]Incidentally, Woodruff explains that Socrates may still have good reasons to look for a moral expert. For, in doing so, he will be able to show what it *would* be to be an expert; to learn that *we* are not experts in a way which encourages us to develop the kind of modesty or humility that lies at the core of human virtue; and to learn that *there are no moral experts* in a way which puts the burden of moral responsibility and understanding back on to the shoulders of each individual. For more discussion on this point, see Woodruff(1996),p.29.

Section 4: Summary

Before we proceed with an examination of the merits and utility of these solutions, let us take a moment to sum up the main differences between them and the kinds of distinctions that they employ.

In relation to the first of these approaches, we saw how Terence Irwin and Gerasimos Santas invoke the distinction between true beliefs and knowledge. They argue that when Socrates sets out to investigate the truth of moral matters, he already possesses true beliefs and aims to turn them into actual knowledge by acquiring a kind of Socratic definition. They also suggest that actual knowledge is valued for the *counter/actual,* rather than *empirical,* reliability with which it provides an individual when he or she attempts to work out what to do in a particular moral situation.

In relation to the second of these approaches, we saw how Gregory Vlastos invokes the distinction between knowledge E and knowledge C. He argues that when Socrates pursues his elenctic enquires he does so with certain untested moral convictions that he is able to test out via the elenchus in order to develop elenctically justifiable moral views, or knowledge E. He also claims that although Socrates is aware of the difference between this kind of knowledge and the kind of knowledge which is best described as knowledge C, he is neither able nor eager to acquire knowledge C. On the contrary, he sets out to develop and improve his own level of knowledge E in the belief that this kind of wisdom is sufficient for *eudaimonia,* but always open to further elenctic lasting and, thus, in need of constant exposure and revision.

And, finally, in relation to the third of these approaches, we saw how Alexander Nehamas, along with Timothy Mahoney and Paul Woodruff, invokes the distinction between non-expert moral knowledge and expert moral knowledge. They argue that when Socrates raises the 'what is F?' question he is able to use the ideas that he has about *F* to generate non-expert moral wisdom about such matters via the elenchus. They also point out that although Socrates may speak about a kind of expert moral wisdom that would enable him to provide a full account of any particular virtue and, thus, transmit what he knows about that virtue to another individual, Socrates is confident that his level of non-expert moral wisdom is sufficient for him to live a genuinely

virtuous and happy life. Accordingly, they believe that once Socrates has acquired this kind of nonexpert moral knowledge, he seeks to do no more than modify or improve it.

Part IV: An evaluation of these solutions

Section 1: Problems with Irwin and Santas' solution

Having examined what I consider to be three of the most popular and plausible solutions to the problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, we must now evaluate the merits and utility of these solutions.

When we turn to the approach that is taken by Irwin and Santas we can see that one of the problems they face in defending their solution relates to the fact that Plato does not explicitly use the distinction between true beliefs and knowledge anywhere in the dialogues of his early period. In this way, Socrates' disavowal of knowledge in dialogues such as *Laches* and *Charmides* cannot be explained unless we presume that a distinction which only appears for the first time in the dialogues of Plato's transitional period, such as *Meno* and *Gorgias,* was actually at work within this earlier stage of Plato's writing and philosophical development. Irwin and Santas may be able to defend their solution in the light of this objection by stating that this presumption is in fact valid, and that they have good reason to draw an inference of this kind.[164] However, on a developmental reading of Plato's works it is likely that Irwin and Santas' solution will prove to be too anachronistic in so far as it seeks to invoke a distinction in Plato's early or Socratic dialogues that is meant to signify the post-Socratic period of Plato's writings in which Plato is really concerned with quite different metaphysical and epistemological distinctions. And if this is true, it would appear that we ought to recognise the distinction between true beliefs and knowledge as something that can *not* be inferred from Plato's early dialogues.

A second, and more serious, problem that Irwin and Santas face in defending their solution is that certain passages within the dialogues of Plato's early and

[164]Indeed, Irwin rightly points out that this may not be a sufficient reason for rejecting this distinction, for even if it is not explicitly drawn in the early dialogues Plato may still be consistently observing this distinction in practice. Alexander Nehamas also makes a similar observation. See Irwin (1977), p. 294;

transitional periods suggest that only actual knowledge will be sufficient to generate defensible moral views. This is evident in the light of Socrates remarks in *Apology* and in *GGrgias,* where Plato has Socrates insist that if he did not have 'knowledge' his condition would be 'most base.'[165] As Vlastos rightly points out, these remarks give us no indication that true beliefs could remove one from a condition of actual moral ignorance. On the contrary, they indicate that the very idea that Socrates claims not to have *knowledge* - that is to say knowledge of *any kind*^ and is thus content to claim *no more* than true beliefs, goes against the passages in Plato's early and transitional dialogues where Socrates makes it clear that he *has* acquired actual moral knowledge, and that nothing less than this could justify his confidence in his own moral convictions.[166] In this way, Vlastos may also be right to say that those who support the thesis that Plato initially regards true beliefs as sufficient for genuine virtue and happiness, 'seem content to ignore evidence that tells flatly against their claim that Socrates avows no more than true beliefs.'[167]

A third objection that awaits Irwin and Santas relates to the fact that the distinction they invoke does not help them to explain why Plato's Socrates should have so much confidence in his own moral beliefs. Irwin claims that Socrates' true beliefs need not 'waver', nor detract from the 'stability' or 'integrity' of his own moral convictions.[168] But it is difficult to see how he can defend this claim in the light of his own critique of the plight of the auxiliaries in Book IV of *Republic.* For,-as we discovered in our examination in Chapter I,[169] Irwin makes the important observation that non-philosophers, such as these auxiliaries, will not have the kind of wisdom that is required for genuine virtue and happiness because they only possess true beliefs, and true beliefs do not provide them counterfactual reliability, nor a sufficient level of moral insight and motivation. And if this is correct, and true beliefs prove *not* to be adequate for these individuals to live genuinely virtuous and happy lives, then there seems to be no reason why they should be sufficient for Socrates to do so either.[170]

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n. 4; and Nehamas (1999), p. 52: n. 17.

[165]See *Apology:* 20d; and *Gorgias:* 472c-d.

[166]See Bumyeat (ed.) (1994), p. 73.

[167]ibid.

[168]See Irwin (1995), p. 141.

[169]See Chapter 1, Part III: Section 8: pp. 35-37 and n. 87.

[170]To get around this problem, Irwin could try to introduce yet another cognitive distinction. He could distinguish between the kind of true beliefs that he *does* regard as sufficient for genuine virtue and

And finally, we can also see that in light of Socrates' remarks in *Apology,* a fourth objection awaits Irwin and Santas' solution to the problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox. For, there, Plato has Socrates provide us with a rare glimpse of the kind of virtue and wisdom that he initially takes to be open and available to human beings, and he does so in a way that undermines their suggestion as to what Plato's Socrates could be striving for. Accordingly, in *Apology,* Socr»*e° admits that the cause of his reputation as 'the wisest man among mortals' is in fact 'none other than a certain kind, of wisdom.'[171] And in speaking about this kind of wisdom he tells his ?rdience that he believes it amounts to a kind of 'human wisdom.'[172] This he contrasts with what needs to be recognised as a level of moral understanding that amounts to 'more than human wisdom' and entails expertise in 'human and social virtue [or excellence]'.[173]

In speaking about this kind of more than human wisdom, Socrates insists that, '...certainly I would pride and preen myself if I had this knowledge, but I do not have it.'[174] But, more importantly, he also suggests that in so far as we are *human,* we ought not to set our sights on this kind of moral knowledge which lies forever beyond our mortal grasp. On the contrary, he implies that we should adopt more *modest* philosophical ambitions, and encourage individuals to strive for a level of virtue and wisdom that amounts to something less than this and is more appropriate for beings of our kind. And in this way, Socrates remarks in *Apology* seem to undermine Irwin and Santas' account of the kinds of knowledge that Socrates is both aware of and intent on acquiring. For in crediting Socrates with true beliefs, and presuming that he means to strive for actual knowledge, they leave Socrates with nothing left to mark off as being essentially off limits and, thus, *beyond* the scope of the e'.enchus.

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happiness, and those which he does *not,* or even give up the idea that what Plato's Socrates is shown to have in these earlier works actually amounts to 'virtue', as opposed to the mere 'goodness of an ordinary citizen' or 'civic' or 'demotic' virtue. However, given that there appears to be no real foundation to distinguish between these two kinds of true beliefs, and the fact that Irwin seems to accept Plato's account of Socrates as one who *is* genuinely virtuous and happy, these options may fall short of what Irwin requires to meet this objection.

[171] See/fpo/og}':20»e.

[172] ibid.

[173] ibid.

[174] ibid.

Section 2: Problems with Vlastos' solution

When we turn to the approach that is taken by Gregory Vlastos, we can see that one of the main problems he will face in defending his solution to the problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, relates to the first objection outlined in relation to Irwin and Santas' solution. For just as Irwin and Santas rely on a distinction that is never made explicit anywhere in Plato's early dialogues, so too does Vlastos invoke a distinction that is never articulated in any one of Plato's early works.

To add to this picture, Alexander Nehamas points out a more serious objection. He suggests that we ought to challenge the very idea that such a conceptual awareness of the difference between a kind of knowledge which is certain and infallible, as opposed to the kind which is merely dialectical or elenctic, dates back to the time when Plato firsi wrote the dialogues of his early period. In this way, Nehamas explains that there is little evidence to suggest that Vlastos' contrast between knowledge E and kinvvviedgc C was even 'articulated sufficiently', let alone 'disseminated widely enough', at the time when Socrates engaged in his elenctic pursuits and Plato began writing about them.[175] He also explains that, if this is true, then we must concede that at this stage in ancient Greek philosophy there could not have been any 'sensible term of contrast' of this kind and, therefore, Vlastos' distinction between knowledge E and knowledge C captures the wrong sort of contrast.[176]

In order to respond to this objection, Vlastos could try to appeal to the distinction that Socrates invokes in *Apology* regarding the kind of human wisdom that Socrates refers to as the cause of his reputation for being wise and virtuous and the kind of more than human wisdom that he says lies forever beyond our mortal grasp.[177]

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[175]See Nehamas (1999), p. 67.

[176]Seeibid.,pp. 67 and 69.

[177]Indeed, this is exactly what Vlastos attempts to do. Accordingly, Vlastos suggests that, 'when he [Socrates] considers the abyss that yawns between knowledge C and knowledge E...he broods on it in the spirit of traditional piety which counsels mortal J to "think mortal" - to keep within the limits of the human condition.' To add to this, when Vlastos considers the notion of knowledge C he also writes: 'this, if anything, is what Socrates would have called "more than human knowledge" *(Apol.* 20d6-e2) in the elenctic dialogues. If it had crossed his mind at all he would have left it for the gods and for those of his fellow-mortals whose folly, venal or sublime, beguiles them into violating the pious precept that "mortals must think mortal".' For more on this, see Burnyeat (ed.) (1994), pp. 63 and 79.

However, in attempting to establish this connection, and, thus, the link between knowledge C and what Socrates refers to as more than human wisdom, he must also face this challenge of explaining what evidence there is to suggest that Socrates could have understood the kind of knowledge that he believes lies *beyond* the scope of the elenchus in terms of certainty and infallibility. To make matters even more complex, Vlastos would also need to reconcile this response with his own account of Socrates' use of complex irony in Plato's early dialogues. This account of complex irony suggests that; in all cases, Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is supposed to entail a kind of half truth or, more precisely, a kind of protreptic element that is designed to encourage listeners to work out what lies behind his evasive kinds of remarks. It also suggests that, in this way, Socrates both does and does not mean what he says when he insists that he does not know the answers to the moral questions that he raises. And yet, as we have seen, Vlastos cannot allow for Plato's Socrates to say such things in relation to knowledge C. For, after all, knowledge C is supposed to be the very thing that Socrates takes to be beyond the scope of human capabilities.[178]

Section 3: The advantages of Nehamas, Mahoney and Woodruffs solution

When we consider the approach that Alexander Nehamas takes to the task of making sense of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge and resolving the prolems of the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox, we can see how his solution may avoid many of the problems that are associated with the approach taken by Irwin and Santas and the one that is supported by Vlastos.

Accordingly, Nehamas' solution does not face the problem of justifying the use of any conceptual distinctions that are not apparent in Plato's early and transitional dialogues. On the contrary, Nehamas, together with Timothy Mahoney and Paul Woodruff, invokes the only kind of distinction that remains close to the spirit of Plato's earlier dialogues, and accords with the specific passages in *Apology* where Socrates speaks of the kinds of virtue and wisdom that are available to human beings. Moreover, the solution that Nehamas provides does not go against the passages in Plato's early and transitional dialogues that makes it clear that Socrates has acquired some form of actual

[178]For more on this, see Vlastos (1991), pp. 21-44, especially pp. 29-33; and Nehamas (1999), pp. 100-102.

knowledge and believes that nothing less than this could justify his confidence in his own moral convictions. And, most importantly, this solution does not fail to explain how Socrates can distinguish between the kind of human wisdom that he believes human beings *can* and *ought* to strive for, and the kind of more than human wisdom that he believes we must acknowledge and respect, but ultimately turn our attention away from. For with this solution we may surmise that Socrates means to employ his elenctic method not as a means to progress from non-expert moral knowledge *to* expert moral knowledge, but to enable himself and others to cultivate non-expert moral knowledge in the first place, and to continue to develop and improve this in the light of new experiences and ideas.[179] And, in this way, we may also observe that this solution enables us to remain sensitive to the evidently pious nature of Socrates' philosophical ambitions in Plato's earlier works.[180] This is not Euthyphro's empty piety, but rather that form of service to the gods in which we make ourselves better - the only form of service that Socrates thinks it makes sense for us to offer to the gods.[181]

For these reasons, we must conclude that this third approach to the problems that are associated with Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic fallacy and the Meno paradox provides the most useful solution to these problems. We must also regard this approach as the one which provides us with the best way to characterise the kind of knowledge that Socrates appears to possess in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods. Accordingly, we may conclude that the kind of knowledge that Plato initially sees as essential for the good human life is best described as i kind of non-expert moral knowledge.

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[179]In this way, Paul Woodruff suggests that Socrates reaches 'towards the ideal knowledge he wishes he could find; and failing that towards a human knowledge that amounts to modesty - to knowing the insignificance of our many human skills and talents...' See Woodruff (1996), p. 284; and Nehamas (1999), pp. 67-69.
[180]In the light of this, we can also see that this approach to the problems regarding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge and the Socratic fallacy manages to take the best elements of Vlastos' own solution by accommodating his two central concerns.
[181]For more on this point, see Socrates' discussion in *Euthydemus,* at 13d.

Part V: Non-expert moral knowledge

Section 1: The link between Socrates' account of non-expert moral knowledge and Plato's early perspective on the availability of happiness

On the basis of our discussion in Part IV, we have good reason to settle on a particular interpretation of Plato's early and transitional dialogues. According to this interpretation, a distinction between two kinds of knowledge underpins Socrates' discussion in these earlier works. These kinds of knowledge are best described as expert moral knowledge and non-expert moral knowledge. To add to this, we may observe that within these works, both of these kinds of knowledge are deemed to be sufficient for genuine virtue. However, according to Plato's leading spokesperson, only one of them will prove to be useful for us, as expert moral knowledge is said to lie beyond the scope of human capabilities. In this way, Plato's early and transitional dialogues encourage us to focus our efforts on cultivating non-expert moral knowledge.

At this stage of our examination, it is also clear that this kind of moral knowledge is different from the kind of knowledge that Plato encourages individuals to strive for in the dialogues of his middle period. Indeed, we have good reason to believe that, in the dialogues of his middle period, Plato comes to regard the sort of expert moral knowledge that is referred to in these earlier works as necessary for genuine virtue. However, we are still left with the question of what Plato sees as necessary to acquire this kind of non-expert moral knowledge within the dialogues of his early and transitional periods. In the next chapter, we shall explore this question in more detail. For now, however, I would like to conclude our present discussion with a few important observations about the nature of this kind of non-expert moral knowledge that Plato initially sees as sufficient for genuine virtue and happiness. In considering these observations, we may also begin to reflect on what this kind of knowledge tells us about the perspective from which Plato first considers the questions of what it takes for a human being to flourish, and who ought reasonably expect to succeed in such endeavours.

Section 2: Some key observations regarding Socrates' account of non-expert moral knowledge

The first observation I would like to make is that this kind of non-expert moral knowledge amounts to something more than the ability to simply state certain facts about the virtues. In this respect, it also goes beyond the mere ability to cite particular examples of courage, or justice, or temperance. For in the early and transitional dialogues Socrates makes it clear that in order to live genuinely well and happily, individuals must also know the virtues 'in the right way'.[182] What this means is that individuals must be able to defend their our own accounts, or understanding, of the virtues when they are called upon to do so. More importantly, however, it also means that individuals must be able to show that a genuine kind of harmony, or consistency, exists between their moral beliefs and actions. To do this, one must be able to apply one's moral principles in practice, and ensure that what one has to say about the virtues actually reflects upon the way that one lives one's life and engages in the lives of others. Nothing less than this will do to demonstrate that one does possess the kind non-expert moral knowledge that Plato initially sees as essential for genuine virtue and happiness.

The second observation that I would like to make is that this type of moral knowledge is not just 'propositional knowledge'.[183] In this sense, we are required to do more than simply state a number of truths regarding the virtues in order to demonstrate that we have the right sort of moral knowledge for virtue and happiness. Indeed, to show that we actually possess a sufficient level of moral understanding, we must be able to provide some explanation as to *how* those propositions might fit together, and inform the process by which we make our own moral decisions. This also means that we must work through the propositional content of this kind of non-expert moral knowledge for ourselves, so as to come up with our own understanding of what the moral virtues mean for us and the ways in which they ought to direct us to act in certain ways rather than others.

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182 For more discussion on this aspect of Plato's early moral philosophy, see Irwin (1995), p. 24. There, Irwin refers to the importance of both the 'metaphysical' and 'epistemological' requirements in Plato's early conception of virtue, wisdom and happiness. See also Nehamas (1999), p. 36.

Accordingly, Plato uses the characters in his early and transitional dialogues to show us that there is a certain connection between how one *interacts* with the world and how one *acquires* the knowledge that is required for virtue and *eudaimonia.* Just as the former requires a certain level of autonomy, so too does the latter involve something above and beyond the mere ability to simply follow moral rules or cite certain moral truths.[184] Thus, in *Laches* Plato shows us that it is not enough for someone like Nicias to simply state what he regards as *Socrates'* own definition of courage in order to show that he himself has 'knowledge' of the virtue of courage.[185] Again in *Charmides,* Plato shows us that it is not enough for someone like Charmides to simply adopt someone else's definition, without thinking it through for himself in order to show that he has an adequate understanding of the virtue of temperance.[186] And, in doing this, he also shows us that in order to develop the kind of non-expert moral knowledge that is required for genuine virtue and happiness, we must think through the ideas that he presents in these earlier works and seek to internalise them to the point where we have made these ideas *our own.*

A third observation that needs to be made about the essential features of this kind of non-expert moral knowledge relates to the fact that it places an emphasis on developing a greater level of *understanding,* rather than certainty or infallibility. In this respect, individuals must be prepared to allow their moral understanding to grow and evolve, but they must also be prepared to act on their moral beliefs without the sense of having a complete or absolute understanding of what it is that the moral virtues require them to do. This is a consequence of the fact that the moral truths that Plato's early Socrates produces by way of the elenchus must be regarded as being always and essentially open to refutation. Here the notion of refutation refers to the on-going

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[183]In this sense, the knowledge that Socrates seeks to develop and improve upon within these dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods places more of an emphasis on 'knowing how' than it does on simply 'knowing that'.

[154] And in this sense, we can see that there may be more to Plato's earlier conception of the kind of moral understanding that is required for genuine virtue and wisdom than we see in *Meno,* where Plato has Socrates emphasise the importance of one's ability to simply 'get the right results'.

[185]See *Laches:* 194d-e and 196c. There, Socrates tells Nicias, 'I think I understand him, and the man seems to me to be saying that courage is some kind of wisdom...', but 'let us see if Nicias thinks he is saying something and not just talking for the sake of talking. Let us find out from him more clearly what it is he means, and if he is really saying something, we will agree with him, but if not, we will instruct him.'

[186]See *Charmides:* 162c-e. In this way, we are shown how Charmides' confidence quickly evaporates when Socrates starts to ask him a few questions about what it is that he means by the claim that temperance amounts to one simply 'minding one's own business'.

process by which we are encouraged to fit more and more of the pieces of our moral understanding together, and to allow our moral convictions to transform and evolve as our moral understanding grows.[187] It also refers to the process by which we must strive to engage our fellow human beings in the search for moral wisdom, and to expect to find the answers to the questions that Socrates raises within ourselves rather than in the minds of those who proclaim themselves moral experts.

And the fourth and final observation that I would like to make is that when we think about what kind of understanding of virtue and morality this sort of non-expert moral knowledge entails, we must remember that it relates to an understanding of such things that is essentially limited or finite. For, as we have seen, Socrates' remarks in *Apology* clearly indicate that in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods, Socrates is intent on acknowledging and respecting what he regards as the realm of more than human wisdom which lies forever beyond the human horizon, and he distinguishes this from the kind of human wisdom that he believes we *can* and *ought* to strive for. In this way, he encourages us to acknowledge and respect the fact that the kind of moral wisdom that is available to human beings is 'worth little or nothing'[188] in relation to the sort of understanding that the gods themselves must enjoy. And he also reminds us that, as a result of this, we must adopt more *modest* philosophical ambitions, and encourage each other to strive for the level of virtue and wisdom that is open and available to ordinary human beings.

Accordingly, we must observe that unlike the main character of Plato's middle dialogues who is intent on extending or transcending the mortal boundaries of knowledge, the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues is clearly content with the project of discovering or marking out the limits of human understanding and working *within* those constraints.

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[187]In this sense, we must also recognise that something that has been refuted will not necessarily be proven *wrong*. On the contrary, it may be shown to be simply incomplete or in need of some alteration or revision.

[188]See/4/;o/ogy: 23a-b.

CHAPTER THREE

PLATO'S OUTLOOK ON THE REQUIREMENTS FOR VIRTUE AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE DIALOGUES OF HIS EARLY AND TRANSITIONAL PERIODS

Part I: Introduction

In the last chapter, we saw how the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods suggest that the type of knowledge that is required for virtue and happiness is best characterised as a kind of non-expert moral knowledge. We also saw that this kind of knowledge is non-technical and based on the sort of understanding that ordinary people may come to possess by way of the elenchus. And, on this basis, our examination revealed how Plato's moral philosophy seems to emerge from a far more humble or optimistic perspective on the nature and availability of human flourishing.

In this chapter, I would like to take a closer look at the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods in order to see what they tell us about Plato's earlier conception of the requirements for virtue and knowledge. In doing so, I hope to show that although Plato's initial view on the relations between virtue, wisdom and happiness suggests tha* the good human life will be open and available to eveiyone, his discussion within these earlier works suggests that the goal of happiness will be by no means easy for anyone. I also hope to show that, in this way, we need to adopt a more cautious approach to the task of accounting for Plato's earlier perspective on the relations between virtue, wisdom and happiness, and the availability of the good human life. In doing so, we must also acknowledge the important point that even in these earlier works there is evidence to suggest that Plato believes that *eudaimonia* requires exceptional levels of focus and commitment, and that the many human beings who fail to possess them will fall short of what it takes to do genuinely well and be happy.

Throughout the course of my examination, I shall focus on several key issues and divide my discussion accordingly. In Part II, I will address the issue of the scope of Socrates' audience in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods. I shall

consider the question of whether Socrates' interlocutors must agree to certain initial points about morality in order to get involved in Socrates' elenctic enquiries. I shall also consider the question of whether Socrates means to address a wide and varied audience. In doing so, I will discuss how Gregory Vlastos' conception of Plato's early Socrates as an eternal optimist contrasts with Alexander Nehamas' depiction of him as an eager opportunist. I wiil also explain why it is difficult to determine whether Socrates means to engage anyone and everyone in his elenctic pursuits or, as Alexander Nehamas suggests, prefers to restrict his audience to those who show exceptional promise or talent. And, from this perspective, I will point out that although this matter may prove to be a difficult one for us to determine, what we can say about these earlier works is that they clearly indicate that unless one possesses certain fundamental personal qualities - such as sincerity, stamina, courage and humility - one will not have what it takes to cultivate the kinds of virtue and wisdom that Plato initially sees as essential for *eudaimonia.*

In Part III, I will examine some of the principal characters in dialogues such as *Laches, Charmides, Gorgias, Euthyphro,* and *Hippias Major.* I will show how Plato's choice of characters, together with the other dramatic and literary aspects of these earlier works, serve to illustrate this point about the need for individuals to possess certain fundamental personal qualities in order to acquire the kinds of virtue and wisdom that are required for *eudaimonia.*

In Part IV, I will conclude this examination by pointing out how these requirements for virtue and knowledge in Plato's early and transitional dialogues suggest that two important aspects of Plato's earlier perspective on virtue and happiness have been largely overlooked. The first is that although these early and transitional works do not appear to support Plato's extreme view in *Republic* and *Pkaedo* regarding the need for one to be a person of a certain kind or class in order to enjoy the best possible human life, they do appear to restrict the prospects for human flourishing to those who possess a certain type of character. The second is that in so far as this means that Plato's earlier works do in fact recognise important links between character, wisdom, virtue and happiness, Aristotle's suggestion that the Socratic, or early Platonic, co:- ceptr-on of virtue 'does away with the irrational part of the soul, and with passion and

character'[189] is actually mistaken. Indeed, it belies a common misconception in both ancient Greek scholarship and contemporary ethical debates.

In pursuing these lines of enquiry, I will emphasise the need for us to think about Plato's early perspective on the nature and availability of human flourishing in the light of this requirement for individuals to possess a certain kind of readiness and willingness to learn. I will also show how this aspect of Plato's earlier works requires us to think about the kind of non-expert moral knowledge that he initially sees as essential for the good human life in a new light, and in a way which opens the possibility for many human beings to fail in their attempts to live the good human life. And, in doing so, we shall begin to see the significance of the fact that, unlike the Socrates who features in Plato's middle dialogues, the Socrates of these earlier works does not tell us whether the stubborn and wily individuals that he encounters fail to develop the kinds of personal qualities that are required for *eudaimonia* because they are simply *unwilling* or actually *incapable* of doing so.

Part Hi The scope of Socrates' audience in Plato's early and transitional dialogues

Section 1: Two key questions regarding the requirements for non-expert moral knowledge

We have seen that some of the key dialogues of Plato's middle period suggest that one must undergo a highly specialised and rigorous form of training in order to develop the kinds of virtue and wisdom that make possible the best human life. We have also seen that, in contrast with these specifications, Plato's earlier works suggest that the kind of understanding that is required for genuine virtue and happiness is open and available to ordinary human beings via the simple elenctic method. But to understand what it takes for one to develop the kind of non-expert moral knowledge that is produced by the elenchus, we need to get a better idea of what it takes for Socrates' interlocutors to get involved in an elenctic discussion. More importantly, we need to develop a better understanding of what it takes for these individuals to get the elenchus to do its job

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[m] *Magna Moralia:* Book I: il 82a 15.

properly and, thus, provide them with the kind of moral understanding that is said to result from this unique form of moral education. Only then will we be in a position to understand the requirements for virtue and wisdom in Plato's early and transitional dialogues, and how these aspects of Plato's moral philosophy influence his initial outlook on the availability of the good human life.

To do this, we need to consider the scope of Socrates' audience in Plato's early and transitional dialogues. More specifically, we need to consider whether the Socrates of these earlier works means to rule out anyone as a candidate for his elenctic enquiries on the basis of their *personal beliefs* about the virtues that he discusses, or on the basis of the kind of *reputation* they have for dealing with challenges of a moral or intellectual nature. In this section I will address the first of these issues. In the next section I will take up the second.

Section 2: Personal beliefs and the elenchus

In relation to the first of these issues, we need to consider the question of whether Socrates' interlocutors need to agree with certain initial points about morality in order to get involved in an elenctic enquiry. This question it, particularly important for the broader question of Plato's initial outlook on the availability of human flourishing. It is also one which is particularly relevant to Plato's early and transitional dialogues. For within these earlier works, Socrates is often shown to be insisting on the need for his participants to agree to certain specific points about morality at the outset of his elenctic inquiries. The *Laches* and *Charmides* provide two examples of this aspect of Plato's early moral philosophy. In *Laches* Socrates introduces what may be regarded as a foundational premise when he says at the outset that whatever else courage turns out to be, it will form only *apart* of virtue. And in *Charmides* Socrates makes a similar move when he makes sure that his interlocutors agree at the outset that whatever temperance turns out to be, it must always be *beneficial.*[190]

Having outlined these foundational premises or initial starting points for his elenctic enquiries, Socrates appears to use them as a guide for both himself and his

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[190] See *Laches:* 190d and 198a; and *Charmides:* 159c and 174c-175a.

interlocutors throughout the course of their discussion. Indeed, these principles appear to influence both the direction in which their discussions flow, and the eventual outcome of their elenctic inquiries. But should we think that these initial moral principles serve as something more than a mere *guide* for Plato's early Socrates? And should we believe that if Socrates' interlocutors were to reject them, Socrates would have good reason to dismiss what they have to say about the virtues and exclude them from the sole means by which he believes we can cultivate moral wisdom?

It is important for us to answer these questions and to think about the nature of these initial moral principles that Socrates introduces at the beginning of his elenctic enquiries. For if we decide that Plato's early and transitional dialogues mean to suggest that these foundational premises act not as mere *guides* for the elenchus, but as specific principles with which individuals must agree in order to get involved in an elenctic discussion, then we must infer that if one failed to do this one would be denied the opportunity to engage in an elenctic enquiry. This, in turn, would suggest that these foundational premises must be agreed to as a matter of course in order to give individuals access to Socrates' unique form of moral education and, thus, the chance to cultivate non-expert moral knowledge.

Fortunately, for Socrates, the interlocutors that he encounters in these earlier works seem to face no real difficulties in accepting these foundational premises and granting him their full support for them. In some cases, as Irwin rightly points out, they do require some form of explanation or argument before they are willing to accept them and are capable of understanding what these principles imply.[191] However, as a general rule, the interlocutors that Socrates encounters in these earlier works appear to be quite willing to assent to this initial points about morality, and Socrates seems to expect that they will do so *wM* little effort or persuasion on his behalf.

But what if Socrates' interlocutors were to question him on the merits of these foundational premises? And what if they failed to grant their full support for them even after Socrates had done his best to explain why he believes in the truth of these principles? Would Socrates have simply walked away from Laches and Nicias if they

[191] See Irwin (1995), p. 49.

had refused to accept his foundational premise that courage must only be *apart* rather than the whole of virtue, and also Charmides in the event that he rejected the notion that temperance must *always* be beneficial?

I want to suggest that on the basis of our examination in Chapter I, regarding the kind of knowledge that Plato's early Socrates appears to possess, we ought not to believe that Socrates regards these foundational premises as indubitable principles with which hie interlocutors must agree. For, as we saw there, the method by which Socrates develops his moral understanding leaves him no reason to think that *any* of his moral principles will be beyond further elenctic testing, nor off limits for further philosophical discussion. In this way, every one of these foundational premises must be understood to be a mere starting point for Socrates' elenctic enquiries and, thereby, essentially open to further elenctic testing or deliberation.[192] And, as a result, Socrates would not have sufficient reason to exclude people from his elenctic enquiries in the event that they offered alternative views about morality.

In the light of this it is interesting to note that in *Crito,* at 49d-e, Socrates initially tells his companion, 'And Crito, see that you do not agree to this, contrary to your belief. For I know that only a few people hold this view or will hold it, and there is no common ground between those who hold this view and those who do not, but they inevitably despise each other's views.' But in doing so, he also provides Crito with an opportunity to disagree with him on this matter. Thus, he continues with the following remark: 'Or do you disagree and do not share this view as a basis for our discussion? I have held it for a long time and still hold it now, but if you think otherwise, tell me now...'193

In this sense, we may observe that in so far as these principles have served Socrates well in the past, and commanded assent from his interlocutors on all previous

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[192]Accordingly, Vlastos rightly points out that 'when he [Socrates] renounces *knowledge* he is telling us that the question of the truth of anything he believes can always be re-opened; that any conviction he has stands ready to be re-examined in the company of any sincere person who will raise the question and join him in the investigation.' He also observes that as clear as these principles seem to Socrates, he acknowledges the important point that 'they are not finally decided; everyone of them is open to review in the present argument.' Terence In.vin also supports the view that these points of agreement are best thought of as 'the *guiding* principles of the elenchus', rather than 'Socrates' *own* beliefs'. See Vlastos (1971a), pp. 10-11; and Irwin (1995), p. 49. See also Chapter 2, Part III: Section 2: pp. 60-61: n. 150.
[193]See *Crito:* 49d-e.

occasions, Socrates may well expect that they will continue to serve him well in the future and find agreement with future fellow inquirers. However, this does not necessarily mean that if he were to come across an interlocutor who *failed* to support them, he would dismiss them as unworthy of his companionship and unfit for the elenctic enquiry that he intends to pursue. Moreover, this does not mean that he would regard their alternative beliefs about morality as unworthy of his consideration. On the contrary, it wouid provide him with a new opportunity to test out these initial moral principles, and to further enhance his owii understanding of the moral matters at hand.[194] And, in this way, we ought not to believe that one needs to assent to these foundationa! premises that Socrates introduces in order to gain access to Socrates' unique form of moral training.

By way of contrast, we may observe that the Socrates of Plato's middle dialogues presents a rather different outlook on the role of certain propositions or foundational premises at the outset of philosophical debates. For there, these premises clearly *are* regarded as being essentially off limits and, therefore, beyond the scope of present philosophical enquiries. Thus, in *Republic,* Plato has Socrates claim that there are those individuals who agree to these first principles and there are those who do not, and whereas the opinions of the former may be worth considering in philosophical debates, the opinions of the latter are certainly not worth bothering about. And, from this perspective, Plato has Socrates describe such dissidents as those who, 'in the things of mind', are 'not altogether worthy of our fellowship'.[195]

Section 3: Reputation and the elenchus

We have seen that therv; is good reason to believe that the Socrates of Plato's earlier works should not preclude anyone from engaging in his elenctic enquiries on the basis of their personal beliefs about morality. To complete our assessment of the scope of Socrates' audience in Plato's early and transitional dialogues we must consider whether this Socrates of Plato's earlier worlrs appears to be willing to converse with a wide and varied audience. In doing so, we must also consider the question of whether

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[194]This point seems to be confirmed by Socrates' discussion with Callicles in *Gorgias,* at 486d-e.

the Socrates of Plato's earlier works seems to proceed with the belief, or at least the hope, that anyone can join in the search for truth and attain the kind of non-expert moral knowledge that is required for *eudaimonia.*

To do this, I shall begin by comparing two contrasting images of the Socrates who features in Plato's early and transitional dialogues. The first of these images is the one which Gregory Vlastos presents. The second is that which Alexander Nehamas presents. So let us take a look at these two contrasting images.

Section 4: Vlastos' account of Socrates as the ardent and tireless 'street philosopher'

In *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher,* Vlastos provides us with the popular image of Plato's early Socrates as the ardent and tireless 'street philosopher'. This image portrays Socrates as one who is willing to converse with anyone he meets for any length of time. And, in the light of this image, Vlastos suggests that 'not only does he [Socrates] allow question-breeding argument about good and evil to all and sundry, he positively thrusts it on them.'[196] He also claims that this Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues 'draws into his search for the right way to live the people he runs into on the street, in the market place, in gymnasia, convinced that this outreach to them is his god-given mission.'[197] And, from this perspective, Vlastos claims that not only does Socrates think of ordinary human beings as being *worthy* of engaging in his elenctic inquiries; he makes it his business to *make sure* that these kinds of people actually get involved.

In presenting these claims, Vlastos draws support from the passages in *Apology* where Plato's Socrates refers to himself as 'the gods' gift to the people' and tells his audience 'the god has commanded me that I should live philosophising, examining myself and others...'[198] He maintains that these passages show how the Socrates of

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[195] See *Republic:* Book II: 37 le. This point is also reflected in Plato's discussion of the difference between 'doxophilists' and 'philosophers' in *Republic:* Book V: 479eff. Note that at 527e of the dialogue, Socrates also tells Glaucon, 'So decide right now which group you're addressing.'

[196] Vlastos(1991),p. 110.

[197] ibid.

[198] See/l/?o/ogy:28e.

Plato's earlier works has every intention of encouraging *all* human beings to focus on improving the conditions of their souls. He also insists that this implies that the scope of Socrates' audience extends to 'each and every one of us, citizen or alien, man or woman.'[199]

This image of Plato's early Socrates as the eager and optimistic truth-seeker - one who is intent on exhorting every human being to develop virtue and moral wisdom - seems to conform with many of Socrates' remarks in Plato's earlier works. The *Apology* provides one such example. There, Socrates tells his audience, 'so even now I go around seeking out anyone, citizen or stranger, whom I think is wise. Then if I do not think he is, I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he is not wise...'[200] In *Euthydemus,* Socrates also insists that 'every man should prepare himself by every means to become as wise as possible' in a way which suggests that he intends to address a wide and varied audience.[201] And again in *Gorgias,* Socrates appears to provide a similar outlook when he tells his fellow inquirers, 'I exhort to all other men to the best of my powers...to share this moral life.'[202]

Section 5: Nehamas' account of Socrates as the 'eager opportunist'

In contrast with Vlastos, Alexander Nehamas presents a less favourable image of the character who takes centre stage in Plato's earlier works. He suggests that the Socrates of these dialogues is only interested in discussing the moral matters that he raises with a very select group or narrow range of individuals. In this way, Nehamas claims that Plato's early Socrates addresses only 'a very small class of people.'[203] This class of people includes 'acknowledged experts (Protagoras, Hippias, Gorgias and his

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[19y]See Vlastos (1991), p. 110. In an earlier article, Vlastos also claims that whereas Aristotle (and later Plato when he came to write the dialogues of his middle period) accepted the idea that 'high-grade moral virtue' is only possible for 'well bom' or at least 'moderately well off men; a conviction which (Vlastos suggests) ran wide and deep through the Greek world, Socrates 'expunged' this view from the realm of moral discourse 'when he made the improvement of the soul as mandatory, and as possible, for the manual worker as for the gentleman of leisure, when he redefined all the virtues, and virtue itself, in such a way as to make of them, not class attributes, but human qualities.' See Vlastos (1971a), pp. 19-20.
[200]See *Apology:* 23a-b, 29d and 31b.
[201]See *Euthyphro*: 282a.
[202]See *Gorgias:* 528d. The Promethean myth in *Protagoras* also seems to reflect the view that, when it comes to questions regarding virtue, every human being ought to be regarded as fit to offer advice. This follows from the suggestion that the gods have instilled a sense of justice and shame within every human being. For more on this, see *Protagoraa:* 323b-c.
[203]Nehamas(1999),p. 73.

companions, Euthydemus and Dionysiodoms, Ion, Laches and Nicias), self-professed experts (Euthyphro, perhaps Critias *[Charmides* 162b-c]. Meno, and Anytus), or handsome young men (Charmides, Lysis, Menexenus, and Alcibiades).'[204] And these people, he contends, must all be regarded as 'special people' who show 'exceptional promise', 'some distinction and sophistication', or 'considerable authority' in a way which undermines Vlastos' suggestion that Socrates' interlocutors include those who may be aptly described as ordinary human beings or 'your average people in the street'.[205]

On this basis, Nehamas interprets both the scope and the purpose of Socrates' elenctic enquiries in an entirely different manner. Indeed, his interpretation of what Socrates has to say in *Apology* regarding his 'god-given role' portrays Socrates as one who is more of an eager opportunist than an eternal optimist. In this way, Nehamas claims that the evidence Vlastos relies on to show how Plato's early Socrates means to engage with anyone and everyone in his search for moral wisdom may be interpreted quite differently. He also suggests that the picture we gtf in *Apology* regarding Socrates' philosophical ambitions is far 'more complex' than Vlastos is willing to admit. And in the light of this, Nehamas claims that on the basis of Plato's discussion in *Apology,* we have reason to believe that the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues 'consistent! identifies his divine mission as a search for someone wise and a demonstration that no one with that reputation really deserves it.'[206]

From this perspective, Nehamas claims that Plato is very careful to show us how the main character in his earlier works means to question *only* those individuals who claim to have acquired knowledge, or the young men of intellectual promise with whom the real Socrates himself loved to associate. He suggests that, as a result, 'we must now insist' that Socrates did not make it his practice 'to engage in discussion indiscriminately'.[207] Accordingly, Nehamas concludes that what this shows us is that, just as we ought to regard Socrates' audience in these earlier works as one which is essentially far more restricted or limited than often thought, the scope of this character's

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[204]ibid.
[205]ibid.
[206]Nehamas(1999),p. 74.
[207]ibid., p. 46.

mission is also 'considerably more narrow than we often take it to be'.[208] And, in this respect, Nehamas' depiction of the leading character in Plato's earlier works seems to fit more closely with Plato's warning in *Republic* and *Philebus* regarding the perils associated with an individual engaging in dialectic before he or she is fully equipped to do so.[209]

Section 6: What we can say about Plato's early and transitional dialogues

These two images of the leading character of Plato's early and transitional dialogues seem to be diametrically opposed: one suggests that Plato's early Socrates is attentive and accommodating in relation to the views of the majority; the other suggests that he is either uninterested or completely intolerant of these people and their moral opinions. And it would appear that Nehamas' conception of Plato's early Socrates - the less charitable image of the leading figure in these earlier Platonic works - is only a stone's throw away from the kind of inquirer who takes centre stage in the dialogues of Plato's middle period. There, we see an enquirer who regards philosophy, together with genuine virtue and wisdom, as being well out of the reach for the ordinary person on the street who falls short of having exceptional physical, intellectual and psychological capabilities. Indeed, as we have seen in Chapter 1, this character proclaims that such things will not only prove to be *difficult* for ordinary human beings, but actually *impossible* for 'the rabble' who are said to make up the majority of society.[210]

Having observed these two competing images of the leading character in Plato's early and transitional dialogues, I would like to suggest that it is difficult for us to answer the question of whether Vlastos' depiction or Nehamas' image best reflects the true character and intentions of Plato's early Socrates. For there is always the possibility that Plato simply uses the dramatic settings in these earlier works for his own ends and that these ends are not transparent to the reader, but essentially open to various interpretations. In this way, these earlier works may simply reflect Plato's intention to show how his teacher *preferred* to engage in conversation with bright, cultivated or attractive young men. They may also reflect the fact that Plato simply believed that it

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[208]ibid., p. 75.
[209]See *Republic:* Book VII: 538d; and *Philebus:* 16e-17a.
[210]See *Republic:* Book VI: 43 Id and 494a; and Chapter 1: Part II: Section 6. pp. 26-27.

would be more interesting for his readers to see Socrates conversing with these kinds of individuals. Or perhaps they simply reflect Plato's belief that no other interlocutors could enable his spokesperson to get his message across in an equally effective manner.

In the light of these complications, we may observe that we may never know for sure whether the Socrates of these early and transitional dialogues really looks for certain *kinds* of people to engage in his elenctic enquiries. And, in this sense, we may never know for certain whether Nehamas is right to suggest that even at this early stage, Plato's works demonstrate the belief that only those who are exceptionally intelligent, authoritative or attractive will have what it takes to acquire the right sort of moral education in order to develop genuine virtue and wisdom. However, what we *can* say about these early and transitional dialogues is that they clearly show us that in order to get the elenchus to do its *job properly* and, thus provide one with the opportunity to cultivate the right sort of moral knowledge, one does need to possess a certain sort of *character.* More specifically, one needs to possess certain fundamental personal qualities. These personal qualities include sincerity, stamina, courage and humility and it is to these personal qualities that our examination shall now turn.

Part III: The importance of character in Plato's early and transitional dialogues

Section 1: The importance of the dramatic aspects of Plato's earlier works

The dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods provide us with many examples of situations in which individuals fail to develop the kinds of virtue and wisdom that are required for *eudaimonin* because they lack a certain kind of readiness and willingness to learn from Socrates and his elenctic method. These examples show us how certain fundamental personal qualities, such as sincerity, stamina, courage and humility, are required for one to get the elenchus to do its job *properly* and, thus provide them with the chance to develop the kind of non-expert moral knowledge that Plato initially sees as essential for the good human life. They also highlight the need for Socrates' interlocutors to possess the right sort *of character* in order to benefit from his unique form of moral education. To sec this, we need to supplement traditional philosophical

analysis of what is said in the dialogues with attention to the dramatic context and what is shown. We also need to turn our attention towards some of the principal characters in Plato's early and transitional dialogues. So let us take a look at how some of Socrates' interlocutors fare in dialogues such as *Laches, Charmides, Gorgias, Euthyphro,* and *Hippias Major.*

Section 2: Socrates' interlocutors in *Laches*

In *Laches,* Laches and Nicias prove to be two characters for whom the search for truth and moral knowledge is too great a task. In this particular dialogue, Plato provides us with a good look at how the search for truth and moral knowledge can be thwarted when the parties who are privy to this pursuit allow their search to be overrun by petty rivalries and the fear of being made to say something which might make them look silly or unpopular. Having summoned Laches to join him in his search for courage, Socrates asks him to take on this 'hunt'[211] or search courageously, lest courage itself make fun of them both for *not* doing so. Laches provides two definitions of what he thinks courage might be, but it soon becomes clear that his answers are falling far short of the kind of account that Socrates is looking for. And so, before too long, Laches starts to sweat a little. 'I am ready not to give up', he tells Socrates, 'although I am not really accustomed to arguments of this kind... and I am really getting annoyed at being unable to express what I think in this fashion.'[212] 'I still think I know what courage is', he insists, 'but I can't understand how it has escaped me just now so that I can't pin it down in words and say what it is.'[213]

At this point Nicias is called on to help them out with their search. Nicias repeats what he says he has often heard Socrates say on this matter, namely, that courage is a sort of wisdom regarding the things that are to be feared and the things that are to be dared. Socrates invites Nicias to spell out more clearly exactly what he has in mind by this idea and pleads with Laches to aid them in their efforts to uncover the truth of what Nicias has just said. 'Let's instruct him instead of making fun of him', he suggests.[214]

[211] Socrates also invokes this metaphor in *Lysis,* at 218c.

[212] *Laches:* 194a-b.

[213] *Laches:* 194b.

[214] *Laches:* 195a. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that in *Theatetus,* at 146b, Socrates provides his interlocutor with a similar invitation. There, Theodorus is also called upon to put his personal views to the

But at this stage of the dialogue, the tone of their conversation changes dramatically, and rather than stepping up to the challenge and helping Nicias work through this idea, Laches takes it upon himself to point out how damaging such an idea would be for the popular conception of courage, and the ways in which most people currently regard certain people *as* courageous. Laches insists that 'those whom everyone agrees to be courageous, he attempts to deprive of that distinction.'[215] And, thus, the petty rivalry and bickering which ensues between these two interlocutors leads them to stray from their designated task, and give up the search for truth too soon.

When Laches tells Nicias how disappointed he is that Nicias was unable to 'solve the whole problem'[216] for them, and how sure he had felt that Nicias, if anyone, would be able to make this 'discovery', given the fact that he had been 'so scornful'[217] of him beforehand, when he was answering Socrates' questions, Nicias replies: 'That's a fine attitude of yours, Laches, to think it no longer to be of any importance that you yourself were just now shown to be a person who knows nothing about courage. What interests you is whether I will turn out to be a person of the same kind. Apparently it will make no difference to you to be ignorant of those things which a man of any pretensions ought to know, so long as you include me in your ignorance.'[218] 'Well', Laches retorts, 'you seem to me to be acting in a thoroughly human fashion by noticing everybody except yourself...'[219] Shortly afterwards, the search for courage is abandoned. Laches and Nicias agree to allow Socrates to take part in the education of Lysimachus' and Melesias' young boys and the three men go their separate ways.

Section 3: Socrates' interlocutors in *Charmides*

In *Charmides,* the interlocutor of the same name finds out that, just as it was not enough for Nicias to recite a definition or state a number of 'propositional truths' regarding a particular virtue, it will not be sufficient for him to do so either if he means to genuinely engage in the kind of philosophical pursuit that leads to moral knowledge.

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test. However, he - like Nicias - succumbs to the temptation to hide behind his own sense of pride or fear of being unable to justify his own beliefs.

[215] *Laches:* 197c.

[216] *Laches:* 200a.

[217] *Laches:* 200a.

[218] *Laches:* 200a-b.

[219] ibid.

Thus, we see how Charmides comes unstuck for putting forward an idea which he has borrowed from someone else without first thinking it through to the point where he has 'internalised' it and made it his own. Here, in *Charmides,* we see how an interlocutor who has not done this can be 'stung'[220] or 'sifted' by Socrates' barrage of questions to the point where his last shred of confidence has evaporated and his failure to engage in authentic deliberation has been exposed. Relying on the views of an authority figure, and blindly faithful to the ideas of his teacher, Charmides is shown *not* to have what it takes to apply himself to the task at hand. Eager to have the author of those views take over the argument rather than himself, Charmides provokes Critias by going on pointing out that the cause has been lost.[221]

Section 4: Socrates' interlocutors in *Gorgias*

In *Gorgias,* Callicles is shown to be another character who is overly concerned with how his views might be received by the general public. Callicles is an interlocutor for whom Socrates must constantly reiterate the importance of following wherever their arguments take them, no matter how unpopular their views may become. But it seems that Callicles' preoccupation with saying what he thinks he *ought* to say is not the only thing that leads to his undoing. For his belief that Socrates is merely trying to pull a 'swiftie' on him with his reasoning, or 'catch him out' in an unguarded moment, is more telling of Callicles' own intention to win what he would regard as a 'verbal victory' - against Socrates and, along with it, the sort of praise and esteem that he thinks such 'crowd-pleasing' activities create. With this in view, Socrates is shown to be constantly reassuring him that he is searching for truth and an understanding about the right way to live, and not for the opportunity to win an argument.[222]

But despite these reassurances, Callicles persists with his suspicions to the point where he is intent on accusing Socrates of twisting his words around. You're 'grandstanding' in these speeches, he tells Socrates, 'acting like a true crowd pleaser';

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[220]Plato's dialogues present us with a variety of metaphors to portray the effects that Socrates' questioning can have on his listeners. These include the image of Socrates as a 'stingray' that 'numbs' anyone who comes into contact with, and the 'gadfly' that attaches itself to ihe city as a fly would to a horse. See *Meno:* 80e; and *Apology:* 30e. See also *Symposium:* 218a, where Alcibiades compares the effects that Socrates' philosophising has had on him to a snake bite.
[221]*See Charmides:* 162d.
[222]See *Gorgias:* 487a and 487e.

'twisting' our discussion in every direction, and 'employing a clever trick you've thought of with which you work your 'mischief.'[223] In such a state, Callicles is no longer even willing to see why Socrates continues with his own line of questioning. 'By the gods!', he tells him, 'you simply don't let up on your continual talk of shoemakers and cleaners, cooks and doctors, as if our discussion were about them!'[224]

Indeed, just how far removed his own attitude is from the one which is required to uncover the secrets of one's search is shown by way of Alcibiades' remarks in *Symposium.* For there, Alcibiades recognises the important point that unless one gives one's full attention and concentration to Socrates' arguments during the course of an elenctic enquiry, one will *never* come to grips with the relevance of these arguments, nor attain the desired effects of an elenctic search. Thus, Alcibiades tells his audience, 'if you were to listen to his arguments, at first they'd strike you as totally ridiculous; they're clothed in words as coarse as the hides worn by the most vulgar satyrs', for 'he's always going on about pack assess, or blacksmiths, or cobblers, or tanners; he's always making the same tired old points in the same tired old words.'[225] 'If you are foolish, or simply unfamiliar with him', he suggests, 'you'd find it impossible not to laugh at his arguments...', but 'if you go behind their surface', you'll realise that these arguments do make sense and are 'of great - no, of the greatest - importance for anyone who wants to become a truly good man.'[226]

In *Gorgias,* Plato's message regarding the importance of sincerity, courage and humility also comes to the fore. Having stated that one needs 'knowledge, good will, and frankness'[227] to put one's soul to an adequate test to see whether it lives rightly, Socrates gains Callicles assurance that he is, indeed, a genuine seeker of truth, and initially commends Callicles for his display of these three qualities. 'The way you pursue your argument', he tells him, 'speaking frankly as you do, certainly does you credit, Callicles. For you are now saying clearly what others are thinking but are

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[223]*Gorgias:* 482c-d, 51 la and 483a.
[224]*Gorgias:* 491a.
[225]*Symposium:* 221e-222a.
[226]ibid. But note that Alcibiades also has his own problems in maintaining the kind of focus that is required to implement the benefits of the elenchus. For more on this, see *Symposium:* 216b.
[221] *Gorgias:* 487a.

unwilling to say. I beg you, then, not to relax in any way...'[228] But as the conversation in the dialogue progresses, Callicles' concern to maintain his reputation and a stake in the popular views of morality gets the better of him, and so, eventually, Callicles succumbs to the pressures of shame, just as Gorgias and Polus had before him.[229]

Section 5: Socrates' interlocutor in *Euthyphro*

In the dialogue named after Euthyphro we find a character who is not willing to give Socrates his time, or enough of his attention, to benefit from Socrates' inquiry. In this dialogue, Euthyphro meets Socrates outside the magistrate's office, having just declared his intention to prosecute his own father for murder over the death of a slave. Both he and Socrates agree that to bring such a charge against one's own father, one must be 'far advanced in wisdom'[230] and pretty confident that this is not, as Euthyphro's critics would say, an impious thing to do. As such, they agree, one must have a thorough understanding of what is pious and what is not. Euthyphro assures Socrates that he does in fact have 'accurate knowledge of all such things'[231] and, so, Socrates asks him to tell him exactly what piety is.

Euthyphro makes several attempts to spell out what the nature of piety is, but none of them prove to be satisfactory. Notwithstanding these failed attempts, and their shared belief that if one *does* have knowledge of something, one must be able to state what one knows, Euthyphro persists with the belief that he *does* have the requisite knowledge of piety. In fact, he goes so far as to say that, of all men, he has 'the best knowledge'[232] of things divine. This 'smug' attitude, together with his unwarranted self-assurance, is what prevents Euthyphro from making the most of his opportunity to transform his beliefs regarding piety into elenctically justifiable moral views. To his own detriment, Euthyphro adopts Callicles' tactic of trying to hold Socrates responsible for his own inability to state clearly what this particular virtue is. Thus, when Socrates

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[228] *Gorgias:* 492d.
[229] Charles Kahn provides an excellent discussion on these aspects of Socrates' enquiries in *Gorgias.* See Charles Kahn, 'Drama and Dialectic in Plato's *Gorgias'*, William Prior (ed.), *Socrates. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Vol. Ill: Socratic Method,* Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 82-84; and Charles Kahn, 'Vlastos's Socrates', William Prior (ed.), *Socrates. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Vol. I: The Socratic Problem of Ignorance,* Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 172-173.
[230] See *Euthyphro:* 4a-e.
[231] *Euthyphro:* 4eff.

suggests that Euthyphro's arguments are just like Daedalus' sculptures,[233] which are prone to 'run away' and 'will not stay where one puts them', Euthyphro claims that *Socrates* is the one who makes them 'go round and round' and that, if it weren't for *him,* his own arguments *would* remain 'as they were.'[234] And so, too, when the pressure becomes too great for him and even this tactic fails to divert Socrates' attention away from his own thoughts and moral practices, at Socrates' request to begin the investigation all over again, Euthyphro tells him 'some other time, Socrates, for I am in a hurry now, and it is time for me to go.'[235]

Section 6: Socrates' interlocutor in *Hippias Major*

In *Hippias Major,* Hippias' concern to provide the most 'colourful' and 'crowd-pleasing' speech also contrasts with Socrates' relentless efforts to uncover truth. Here we have a character who simply will not take either Socrates, his particular interest in the nature of what is 'fine', *to kalon,* or his own method of elenctic inquiry seriously. He tells Socrates outright that the only thing that is 'fine and worth a lot' is 'to be able to present a speech well and finely' and 'go home carrying not the smallest but the greatest of prizes', that is, 'the successful defence of yourself, your property and your friends.'[236] 'One should stick to that', Hippias insists, for anything else is mere 'small-talking' and ought to be given up and abandoned by Socrates, and anybody else who cares to engage in it, 'so he won't be thought a complete fool for applying himself, as he is now, to babbling nonsense.'[237]

[2ll] *Euthyphro:* 13e.
[233] Paul Woodruff tells us that in legend, Daedalus was praised as an inventor of'lifelike' statues who worked for King Minos of Crete. See Woodruffs comments on *Hippias Major* in John M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato. Complete Works,* Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1997, p. 900: n. 3; and Richard Lattimore, (trans.), *The Odyssey of Homer,* Harper Perennial, New York, 1991, iv. 385ff., p. 75. Socrates also invokes a similar image when he speaks of Proteus the Egyptian sophist or 'shape-shifter' and likens his stubborn interlocutors to this kind of creature because they are unable to maintain the same position with respect to their argument. See *Euthyphro:* 15c-d; and *Euthydemus:* 288b (with commentary). Sec also *Ion:* 541e-542a, where Socrates tells his interlocutor, 'Really, you're just like Proteus, you twist up and down and take many different shapes, till finally you've escaped me altogether by turning yourself into a general, so as to avoid proving how wonderfully wise you are about Homer.'
[234] *Euthyphro:* llb-c.
[235] *Euthyphro:* 15e.
[2i6] *Hippias Major:* 304a-b.
[237] *Hippias Major:* 304b.

In this frame of mind, Hippias makes it obvious that he has no interest in examining his own views, in relation to which he professes the greatest confidence, nor any desire to converse with such a 'stickler for details' over what he regards as an evidently unimportant and uninteresting subject. And contrary to Socrates' requests for him to provide his own views regarding the *best* explanation of *the nature* of 'the fine', Hippias continues to look for what he thinks someone else might want to hear, or a reply which he thinks would be good enough to 'slip by' the average inquirer. In doing so, Hippias clearly shows himself to be the kind of person who is more concerned with saying what others would think *sounds* 'fine', rather than *paying attention* to the question at hand and aiding Socrates' efforts to uncover the nature of'the fine' itself. Accordingly, his first reaction to Socrates' question is to say that what is fine is 'a beautiful girl'; he knows that this is exactly the kind of 'crowd-pleasing' response that will score him points with his audience and command assent from anyone within earshot; it is witty and no one's likely to question it, so that'll do for him.

Hippias' kind of response also allows him to evade the *adhominem* aspect of Socrates' inquiry: Hippias does not want, or care, for an examination of himself or his own particular views, and he realises that so long as the mood of their inquiry remains one of *jest,* rather than serious philosophical contemplation, his own life and beliefs will *avoid* Socrates' scrutinising gaze. As such, Hippias hopes or expects that a response such as 'the fine is a beautiful girl' will meet with a nod and a laugh and the feeling that he has said all that really needs to be said about the issue. And as Paul Woodruff has observed, 'Socrates is no doubt supposed to chuckle, nudge Hippias in the ribs, and change the subject.'[238]

Section 7: Summary

Having examined the various attitudes of Socrates' interlocutors in these early and transitional dialogues, we can see that within them both the drama and dialectic; Plato's choice of characters and their arguments, serve to illustrate the point that rational arguments will be *worthless* without a certain level of commitment, sincerity and appreciation on behalf of the individuals who are concerned. Accordingly, these earlier

[238]See Paul Woodruff, *Plato. Hippias Major,* Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1982, p. 106.

works provide us with ample evidence of Socrates' awareness of the fact that the intellect is not *solely* responsible for our moral development, for we must satisfy certain non-cognitive requirements and acquire a certain readiness and willingness to learn in order to develop our moral understanding.

In this way, Socrates' encounters with these various characters clearly show us that if We do not possess certain fundamental personal qualities, such as sincerity, stamina, courage and humility, we will fail in our search for moral truth and understanding. They also show us that without these kinds of fundamental personal qualities, or psychological traits, we simply cannot expect to be able to get involved in an elenctic discussion and benefit from this particular form of moral training or education. And, on this basis, we may also observe that these personal qualities need to be recognised as essential requirements for virtue and knowledge within the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods.

Part IV: Plato's perspective on the nature of virtue and happiness in his early and transitional dialogues

Section 1: Two important aspects of Plato's earlier perspective that have been overlooked

Having observed the importance of Plato's emphasis on the need for individuals to possess certain fundamental personal qualities, I want to conclude this examination by pointing out how these requirements for virtue and wisdom suggest that two important aspects of Plato's earlier perspective on virtue and happiness have been largely overlooked. The first is that although Plato's early and transitional works may not support Plato's extreme view in *Republic* and *Phaedo* regarding the need for one to be a person of a certain *kind* or *class* in order to enjoy the best possible human life, they do appear to restrict the prospects for human flourishing to those who possess a certain type of *character*. The second is that in so far as this means that Plato's earlier works do in fact recognise important links between character, wisdom, virtue and happiness, Aristotle's suggestion that the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of virtue *does away with* the irrational part of the soul, and with passion and character is actually

mistaken. Indeed, this suggestion belies a common misconception in both ancient Greek scholarship and contemporary ethical debates. These two aspects of Plato's earlier perspective on virtue and happiness have important implications for his initial outlook on the kind of moral knowledge that is required for *eudaimonia.* They also have important implications for his earlier conception of the availability of human flourishing. And for these reasons, we must endeavour to examine them in greater detail.

Section 2: A more cautious approach to Plato's earlier perspective on the relations between virtue, wisdom and happiness and the availability of the good human life

In the light of our examination of some of the principle characters in Plato's early and transitional dialogues, we can see how these earlier works suggest that something *more* than the intellect is required for individuals to develop genuine virtue and wisdom. We can also see how they emphasise the importance of individuals approaching the quest for moral truth and knowledge with the right sort of attitude and commitment. For, as we have seen, these earlier dialogues provide many examples of situations in which individuals fail to develop the kind of moral knowledge that is required for virtue and happiness for all sorts of reasons other than intellectual ones. Some of them fail to develop this kind of wisdom because they are not willing to follow where their arguments lead them for fear of saying something which other people might find ridiculous. Others, like Laches and Nicias, fail to develop this because they are simply preoccupied with petty rivalries, or because they are more concerned with winning a 'verbal victory' than improving their own moral understanding. And others still fail to take advantage of their opportunity to benefit from Socrates' unique form of education because they are intent on avoiding an examination of themselves or their convictions at all costs or, as we saw in the case of Hippias, because they are simply unwilling to take either Socrates or his particular method of inquiry seriously.

I want to suggest that, in these cases, what prevents these characters from undergoing moral development is not so much their lack *of intelligence,* but their adoption of the wrong sort of outlook or attitude. And, in this way, it is not so much their *inability* to follow or understand Socrates' arguments that lets them down, but their

unwillingness to *listen* to those arguments and to make the most of their opportunities to discuss, to defend and thereby *verify* the worth of their own moral convictions.

On this basis, we may observe that Plato's early and transitional dialogues appear to restrict the prospects for human flourishing to those who possess a certain type of *character.* And, in doing so, they open up the possibility for many human beings to fail in their attempts to live the good human life. These early and transitional dialogues may not support Plato's extreme view in *Republic* and *Phaedo* regarding the need for this type of character to result from the kind of nature, education and position in society that is restricted to the philosopher-rulers. Accordingly, they may not go as far as suggesting that this precondition for happiness is restricted to a certain *kind* or *class* of people. However, Socrates' encounters within these dialogues clearly show us the importance of this precondition for happiness and how even some of the most talented individuals will fall short of it. And, in doing so, they demonstrate Plato's view that although the goal of happiness may be open and available to everyone, it will be by no means easy for anyone.

In the light of these observations, we must adopt a more cautious approach to the task of accounting for Plato's earlier perspective on the relations between virtue, wisdom and happiness, and the availability of the good human life. And, in doing so, we must also acknowledge the important point that even in these earlier works there is evidence to suggest that Plato believes that *eudaimonia* requires exceptional levels of focus and commitment, and that the many human beings who fail to possess them will fall short of what it takes genuinely to do well and be happy.

Section 3: Aristotle's criticism of Socratic virtue

This point about the need for individuals to possess a certain kind of character in order to acquire virtue and wisdom also raises the need for us to reconsider Aristotle's suggestion that the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of virtue does away with the irrational part of the soul, and with passion and character.[239]

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[239]Aristotle regards passion and character, or *pathos* and *ethos,* as two important elements in virtue which belong to what he refers to as the 'irrational' (or *alogos)* components of the soul. For us, in our post-Humean age, it seems more natural to speak of'cognitive' and 'non-cognitive' aspects of human

Aristotle presents this objection to Plato's early conception of virtue in the *Ethics* and *Magna Moralia.*[240] In these works he appears to distance himself from the Socratic, or early Platonic, account of virtue in an attempt to emphasise the importance of character and habituation in moral development. He also contrasts the Socratic model of virtue with his own in an attempt to show how Plato's initial outlook on the requirements for virtue dwells too much on the role of the intellect and overlooks the importance of training our passions and developing the right kinds of habits and feelings. Thus, in *Magna Moralia,* we are told that in identifying virtue with knowledge and denying the possibility of *akrasia,* or 'weakness of will', the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues is 'doing away with *[anairei]* the irrational part of the soul, and...thereby away also with passion and character.'[241]

This criticism of the account of virtue that Socrates presents in the dialogues of Plato's early and transitional periods has been widely accepted. And, as a result, we find in both ancient Greek scholarship and contemporary writings on moral philosophy a proliferation of the idea that a Socratic, or early Platonic, account of virtue means 'a purely intellectual one' and one which not only overlooks the dynamic aspects of human behaviour and motivation but also fails to appreciate the many obstacles to virtue which are *not* specifically cognitive or intellectual.

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behaviour, rather than 'rational' or 'irrational' parts of the soul. And for this reason, scholars have come to think about this objection in terms of Aristotle's concern for the specifically «o«-cognitive elements in virtue. This way of thinking about Aristotle's concern is quite useful, for it invokes a distinction which seems to both capture the essence of Aristotle's own dichotomy and allow us to set this ancient debate into a contemporary framework. Nevertheless, in making this connection we need to keep an open mind about the different ways in which Aristotle might have thought about our rational and irrational capacities, lest we allow ourselves to become too anachronistic in our outlook.

[240] It should be noted that there is some dispute over whether *Magna Moralia* is actually the work of Aristotle himself. John Cooper has argued that this may be one of Aristotle's early works. By contrast, Anthony Kenny has suggested that *Magna Moralia* may be the work of one of Aristotle's students who sought to collate the information that he received from Aristotle's lectures. To add to this, others have argued that we ought to regard this work as a kind of "textbook" that was created within the Lyceum after Aristotle's death. Regardless of these differences of opinion over the authenticity *of Magna Moralia,* it is clear that this particular aspect of this work finds general support within both *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics.* Given this, it seems reasonable to attribute this notion within *Magna Moralia* to Aristotle himself. For more on this, see John Cooper, 'The *Magna Moralia* and Aristotle's Moral Philosophy', in J. M. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion. Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1999, pp. 195-211; and Anthony Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics: A Study of the Relationship between the Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, pp. 9-12. See also *Eudaimom'an Ethics:* Book I: 1216b20-25 and Book VII: 1246a32-1246b1; and *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1095a5-1 i.

[2^] *Magna Moralia:* Book I: 1182a21-22.

Thus, in *Plato's Ethics,* Terence Irwin shows full support for Aristotle's account and criticism of the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of virtue. There, he states that in adopting 'a purely cognitive account of the virtues', this Socrates of Plato's earlier works makes the mistake of thinking that cognitive states 'are the only ones that make a difference to whether one is virtuous.'[242] So too, in 'Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom', Martha Nussbaum moves from the claim that 'the Socrates of Plato's early dialogues emphasises knowledge rather than practice or habituation', to the charge that, in doing so, Socrates mistakenly believes that 'the training of the intellect is sufficient for wisdom...'[243] In her view, Aristophanes' attack on Socrates for his lack of attention to the necessary role of character and emotion in moral education is directly relevant to the Platonic Socrates. And on her reading, Aristophanes and Aristotle are right to condemn Socrates for this obvious oversight.

Again in 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', Myles Burnyeat tells us that 'Intellectualism' in the form of'a one-sided preoccupation with reason and reasoning' is a 'perennial failing in moral philosophy' and one which Aristotle came to know 'in the form of Socrates' doctrine that virtue is knowledge.'[244] Burnyeat suggests that in the face of this doctrine, Aristotle reacted appropriately by emphasising the importance of gradually developing good habits and feelings, and acknowledging the important point that 'morality comes in a sequence of stages with both cognitive and emotional dimensions.'[245] Observing Aristotle's remarks in Book X of'*Nicomachean Ethics,* Burnyeat commends him for his valuable insight into the limits of arguments and rational training. There Aristotle tells us that because 'reason and teaching do not have the same force in all circumstances', and 'the man who lives according to whim will not listen to an argument deterring him, or even understand it', the soul of the pupil must be 'thoroughly worked over beforehand, by habituation...just as the earth that is going to be prepared for seed'.[246]

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[242]See Irwin (1995), pp. 236-237.

[243]See Martha Nussbaum, 'Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom'. W. J. Prior (ed.) *Socrates. Critical Assessments of leading philosophers. Vol I: The Socratic Problem and Socratic Ignorance,* Routledge, London and New York, 1996, pp. I11: n. 6 and 91.

[244]See Myles Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics,* University of California Press, California, 1980, p. 70.

[245]ibid., pp. 70-71.

[246]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: 1179b23-8.

And, likewise, in 'Skepticism About Weakness of Will', Garry Watson makes the claim that in so far as Socrates' reasons for rejecting the common conception of weakness of will 'deny the potential divergence between certain kinds of desire and judgments of the good', his account of virtue is 'unsound', for, in denying this, Watson claims, Socrates is also denying 'the morally and psychologically important complexity of human motivation.'[247] Indeed, Watson suggests that no adequate theory of human behaviour and moral motivation could fail to recognise the potential for our normative or deliberative and our motivational judgments to come apart in the way that the Socratic account does. For this, he insists, amounts to a failure to appreciate the fact that our appetites and emotions obviously *can* sway even our correct judgments and, thus, an 'intellectual blindness' to the non-cognitive elements required for virtue and moral motivation.

Section 4: Aristotle's error

As we have seen, however, a closer inspection of the evidence that Aristotle relies on to construct this purely 'intellectualist' account of Socratic, or early Platonic, virtue does not support the view that Plato's initial outlook on virtue regards the affective side of our natures as irrelevant and fails to recognise the importance of character. On the contrary, Plato's early and transitional dialogues provide us with ample evidence of Socrates' awareness of the need for us to satisfy certain non-cognitive conditions in order to cultivate the kind of non-expert moral knowledge that Plato initially sees as essential for the good human life. In this way, Aristotle is wrong to suggest that Plato's early and transitional dialogues reflect the view that our cognitive states, or intellectual abilities, are the *only* things that determine whether or not we become virtuous. He is also wrong to imply that in the situations where Socrates' interlocutors fail to cultivate the right sort of moral knowledge, we can always put this down to a failure, on their part, to possess a certain level of *intelligence* or intellectual capacity. For Plato's discussion within these works demonstrates that many of these interlocutors fail to make the most of Socrates' elenctic enquiries and, thus, develop virtue and wisdom* for reasons other than intellectual ones.

[247]See Gary Watson, 'Skepticism About Weakness of Will', George Sher (ed.), *Moral Philosophy,* Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Fort Worth, 1987, p. 128.

On this basis, we may also observe that Plato's awareness of the need for us to satisfy certain non-cognitive requirements for virtue at this early stage of his writing calls for us to think very carefully about the implications of Socrates' idea that virtue is knowledge and his belief that *akrasia,* or weakness of will, is impossible. These ideas do appear to be two central tenets of Plato's early conception of virtue. However, the implications of these ideas have often been misconstrued, for too often they have been taken to be indicative of Socrates' failure to appreciate the importance of character in virtue and the psychological complexity of moral motivation.

In the light of this, I would like to suggest that Socrates' identification of virtue with knowledge and his denial of the possibility of weakness of will are actually *compatible* with his recognition of certain non-cognitive elements in virtue and the importance of certain aspects of character in the development of virtue and wisdom. I would also like to suggest that his recognition of the latter makes his adoption of these two central theses and, thereby his entire account of virtue, look a whole lot more plausible. For when we when understand that Plato's early Socrates *does* allow that our character plays a role in our coming to be virtuous, we need not think that in saying that virtue is identical with or very closely related to knowledge, and in stating that one who truly *knows* what virtue is will not *fail* to be virtuous, he means to suggest that the affective side of our natures will *never* present us with any difficulties in our attempts to be virtuous. Rather, we need only take this to mean that they will only ever do so *prior* to our acquisition of virtue or genuine moral knowledge.

In this sense, Plato's early conception of virtue does not need to deny that our deliberative, or normative, and our motivational judgments can sometimes come apart. On the contrary, he may maintain that they clearly can, and most often will, for as long as we fail to possess the kind of moral understanding that amounts to genuine virtue. But once we have acquired this kind of moral understanding, that is to say, we have become *open lo* and, more importantly, *convinced by* the truth of what we have learned, this possibility will no longer present itself. In this way, the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of virtue is compatible with the suggestion that although we may face many psychological or emotional barriers on the road *to* virtue, once we get there; once we acquire the kind of moral understanding that amounts to non-expert moral knowledge and, hence, virtue, there will be no *further* or additional problems for us to wrestle with.

Section 5: Potential strategies for Socrates to accommodate these aspects of character

Plato's emphasis on the need for individuals to possess certain fundamental personal qualities also raises the need for us to think carefully about the kind of moral knowledge that Plato initially sees as essential for the good human life. For we must acknowledge that this kind of non-expert moral knowledge is essentially connected to certain psychological traits, or dependent upon certain non-cognitive conditions.

In the light of this, I would like to suggest that the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues can account for the role of character in the development of virtue and wisdom in one of two ways. He may either account for them as things which, together with the intellect, form the *very foundations* upon which non-expert moral knowledge is built, or he may consider them to be the specifically psychological and motivational components which are *built into* moral knowledge itself. If he takes the first option, we might think of these aspects of character as something like necessary conditions for the development of genuine virtue and wisdom. If he takes the second of these options, rather than thinking of Plato's early conception of virtue as something which is essentially *too intellectual,* we may think of the kind of knowledge that he has in mind as the kind of thing which is *more psychological,* in so far as it has both cognitive *and* affective dimensions which cannot be entirely separated.[248] In this way, Plato's early Socrates has two possible strategies for accommodating these aspects of character and, in adopting either one of them, he can account for them *in the process* of our coming to be virtuous. This, in turn, suggests that these aspects of character will not need to be accounted for *again* for the very reason that they will be either intrinsic to that very process or inseparable from the kind of knowledge which results from it.

Section 6: Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to show how the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues does *not* fail to recognise the importance of character. In

[248]This second option may require us to think about what it means for someone to *know* what virtue is in an entirely new way. It may also call on us to revise many cases of weakness of will, and to redescribe them in terms of failures to *know* in the relevant sense, rather than failures of a *motivational* kind.

adopting a combination of literary criticism and philosophical analysis, I have also tried to demonstrate that Aristotle's suggestion that Plato's initial outlook on virtue is essentially too intellectual and, thus, fails to recognise the importance of passion and character actually belies a common misconception in both ancient Greek scholarship and contemporary ethical debates. But perhaps someone might object that, in pursuing these lines of enquiry, 1 have somewhat missed the point. The point, they might insist, is that unlike Aristotle, and the Socrates of Plato's middle dialogues, the Socrates of Plato's early and transitional dialogues fails to tell us *what to do about them]* To conclude this examination, I would like to offer two brief replies to this potential objection.

The first is that there may, indeed, be some fine distinctions to be made here regarding Socrates' *recognition* or *awareness* of the importance of aspects of character, as opposed to his evident *neglect* of them and his failure to say anything about how we might go about satisfying them. But despite these subtleties, the distinctions we must make are still very important, for there is a real difference between saying that Socrates *ignores* the non-cognitive elements in virtue and saying that Socrates./a/A9 *to appreciate* the importance of them, just as there is a real difference between saying that he *emphasises* the importance of the intellect in moral education and saying that he thinks the intellect alone is *solely responsible* for our moral development, and even *this much* has been denied Socrates for so long.

The second point I would like to make is that the fact that Plato's early Socrates *fails* to tell us anything about how these non-cognitive obstacles to virtue may arise in the soul, or what we ought to do to try to overcome them, may well point out some very important differences regarding the levels of development which Plato's ideas reached during these early and middle periods of his writing, or the ways in which Plato's ideas would come to diverge from those of his teacher regarding the right approach to moral education. For it may well be the case that neither the *real Socrates* nor Plato, at this early stage of his writing, had considered such questions regarding the intricacies of our rational and irrational faculties. But it might also be the case that the real Socrates *had* thought at least *some* of these issues through, and that whereas Plato would go on to spend much of his time telling other people how they *could* attain the virtuous and

happy life, Socrates was not willing to do this for those who could not figure it out for themselves.

And, in the light of this point, we can begin to see the significance of the fact that unlike the Socrates who features in Plato's middle dialogues, the Socrates of these earlier works does not tell us whether the stubborn and wily individuals that he encounters fail to develop the kinds of personal qualities that are required for *eudaimonia* because they are simply *unwilling* or actually *incapable* of doing so. This • question is one which will become increasingly important for our discussion over the course of the next three chapters. For there we shall see how Aristotle, together with the Stoics and the Epicureans, attempts to respond to Plato's initial outlook on virtue, wisdom and happiness, and address the question of the extent to which we may regard happiness as something which is essentially 'up to us'.

Does Plato initially believe that Socrates' interlocutors must simply try harder to listen and learn from what he has to offer? Or does he mean to suggest that individuals like Laches, Nicias, Euthyphro and Hippias are actually incapable of demonstrating the kind of focus and determination that are required for moral progress? These are the sorts of questions that Plato's early and transition?! dialogues seem to leave unanswered. But in emphasising the importance of character in the development of virtue and wisdom it is clear that they mean to suggest that wuhout these kinds of fundamental personal qualities, we will fail in efforts to do genuinely well and be happy.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF LUCK IN ARISTOTLE'S ACCOUNT OF THE GOOD HUMAN LIFE

Part I: Introduction

In examining the Greek's notion of *eudaimonia,* or human flourishing, and the views held by the ancient Greek philosophers on the accessibility of the good human life, the first three chapters of my thesis have focussed on Plato's account of human flourishing. In these chapters we have seen the role of virtue, wisdom, education, constitutive luck and certain social and political conditions in Plato's account of the very best human life. We have also seen the emphasis he places on certain fundamental personal qualities, such as sincerity, stamina, courage and humility, and the need for individuals to develop these attributes in order to become *eudaimdn.* From this perspective, we can see what Plato comes to regard as the necessary conditions for a good human life. We can also see why Plato comes to believe that most human beings will *fail* to meet these conditions and, thus, fall short of what it takes to live as happily as any human being can live. And with this information in hand, we can begin to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding Plato's *descriptive* and *prescriptive* remarks about happiness and the human condition, and the challenges that he believes we must overcome in order to do well and be happy.

For the purpose of the next two chapters, I wish to examine what Aristotle has to say about the conditions for a good human life. Drawing on the themes that we have considered in the preceding chapters, I will attempt to explain what Aristotle sees as the essential requirements for the good person's life and how his views compare with Plato's own on the issue of the availability of human flourishing. Taking, as my starting point, Aristotle's claim that we are partly or 'jointly' responsible for our own states of character and ensuing success,[249]1 will divide my discussion into two parts. The first part will address the issue of what Aristotle regards as the sorts of things that are

[249]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book III: 1114b22-23. There, Aristotle writes: '...for we are ourselves somehow part-causes *(sunaitioi)* of our states of character.'

fundamental for a good human life and essentially 'up to us' in our pursuit of happiness. The second part will address the issue of what Aristotle takes to be fundamental for happiness but essentially 'outside our control' when it comes to the development of a good and happy human life. Taking the latter issue first, this chapter will focus on the kinds of things that Aristotle thinks must 'go our way' in life if we are to live well and happily and, thus, the role of luck in Aristotle's account of the good human life. Having considered these aspects of Aristotle's ethical theory, I will then examine those things that Aristotle thinks are *not* up &> us in our pursuit of happiness in Chapter 5. There, we shall see the sorts of things that Aristotle regards as being both essential for happiness and either antecedent to, or independent from, our own actions, efforts, and intentions.

In examining the role of luck in Aristotle's account of the good human life, I will divide the discussion in this chapter into seven parts. In Part II of this chapter, I will focus on the issue of moral luck. There, I will outline Thomas Nagel's account of the different kinds of moral luck that may impede or prevent the moral agent's efforts to live and do well. I will also distinguish between two important 'moral links'. The first of these links relates to the contingent factors that may affect the development of moral *agency.* The second of these links relates to the contingent factors that may play a role in one's performance of moral *actions.*

In Part III, I will examine the leading positions in the contemporary literature regarding Aristotle's perspective on the first of these moral links. There, we shall see what Martha Nussbaum, Terence Irwin, Steven White and John Cooper have to say about Aristotle's account of the role of luck in the performance of moral actions. In Part IV, I will evaluate the views of Nussbaum, Irwin, White and Cooper on this issue in the light of what Aristotle has to say about it in the *Ethics.* In Part V, I will discuss Thomas Nagel's account of the challenge that awaits modern ethicists and show how this compares with Aristotle's own challenge in *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* and provides us with a contemporary spin on an ancient ethical problem. In Part VI, I will address what Aristotle has to say in relation to the second of these moral links. This will involve an examination of what Aristotle has to say in *Politics* regarding the events which make possible the full development of moral agency. And in Part VII, I will sum up the results of this examination and draw some conclusions about Aristotle's account of the role of luck in the good human life.

In pursuing these lines of enquiry, I will point out the need for us to recognise that there are two important moral links that may be said to be governed by luck. I will also point out that we need to consider what Aristotle has to say in relation to *both* Gf these links in order to understand the full implications of his account of the role of luck in the good human life. In doing so, 1 will show that whereas a great deal of attention has been paid in recent debates to what Aristotle has to say in relation to the *first* of these moral links, his views in relation to the *second* moral link have been largely ignored or misunderstood. Accordingly, I will argue that when we consider what Aristotle has to say in *Politics* regarding the contingencies that are associated with the development of moral agency, we must recognise that Aristotle's remarks in *Politics* effectively widen the scope for luck to impede one's moral progress. I will also argue that this demonstrates the need for us to both qualify some of his earlier remarks in the *Ethics,* and acknowledge the fact that the role of luck in Aristotle's account of the good human life is more *complex* than often thought.

Part II: The issue of moral luck

Section 1: Nagel's taxonomy

In considering the role that luck plays in Aristotle's account of the good human life, it is important to begin with an understanding of the different *types* of luck that have been thought to affect morality, or at least the different *levels* upon which luck may be said to intervene in our moral practices.

In *Mortal Questions,*[250] Thomas Nagel describes four types of luck that have been thought to affect moral action and what he refers to as 'the natural objects of moral assessment.'[251] These include: 1) *constitutive luck,* which has to do with the kind of inclinations, capacities and temperament one is either born with or predisposed to develop; 2) *luck in one's circumstances,* whereby the kind of problems and situations one faces may determine whether an agent's true moral character is exposed, or whether one will be given the requisite opportunities and experiences to actualise certain natural

[250] Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions,* Cambridge University Press, U.S.A., 1979, chapter 3. See pp. 24-38, especially pp. 28ff.
[251] ibid.

moral tendencies;[252] 3) *luck in how one is determined by antecedent circumstances,* such as properties of temperament not subject to one's will, or the prospects for the freedom of the will itself; and 4) *luck in the way one's actions and projects turn out.*

Nagel's taxonomy provides us with a useful starting point for our discussion. For, whereas some of the types of luck that Nagel describes relate to the development of moral *agency,* others - or at least one other - will be associated with the performance of complete or successful moral *actions.* By complete or successful moral actions, I mean the kind of actions in which an agent's efforts are neither obstructed, nor fail to bring about the results that he or she intended. Accordingly, whereas constitutive luck and luck in how one is determined by antecedent circumstances appear to condition the possibility of moral *agency,* luck in the way one's actions and projects turn out appears to ground the possibility of a moral agent performing what I have referred to as complete or successful moral *actions.* This distinction between contingent factors that may contribute to moral agency and contingencies that are associated with moral actions will be crucial for our examination of Aristotle's views on the role of luck in the good human life.

At this stage of our examination, it is important to acknowledge that the second type of luck that Nagel describes, namely, luck in one's circumstances, may prove to be difficult to locate within this basic dichotomy. This is because Nagel seems to suggest that it touches on issues regarding both the evaluation of an agent's *existing* moral character, and the potential for her to develop what can only be described as a *predestined* moral character. However, given the fact that Aristotle seems not to be

[252]Nagel uses a political example to illustrate the kind of luck in one's circumstances that he thinks may determine whether one's moral fibre has the opportunity to come to light, and hence whether one's true moral character will be given the chance to be judged correctly. This example involves members of the general public in Nazi Germany, for whom Nagel thinks there was an obvious opportunity to behave either heroically or badly in a dangerous situation. Nagel believes that these individuals were presented with this opportunity when they faced the decision of either opposing the Nazi regime or staying quiet in the face of this regime's evidently immoral and tyrannical conduct. He also suggests that, as most of these people opted to stay quiet, and not oppose the force of this aggressor, this provides us with an historical example of a situation in which the 'moral records' of certain individuals were changed forever due to a certain set of circumstances that called upon them to act in a way that would distinguish or disgrace themselves. For more discussion on this point, see Nagel (1979b), pp. 33-34.

concerned with this type of luck, it seems reasonable for us to side-step this problem by putting this type of luck to one side and excluding it from our present examination.[253]

Section 2: Two important 'moral links' regarding the development of moral agency and the performance of moral actions

Having drawn our attention to this distinction between moral *agency* and moral *actions,* and outlined some of the types of luck that have been attributed to their development, it is clear that we need to isolate two separate points in time at which luck may impede, or perhaps even prevent, our moral progress, and, thus, two important links that may be said to be governed by moral luck. The first of these links relates to the gap that may exist between one's natural constitution and one's ability to cultivate a virtuous or morally good character. The second of these links relates to the gap that may divide our efforts to live and do well, having already established a morally good character, and the actual results of those good efforts and intentions.

It shGuld be clear from my discussion so far that any thorough examination and assessment of the merits and contemporary relevance of Aristotle's views on the role of luck in the good human life needs to consider what Aristotle has to say in relation to *both* of these links that I have described. However, while the recent literature on Aristotle's ethics has paid a great deal of attention to the vexed question of how we ought to interpret Aristotle's views on the contingencies that are associated with this *second* type of link, Aristotle's views on *this first* type of link seem to have been somewhat underrated, overlooked and often misunderstood. Part of the reason for this seems to be the general tendency that has developed in recent debates to focus on what Aristotle has to say in the *Ethics* on the need for luck to shield one's *actions* from ultimate disaster - and how even the good person's life may be 'fragile'[254] or vulnerable in this *particular* respect - in *isolation* from what Aristotle has to say about *other* types of luck in his other works.

[253] As far as I am aware, Aristotle does not think that there is such a thing as *a predestined* moral character. In relation to this point, Julia Annas has also argued that, 'Aristotle does not discuss this and presumably does not think that accidents of situation are central to issues of moral development.' See Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 377. For more discussion on this issue in relation to Aristotle's moral theory, see Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame: Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1980, chapter 4.
[254]to use one of Martha Nussbaum's expressions.

Another source of the problem seems l mmon misconception that Aristotle's view of moral luck ultimately shares mv same parochial outlook that Plato has regarding the necessity of constitutive luck and the thought that, as a consequence, there is nothing really useful or interesting to say about it. Here, I have in mind the kind of dismissive attitude displayed by Bernard Williams in his seminal paper entitled 'Moral Luck'.[255] It is in this paper that Williams follows Nagel's lead in rejecting the Kantian view that, 'the niggardly endowment of step-motherly nature' plays no role in determining one's fitness for moral action and responsibility;[256] thereby conceding the possibility that one's natural inclinations *may* in fact prevent one from acquiring an outlook conducive to moral agency. But it is in this paper that Williams also ultimately condemns what he refers to as 'certain doctrines of classical antiquity' that he thinks represent 'the most extreme versions of this outlook [on the role of constitutive moral luck] in the Western tradition.'[257]

Given what has been stated thus far, my main objective in this chapter is to restore some of the balance in this debate in favour of a more comprehensive, and perhaps even cautious, approach towards Aristotle's views on the role of luck in the good and moral life. Accordingly, I will endeavour to address what Aristotle has to say in relation to both of the links that I have outlined and, drawing on what he has to say in both the *Ethics* and *Politics,* I shall attempt to outline some of the conclusions that can be drawn regarding the sorts of conditions, disasters or ill fortune that Aristotle takes to be sufficient to break these links. In providing some comparative remarks regarding these conclusions and my findings on Plato's own perspective on this matter, I shall also attempt to help remedy some of the problems that have arisen with the tendency to assimilate Aristotle's views on luck into a more Platonic framework.

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[255]in Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 20-39.

[256]For Kant's view, see H. J. Paton (trans.), *The Moral Law. Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals. Immanuel Kant,* Routledge, New York, 1989, Ch. I: 394, p. 62. See also Ch. I: 394, p. 62, where, in speaking of the function of reason, Kant suggests that nature attaches reason to our will 'as its governor.' For Williams' view, see Williams (1981), pp. 20-22, and 123, where Williams insists that, '...there is good reason to think that there are no external reasons for action.' For Nagel's view, see Nagel (1979b), pp. 33ff, where Nagel provides reasons for his decision that, 'Kant's conclusion remains intuitively unacceptable.'

[257]Accordingly, Williams claims that for them, '...it was a matter of constitutive luck that one was a sage, or capable of becoming one: for the many and vulgar this was not (on the prevailing view) an available course.' See Williams (1981), p. 20.

In the course of this discussion we will find that it is important and fruitful to consider both what Aristotle has to say about the contingent factors associated with the development of moral agency, and hence the role that luck has to play on this level, *and* the contingencies that he attributes to the performance of moral actions. However, we will also find that whilst it is, indeed, both useful and important to attend to *both* of these issues, we may not be able to reach the same le *A* of confidence in our conclusions about what Aristotle has to say about each of them. The reason for this is that Aristotle himself seems not to provide entirely concise and consistent comments about the extent to which our efforts to become and be happy *are* subject to luck. And yet, this will not detract from our ability to uncover the central challenges that Aristotle believes the good person must meet in order to live a genuinelv happy life. Indeed, it is my suggestion that this will actually help us to develop a *better* understanding of Aristotle's views, and also help to illuminate a deep problem for the way we think about morality and perhaps even moral theory itself.

As the main focus of recent debates about Aristotle's views on luck seems to have centred on Aristotle's views regarding moral *action,* and the extent to which success on this level can bridge the gap between being good and living well, I shall consider Aristotle's views in relation to this particular link first. I will also begin by outlining some of the leading positions on this issue in the contemporary literature.

Part III: Aristotle's views on the role of luck in the performance of moral actions

Section 1: The context of the debate in the contemporary literature

In the recent literature on Aristotle's views regarding the role of luck in relation to virtuous activity, commentators seem to have adopted one of two positions. On the one side we have scholars such as Martha Nussbaum and Terence Irwin. They have argued that although Aristotle thinks virtuous activity plays a *dominant role* in human flourishing, his admission that ill-fortune *may* prevent even the most virtuous of people from living and faring well highlights his belief that luck or fortune plays an irreducible and inevitably significant part in the formation and loss of human happiness. On the

other side we have scholars such as Steven White and John Cooper. They have attempted to play down the role of luck in Aristotle's account of human flourishing. Accordingly, White has expressed the view that Nussbaum's outlook on the apparent 'fragility' of the good human life is somewhat overestimated, or perhaps ill-suited to the content and spirit of Aristotle's ethical works. And, in his appraisal of the strength of Aristotelian virtue in enabling moral agents to fortify themselves from disaster, White has been supported by John Cooper.

It is important to note at the outset that, although the proponents of this debate may disagree about the *extent* to which Aristotle allows for the possibility for luck to erode one's ability to continue living and doing well, they all agree that at *some* point, and with *some* particular kinds of devastation, one's deprivation of *eudaimonia* will be certain. And this is something that they must concede on the basis of what Aristotle has to say in the *Ethics* regarding the person who is strung out and tortured on the rack, and his oft-quoted example of the fate of Priam. In relation to the first of these examples, Aristotle claims that, 'those who say that the victim on the rack or the man who falls into great misfortunes is happy if he is good are, whether they mean to or not, talking nonsense.'[258] In relation to the second example, Aristotle insists that genuine happiness requires 'not only complete excellence but also a complete life, since many changes occur in life, and all manner of chances, and the most prosperous may fall into great misfortunes in old age, as is told of Priam in the Trojan Cycle; and one who has experienced such chances and has ended wretchedly no one calls happy.'[259] What is decisive in the variegated outlooks adopted by these scholars, however, and hence what will prove to be crucial for us in this debate, are the elements that each of them take to be necessary, by Aristotle's lights, to *sustain* virtuous activity, and the capacity that each of them *see for* virtuous activity in generating and sustaining human happiness in the face of genuine conflict or adversity.

With this information in hand, let us now consider the views of Nussbaum, Irwin, White and Cooper on the relation between luck and moral action in Aristotle's account of the good human life.

[258]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VII: 1153b 19-21.

Section 2: Nussbaum's position

In *The Fragility of Goodness,* Martha Nussbaum mounts a case for the view that Aristotle's conception of happiness reinstates the effects that fortune may have on our lives in a way that exposes a very real and significant gap between one's *being* a morally good person and one's ability to *live* a good and successful moral life.[260] In examining what she takes to be Plato's efforts to curtail the effects of fortune, and what she describes as 'the Platonic aspiration' to make ethics into a *technē* (or craft) with which one can 'triumph over *tuchē* (or fortune)',[261] Nussbaum argues that in responding to *these* works, Aristotle's writings on luck portray a kind of good life for humanity that is essentially more vulnerable to catastrophe or ungoverned fortune and, consequently, 'more open and less ambitious for control, than Plato said it was.'[262] Accordingly, Nussbaum suggests that Aristotle develops a conception of a human being's proper relationship to fortune 'that returns to and further articulates many of the insights of tragedy.'[263]

Now, in saying that the best human life may be open to chance happenings in the world that, are inextricably linked to ill-fortune, Nussbaum seems to be suggesting that such events, and the contingencies that surround them, may actually *contribute* to the wealth of our experiences and thus give meaning to, and further enrich, the value of

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[259]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1100a 1-8.

[260]or, as Nussbaum describes it, 'a gap between being good and living well.' See Nussbaum (1986), p. 322.

[261]ibid.,p. 291. See also p. 84.

[262]ibid., pp. 290-291. There, Nussbaum explains that when she speaks of 'Plato' in this context, she means the dialogues of Plato's 'middle period', and not *Phaedms, Laws* or *Statesman.* As she explains, Aristotle's writings on fortune are thought to be a response to these middle works and the views that they, alone, express. According to Nussbaum, Aristotle 'shows little concern with Plato's later dialogues, possibly... because many of his criticisms antedate them and they are composed in response to these criticisms.' It is noteworthy that in chapter 7 of *The Fragility of Goodness,* Nussbaum argues that in *Phaedrus,* Plato 'systematically criticises the middle-period view as insufficiently responsive to the positive role of vulnerable values in the good life.' In chapter 6 of this work she also argues that, 'this criticism is prepared by the *Symposium's* sympathetic portrayal of the life that it criticises.' For more on this point, see ibid., p. 87.

[263]ibid., p. 237. In *Love's Knowledge. Essays on Philosophy and Literature,* Nussbaum confirms this interpretation of Aristotle's ethical perspective. There, she writes: 'Aristotle defends the claim of tragedy to tell the truth; and his own ethical view, as I have argued, is close to views that can be found in the tragedies.' 'The great tragic plots', she contends, 'explore the gap between our goodness and our good living, between what we are (our character, aspirations, values) and how humanly well we manage to live. They show us reversals happening to good-charactered...people, exploring the many ways in which being of a certain good human character falls short of sufficiency for *eudaimoniaS* For more discussion on this point, see Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge Essays on Philosophy and Literature,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, pp. 18 and 382.

human lives, rather than destroy or undermine such things. It is in *this sense* that Nussbaum sees Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* as one which breaks with Plato and renounces the Platonic aspiration to avoid, rather than embrace, certain vulnerable and often painful components of human experience.[264] The good life for Aristotle is thus understood not as one which seeks to provide an *immunity* from the vulnerable or unstable things in life, nor one which refuses to confer value on such things in the name of rational self-sufficiency. On the contrary, it is seen as one which includes such things as necessary and important components of agoo^and essentially *human* life.[265]

However, in suggesting that Aristotle values the insights of tragedy and attaches 'great importance'[266] to tragic poetry as a source of moral learning, Nussbaum also means to suggest that Aristotle *accepts* the view of the human condition that these works present. In this way, she also suggests that Aristotle embraces the tragedians' illustration of the point that *despite* our efforts to develop sound and moral characters, and despite our efforts to make choices and act on the *basis* of those characters, our chances to *do well* and *be happy* can be dashed by the sudden events of misfortune, and the random, uncontrollable events in the external world over which we have no control. For, as Nussbaum suggests, we are talking here about 'events that influence the agent's life in a way that is not amenable to his or her control.'[267]

Agamemnon, Antigone, and Hecuba are examples from ancient tragedy that Nussbaum invokes to talk about genuinely good people who find themselves in disastrous situations and undergo the kinds of catastrophes and extreme forms of

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[264]Nussbaum takes the Platonic approach to be one which acknowledges only 'maximally stable and invulnerable things as intrinsically valuable activities', thereby 'narrowing the specification of the good life.' Accordingly, she suggests that, for Plato, 'the good person attaches no importance to any external loss, to any loss, that is, in a sphere of life that is beyond the control of the rational soul.' See Nussbaum (1986), pp. 319,329 and 84.

[265]on this point, see also Nussbaum (1990), pp. 184 and 188.

[266]See Nussbaum (1986), pp. 319 and 378-379.

[267]ibid., p. 319. In *Love's Knowledge* (on pp. 43-44), Nussbaum also writes: '..the Aristotelian conception holds that a correct understanding of the ways in which human aspirations to live well can be checked by uncontrolled events is in fact an important part of ethical understanding - not, as the Platonist would have it, a deception.' Cf. Plato's view in Book III *of Republic* where, at 392a-b, he claims that the poets 'speak wrongly about human beings in matters of greatest importance' when they show the lives of good and just people being seriously affected by adverse circumstances and, as a consequence, should be forbidden to tell this story and commanded to tell the opposite. As Nussbaum points out, in so far as Plato thinks that the good person is 'altogether self-sufficient', these stories of tragic action become irrelevant to him in his search for human good living and the right sort of moral education. For more discussion on this point, see Nussbaum (1986), p. 385.

suffering that inevitably lead to their downfall. All of these experiences, she contends, are due to forces well beyond the control of the moral agents involved, and all of these individuals, as Aristotle says himself in *Poetics,* testify to the kind of vulnerability and hardship that people like ourselves are susceptible to, and thus may well have to endure.[268] Such contingencies may not be able to reduce the genuinely virtuous agent to a state of complete and utter ruin, as Aristotle concedes in Book I of *Nicomachean Ethics,*[269] but in so far as they may hold the power to prevent us from living the kind of life that he sees as worthwhile for humanity, and to the extent that these tragic plays show what *can* happen to an individual caught in the grip of such forces, this consideration seems to provide little comfort for us and no alleviation from the plight of the vulnerable moral agent.

Given this admission that there *will* be some extreme cases in which nothing that a moral agent does will be sufficient to prevent the loss of *eudaimonia,* Nussbaum seeks to outline what, according to Aristotle, goes wrong in such cases, and what she thinks will prove to be sufficient to break this link between the development of good character and one's ability to succeed in living well.

Taking Aristotle's conception *of eudaimonia* as something which essentially entails actually *living* and *doing* well, rather than simply developing and maintaining a morally good *condition,* Nussbaum points out that how stable the good life is will inevitably depend on the stability of virtuous activity itself. For by this very *definition* of *eudaimonia,* Aristotle makes virtuous activity the cornerstone of human flourishing

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[268]Aristotle suggests that tragic action should be constructed within a play so as to allow for appropriate emotional responses of pity and fear. This, he insists, requires that the characters shown therein *'m* people to whom we can relate, 'for our pity is awakened by undeserved misfortune, and our fear by that uf someone just like ourselves - pity for the undeserving sufferer and fear for the man like ourselves...' See *Poetics:* Ch. 13: 1453alff.

[269]at 1100b33-l 101 a7, Aristotle actually says the following: 'If activities are, as we said, what determines the character of life, no blessed *(makarios)* man can become miserable *(athlios);* for he will never do the acts that are hateful and mean. For the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances...And if this is the case, the happy *(eudaimōn)* man can never become miserable - though he will not reach blessedness, if he meets with fortunes like those of Priam.' For a discussion on the controversial issue of to how to explain the difference between the 'happy' or *eudaimōn* individual and the 'blessed' or *makarios* one, see Nussbaum (1986), p. 333; and Steven White, *Sovereign Virtue. Aristotle on the Relation Between Happiness and Prosperity,* Stanford University Press, California, 1992, p. 130. See also Martha Nussbaum, 'Tragedy and Self-sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity', A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics,* Princeton University Press, Oxford, 1992, pp. 284-7. In this article, Nussbaum argues that Aristotle would reject Euripides' story in which Hecuba ceases to be a good moral agent.

and, therefore, the key factor in his account of the good human life. As Aristotle points out in *Nicomachean Ethics,* it makes 'no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state or in activity. For the state may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well.'[270] And again in *Eu^emian Ethics,* he writes: '...to do well and live well is held to be identical with being happy, but each of these - living and doing - is an employment, an activity; for the practical life is one of using or employing...'[271] Accordingly, Aristotle's ethical works may well acknowledge the need for certain external goods, such as health, friends, and a moderate degree of wealth, to contribute something valuable to our lives,[272] but as Nussbaum observes, Aristotle is also quick to point out that these things will be worthless, and perhaps even harmful, unless they are allied with practical wisdom and governed by the kind of virtuous activity that is required to put them to good use.[273] Hence, virtuous activity will remain, for Aristotle, the *dominant component* of human flourishing.

In the light of this point, Nussbaum suggests that although Aristotle shows some concern for the prospect that certain uncontrolled events may bring about damage to *moral character,* his main concern is to show that when bad luck does damage an agent's attempt to live well, it does *so primarily* through impeding *moral action.*[274] Following this line of argument, Nussbaum outlines what she describes as the four different types of impediment situations for moral agents attempting to live well through

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[270]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1098b32-1099a3, Book VII: 1152b33ff and Book IX: 1169b29ff. See also *Politics:* Book VII: 1325a32, where Aristotle states that, 'happiness is activity'; and *Poetics:* Ch. 6: 1450al6ff, where Aristotle writes: 'Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life. [All human happiness or misery takes the form of action; the end for which we live is a certain kind of activity, not a quality. Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions that we are happy or the reverse.] In a play accordingly they do not act in order to portray the characters; they include the characters for the sake of the action. So that it is the action in it, ie. its plot, that is the end and purpose of the tragedy...'

[21x]*Eudemian Ethics:* Book II: 1219bl-3.

[272]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099a33-b6.

[273]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099a30-31. See also *Politics:* Book VII: 1332a 19-27, where Aristotle writes: 'A good man may make the best even of poverty and disease, and the other ills of life; but he can only attain happiness under the opposite conditions (for this also has been determined in the *Ethics;* that the good man is he for whom, because he is excellent, the things that are absolutely good are g'xxi; it is also plain that his use of these goods must be excellent and in the absolute sense good). This makes men fancy that external goods are the cause of happiness yet we might as well say that a brilliant performance on the lyre was to be attributed to the instrument and not the skill of the performer.' It is noteworthy that on this point Aristotle seems to have been influenced by some of the remarks that Plato has Socrates express in *Euthydemus.* For evidence of this, see *Euthydemus:* 278e-283a.

the exercise of virtuous activity. These impediment situations include the complete blockage *or* the mere constraining of virtuous activity through the deprivation of an *instrumental resource,* such as one's inheritance or one's political rights; and the complete blockage *or* mere constraining of virtuous activity through the absence of an *object* required^br that activity, such as a friend or a fellow citizen who is in need of a moral agent's help.[275] And with this list in mind, Nussbaum suggests that, 'we begin to notice the extent to which an average life is hedged round by dangers of impediment.'[276]

In outlining these specific explanations for what goes wrong when moral agents do fail to overcome the effects of ill fortune, Nussbaum puts the emphasis squarely on the interference of virtuous activity and the obstruction of certain personal human relations which she takes to provide both the objects for, and instrumental means to accomplish that activity. As a result, Nussbaum suggests that to the extent that Aristotle allows for misfortune to impair both our vulnerable human relationships and their associated virtuous activities, he presents an account of the good life which is only 'tolerably stable in the face of the world'; it may not leave us with no other way of viewing ourselves other than as mere *victims* of luck, but it certainly does keep us in 'a significant sense' at 'the mercy of luck'. More importantly, his account of the role of luck in the good human life also acknowledges that there is a very real gap between being good and doing well - that uncontrolled happenings can, as Nussbaum suggests, 'step into' and thereby prevent our good states of character from finding their proper fulfilment in action.[277]

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[274]See Nussbaum (1986), pp. 336-340; and Nussbaum (1990), p. 369: n. 6.

[275]See Nussbaum (1986), p. 334. See also pp. 327ff, where Nussbaum provides a summary of these impediment situations and an explication of these specific categories. It is noteworthy that Nussbaum acknowledges that Aristotle does not actually draw these distinctions explicitly himself. For her view on how such 'impediment situations' may also affect 'the internal springs of action themselves', see pp. 337ff.

[276]ibid., p. 328.

[277]This, she suggests, is an inevitable consequence of a conception of human flourishing that does not shy away from conferring value on the more 'riskier' aspects of human lives. It is also her view that, 'we can see how closely risk and richness of value are connected: for the same evaluative choices that enhance the quality and completeness of a human life - the choice to value activities rather than just intellectual keenness - open the agent to certain risks of disaster.' Accordingly, Nussbaum suggests that, 'any conception of good living that we will consider rich enough to be worth going for will contain this element of risk.' See ibid. p. 340. For further discussion on this point, see also ibid., pp. 300, 329, 334 and 382.

Section 3: Irwin's position

Terence Irwin provides us with an interpretation of Aristotle's views on this particular moral link that effectively widens the gap that Nussbaum identifies regarding one's ability to be good and live well. The main reason for this if that, in his explication of Aristotle's views in the *Ethics,* Irwin adopts what has become known as the 'external use' reading of the role that external goods play in Aristotle's account of the good human life. This simply means that, whereas scholars such as Nussbaum take the value of external goods, such as health and wealth, to be primarily *instrumental* in so far as they provide the resources to engage in virtuous activity, and only 'importantly relational' in so far as they provide direct *objects for* such r/wtivity, Irwin takes some of the external goods that Aristotle speaks of to be *intrinsic component parts* of the good life itself. In this way, Irwin suggests that, once these external goods are allied with virtue and a stable moral character, some of them are supposed to be valued^or *themselves,* and, therefore, as things necessary, according to Aristotle's picture, for us to hang on to if we are to avoid the loss (or deprivation[278]) of human happiness.[279]

Accordingly, Irwin suggests that although Nussbaum is right to point out that ill-fortune *may* damage one's attempt to be happy by impeding one's exercise of virtuous activity, her suggestion that this is *the primary reason* why things go wrong when morally good people like Priam and the other unfortunate characters depicted in ancient tragedy *lose their way,* is mistaken. For, on Irwin's reading of Aristotle, part of the reason why ill-fortune and the uncontrolled happenings of the external world can and *do* prevent good people from leading morally good and flourishing lives is that in these situations the moral agents also lose things which *are* actually genuinely valuable to them, such as their family, their children, their power, or their freedom, and, as such, the very things that, 'are valued for their own sake and belong to a complete life.'[280]

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[278]Note that whereas some passages in *Nicomachean Ethics* suggest the possibility of the *loss* of *eudaimonia* in such cases, other sections *of Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia* suggest that *deprivation* is a more accurate description of what occurs here. For, in these works, Aristotle suggests that *eudaimonia* is something that will only ever be assessed at the *end* of one's life. For evidence of this, see *Eudemian Ethics:* Book II: 1219b4-8; and *Magna Moralia:* Book I: 1185a5-9. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1100b 1-2 and 1105a33.

[279]Terence Irwin, 'Permanent Happiness: Aristotle and Solon', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 3, 1985, p. 96.

[280]ibid. In a more recent work, Irwin makes the important qualification that, according to Aristotle, the virtuous person 'only pursues and values the external goods as instrumental and intrinsic goods within the

Taking this notion of the intrinsic value of external goods, and working with a particular interpretation of how the notion of *teleion* functions as a formal condition of *completeness* in Aristotle's conception of happiness,[281] Irwin suggests that, according to Aristotle, the virtuous person loes not value and pursue external goods merely for the purpose of *doing* well, but also because such things help 'to realise his whole nature as a human being.'[282] In this light, Irwin suggests that the good person 'does not want to be ugly or solitary; he wants friendship, honour and success',[283] and these things are supposed to be considered by us as legitimate aims. As a result, the loss of such external goods will lead one to become 'a poor candidate for happiness'; on Aristotle's picture 'we cannot be magnificent or magnanimous if we are not rich', writes Irwin, 'and we cannot live with our friends if they die at the wrong times.'[284] This, Irwin concedes, may well make certain components of our happiness more vulnerable to ill-fortune and the uncontrolled happenings of the external world, but, 'if happiness is comprehensive, and goods dependent on fortune are genuine goods, then happiness must include them.'[285]

Having stated this, it is clear that on this particular level of morality, Irwin sees quite a significant role for luck to play in Aristotle's account of the good human life. Irwin may well attempt to show that in so far as Aristotle takes the 'primary'[286] or 'dominant'[287] component of happiness to be virtuous activity, and this itself is said to be 'permanent' and 'stable', and 'always to be preferred over any other component of happiness',[288] Aristotle's conception of human happiness will in fact be *based* on something both permanent and stable.[289] However, given that he thinks that certain

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limits set by his conception of his own good and the common good.' See Terence Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles,* Oxford University Press, New York, U.S.A., 1988, pp. 442-443.

[28']See Terence Irwin, 'Stoic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness', Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker (eds), *The Norms of Nature: studies in Hellenistic ethics,* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1986, pp. 206-208.

[282]ibid., p. 207. This seems to fit well with Aristotle's discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: Ch. 8: 1178b28ff.

[283]Irwin (1986), pp. 207-208.

[284]Irwin (1985), p. 94. See also Irwin (1988), pp. 462-464, where Irwin confirms his view that, on Aristotle's picture, private property is required to exercise virtues such as friendship and temperance. Cf. Steven White's view in White (1992), p. 213, where he suggests that, 'having few resources does not stifle virtuous giving, since liberality is measured not by quantity but by character...'

[285]Irwin(1985),p.94.

[286]Irwin (1988), p. 409.

[287]ibid., p. 446 and chapter 2: n. 2, p. 609. See also Irwin (1985), p. 108.

[288]See Irwin (1985), pp. 106ff; and Irwin (1988), chapter 17: n. 2, p. 609.

[289]as he does in 'Permanent Happiness: Aristotle and Solon', on pp. 106ff, and especially p. 123 where he writes: 'We should realise that the Aristotelian virtues are the dominant component of happiness, and that, though happiness itself is unstable, its dominant component is stable.' On p. 120, Irwin also contends that

external goods are also *component parts* of Aristotle's conception of happiness, and that our possession of such things will *not* be guaranteed,[290] his final analysis of Aristotle's view must reiterate this point that happiness *itself* will *not* be stable in so far as these other component parts are subject to fortune and the uncontrolled happenings of the external world.[291]

Section 4: White's position

In contrast with Nussbaum and Irwin, Steven White presents an account of Aristotle's views on the role of luck in this particular moral link that attempts to rein in the effects of fortune. According to White, both Nussbaum and Irwin offer interpretations of Aristotle's perspective on this issue that fail to do justice to two central themes in the *Ethics.* One of these themes, he suggests, relates to Aristotle's use of the notion of *teleion,* or 'completeness', as a formal condition of happiness and the scope that it allows for some happy lives to be better than others. The other, he insists, relates to Aristotle's emphasis on the importance of how a moral agent *responds* to situations of genuine conflict or adversity and how this response will determine whether an individual manages to continue to live well in the face of such misfortune. The first of these criticisms is clearly directed at Terence Irwin, and Irwin's insistence on what can be described as an 'additive approach' to the value of external goods. The second of these criticisms seems more applicable to Martha Nussbaum's exposition of Aristotle's views. In particular, White objects to Nussbaum's decision that the important personal relations that are required for the good human life together with the virtuous activities that are associated with them are, indeed, ultimately subject to certain *external* conditions, rather than *intrinsically* valuable goods.

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a moral agent's failure to live well in the face of adversity cannot remove the virtue that is the dominant component of his or her happiness. On this point, it is noteworthy that Aristotle suggests that if this does happen, it cannot be the case that the person was actually 'truly good' in the first place. For evidence of this, see *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1100b20-21 and 1105a33.

[290]In *Aristotle's First Principles,* Irwin also concludes that according to Aristotle's views in the *Ethics,* 'rational planning cannot expect to secure every necessary condition of the happy life,, and that some of its conditions are exposed to chance and to external conditions.' See Irwin (1988), p. 456.

[291]This may leave room for the possibility that, having fallen from *eudaimonia,* one's potential to return to that former state of well-being will remain intact. However, once again, the realisation of that return will inevitably be determined *by* luck rather than one's own efforts. See Irwin's discussion on this point in Irwin (1985), pp. 106ff.

According to White, the additive approach to the value of external goods in Aristotle's account of happiness is systematically flawed. This approach assumes that each of the external goods that Aristotle speaks of are supposed to have an intrinsic value and that each of these goods, if not by token then at least by type.[202] is required to provide the sum total of human happiness that is properly called *eudaimonia.* Irwin appears to endorse this approach when he states that, by Aristotle's lights, happiness 'must extend to *all* the goods that a rational person is justified in pursuing'; that 'my ultimate end includes everything that is good'; and that, as a consequence, 'if we can add some good to make our life better it cannot have achieved the complete good, and hence cannot be happy.'[293]

In contrast with this, White presents the innovative idea that Aristotle's notion of *teleion* does not refer to aspects of completeness, but only to the requirement of'an absence of need.'[294] Accordingly, he insists that this particular formal condition for happiness 'leaves unanswered' the question of how many goods and what types of goods will be necessary or sufficient for happiness, but nonetheless indicates that our supreme goal 'certainly would not need to include all final goods, let alone everything worth pursuing.'[295] Taking this distinction between 'not being in need' or 'needy', and 'having everything go as we wish or think best', White suggests that the aim of Aristotle's discussion in the *Ethics,* regarding the notions *of teleion* and self-sufficiency is to characterise what he describes as 'the peculiar fact that while happiness is the best

[292]For Irwin's view, see ibid. pp. 99ff. There, Irwin claims that, 'in saying that no good can be added (to happiness) Aristotle means that no determinable type of good (as opposed to tokens of goods) can be added to make a better good than happiness.' For a criticism of Irwin's solution and the problem that he faces in finding textual support for it, see Annas (1993a), p. 382. As White rightly points out, the view that *eudaimonia* entails everything of any worth taken literally *would* be 'absurd', because in including all the goals that anyone ever seeks it would be utterly impossible to attain it. Moreover, as he rightly points out, this additive approach, taken literally, lacks any basis for objecting that, eventually, such additions would no longer be good. More importantly, it also obscures how even what is essential in some lives is not necessary in others. But what White objects to most about this approach is, however, that it places the emphasis on *types* or *tokens* and their number, rather than the *relations* that exist *between* the relevant goods that go towards making up our final end. On White's view, we cannot even determine the kind of types that will be required for the good human life, let alone how many tokens of each will be necessary, because even this will be determined by the specific 'needs' of each individual moral agent and, thus, vary from case to case. See Steven White, 'Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life?', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy,* 1990, pp. 113 and 124-126; and White (1992), p. 126: n. 23.
[293]Irwin (1986), pp. 207 and 223.
[294]White(1990),p. 118.
[295]ibid., pp. 115 and 110. In contrast, White suggests that, 'nothing in the condition of being most *teleion* requires any specific parts, not even all goals sought for their own sake.'

sort of life, it can still be improved.'[296] This, White takes to be both of central importance in Aristotle's account of the good human life and the basis on which he reaches his own decision that according to Aristotle's ethical works, 'happiness is found in a good life, not only in the very best life' and Ms simply that goal which, chosen always and only for itself, makes life as a whole choice-worthy and not in need.'[297]

On this basis, White presents a case for the view that, although Aristotle concedes that the uncontrolled happenings of the external world may prevent one from living a *better* life than the one currently available, such contingent factors will not deprive a moral agent of a *good life,* or reduce the status of that life to something *less* than good, so long as the moral agent continues to peiceive his or her 'lot in life' as sufficient to continue living well and the one which is 'most choice-worthy'. To illustrate this point, White presents his own version of what, on an Aristotelian picture, would have made the difference between Priam's failure to shake off the effects of ill-fortune and Socrates' ability to continue living well and happily right up until the end of his life. According to this reading of Aristotle, whereas Priam's failure to continue living well in the face of such misfortune must have been due to his inability to withstand the inner turmoil that resulted from the loss of his family and loved ones, Socrates' ability to continue living a virtuous and happy life, notwithstanding the fact that it was cut shori by Athenian authorities, can be attributed to the fact that, for as long as he was alive, and, thus, for as long as virtuous activity remained sovereign over his happiness, Socrates 'continued to do what virtue required' and, in doing so, 'he continued to act on behalf of what he valued most.'[298]

White's second point regarding Aristotle's emphasis on the importance of how a moral agent *responds* to situations of genuine conflict or adversity, and how this response will *determine* whether the link between being good and living well is severed, dovetails with this first point. In relation to this second point, Wliite attempts to reset the parameters that Nussbaum has drawn regarding the extent to which happiness is dependent upon external conditions and other contingent factors not subject to an

[296]ibid.,pp. 118 and 119.
[297]ibid., pp; 136 and 120-121. White also suggests that Aristotle is arguing 'not that his account satisfies all the desires anyone may have but only that people who attain the final end he describes lead an inherently satisfying life.' See White (1992), p. 75.
[298]See White (1992), pp. 125 and 276.

agent's control, by showing that just as Aristotle recognises the importance of the moral agent in determining the 'choiceworthiness' and moral worth of one's life, Aristotle also emphasises the importance of the moral agent's internal capacity to ward off the effects of ill-fortune.

In his attempt to explain what goes wrong when moral agent's like Priam lose the.: way and are prevented from living happily, White begins by rejecting Irwin's external use reading of the valvie of external goods in Aristotle's account of the good life, adopting an intei^iil use reading of the value of those external goods roughly similar to the one that is supported by Nussbaum.[299] He then outlines what he takes to be two separate and decisive factors. These factors include both an external and an internal demand.[300] Accordingly, White suggests that for moral agents to avoid the kind of downfall that is inextricably linked to such hard luck cases, they need to continue, as White says Socrates managed to do, both (i) *doing* what virtue requires and (ii) *valuing* what they are doing, and hence the sort of life that they are leading. Whereas the former entails an external demand, in so far as it is partly dependent upon appropriate conditions in the outside world, the latter clearly represents a specifically internal demand, in so far as it is wholly dependent on the moral agent's own personal outlook.

Emphasising the importance of both of these factors in Aristotle's account., White begins by making the weaker claim that success in overcoming the effects of ill-fortune will *be partly* dependent on an agent being able to continue to *do* well in the restricted circumstances, and *partly* dependent on the way in which an agent *responds* to that new set of restricted circumstances.

From this point, however, White proceeds to strengthen this claim by shifting the focus away from the external demand that he first isolates, and towards the more specifically internal demand. This begins with White's observation that the value of what we do 'should not depend on external results, but on the exercise of virtue and other states of our own soul', and results in his claim that, 'although success in virtuous

[299]More precisely, White's view is that certain external goods, in so far as their need depends only on the ends they can be used to achieve and, thus their instrumental use for virtuous activities, are, on Aristotle's account, only 'preconditions for virtuous activity', rather than essential component parts of happiness itself. See ibid., pp. 114, 123, and especially pp. 111-112.
[300]See ibid., pp. 125ft'. For a more detailed discussion of the fate of Priam, see also pp. 89ff.

endeavours is more desirable and better than failure', since failure detracts from the value of our efforts only to the extent that we are responsible for such failure, 'virtuous actions thwarted by external forces and fortune are no less valuable in themselves.'[301] With this move, White appears to give up his initial external demand for one to continue to actually *do* well in the face of adversity in order not to be deprived of happiness, in favour of the view that *attempting* to do so, and *valuing* those attempts will be sufficient to retain one's happiness. Here, placing the emphasis squarely on the capacity for the moral agent to sustain well-being in the face of adversity, White suggests that success in overcoming the effects of misfortune will actually be *wholly,* rather than *partly,* dependent upon on the way in which moral agents respond to their new set of restricted circumstances. In this light, White presents the rather different conclusion that, 'it is not fortune by itself that can "spoil" our lives for us; rather, depending on how we respond, we may "spoil" our own lives.'[302] Accordingly, this modified view of Aristotle's perspective on this issue suggests that if fortune is to succeed in damaging one's attempt to live well, *it will only ever do so* by eroding the virtuous person's *conception* of that life. 'It lies beyond the compass of theory to say precisely how much misfortune and grief anyone can endure', suggests White, for 'in the end, only the virtuous can say whether they are happy or not, for only they can say whether they find sufficient joy in their lives.'[303] Virtuous activity may well be impeded by the uncontrolled happenings of the external world to the extent that the moral agent is no longer able to perform complete or successful moral actions by securing certain results ./row those actions, but, so long as the moral agent still *thinks* that his or her life is *best* and most choice-worthy, that happiness will remain intact.

Section 5: Cooper's position

In his own writings on the role of the external goods in Aristotle's account of the good life, John Cooper appears to support White's move to limit the scope for luck to

[30']See White (1992), pp. 107-108 and p. 295. White reiterates his point that, when it comes to the virtuous, 'whether or not they achieve their external ends, they have a steady inner source of satisfaction in their constant integrity and unity of purpose.'

[302]ibid., p. 121. On p. 291, White also suggests that if unfortunate people, such as these, 'continue to act for some of what they value most, they may still find joy in their life even when left with meagre resources or struck by grievous loss. Aristotle concedes that disaster can ruin a life...but his aim is only to show it is possible to remain happy by upholding one's sovereign concerns...'

[303]ibid.,p.291.

interfere with virtuous activity and sever the link between being good and living well. Cooper does this by adopting the internal use reading[304] of Aristotle's conception of the value of external goods. He also assumes that, 'the virtuous person will generally and regularly get these goods as an immediate consequence of his being virtuous, so that they should not be counted as goods that he needs as supplements to virtue if he is to be happy.'[305] In doing so, Cooper adopts an interpretation of Aristotle's perspective on this issue which seems to limit the scope for luck to intervene on this particular level of morality further still. For, in attributing a merely instrumental value to such external goods, and allowing for 'the regular success'[306] of the virtuous person's efforts to acquire and maintain those external goods that Aristotle takes to be necessary for happiness, Cooper does away with both Nussbaum's concern about the potential for uncontrolled happening to remove the objects required^/br virtuous activity.[307] He also does away with White's concern that the effects of such uncontrollable forces may threaten an individual's *conception* of the choice-worthiness of his or her way of life. Accordingly, Cooper reduces the scope for luck to interfere with morality on this particular level to an absolute minimum. Here, on Cooper's reading of Aristotle, the only way in which a genuinely virtuous person can be deprived of the chance to flourish on the basis of ill-fortune, is through the loss of the external goods that are required to *continue* acting virtuously.[308] These impediment situations will be rare, according to Cooper. And to add to this picture, Cooper suggests that although there might be a few cases in which a virtuous person's knowledge proves to be insufficient to bring about the desired results in action, 'in so far as happiness consists in deciding and doing what is best', not even these failures will lead to a diminution in one's happiness.[309]

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[304]Cooper's concern is to show that these external goods are only important in so far as they provide, in one way or another, 'the context that virtuous persons as such prefer for the exercise of their virtues.' See John Cooper discussion in 'Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune', in his book entitled *Reason and Emotion. Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1999, p. 309.

[305]ibid., p. 308.

[306]Cooper(1999e),p. 309.

[307]For his more direct criticism of Nussbaum's view, see John Cooper's discussion in 'Aristotle on the Authority of"Appearances'", in John Cooper, *Reason and Emotion. Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theoiy,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1999, pp. 290-291.

[308]See Cooper (1999e), pp. 298,306 and 310.

[309]Cooper also denies that external goods play a role in Aristotle's account of the *development* of the virtues. His interpretation of Aristotle's perspective on the value of external goods is thus restricted to an account of their use in enabling the *continued exercise* of the virtues. See ibid., pp. 309 and 299: n. 13.

Part IV: An evaluation of these contemporary views on Aristotle's account of the role of luck in the performance of moral actions

Section 1: Two competing concerns in Aristotle's *Ethics:* 'completeness' and 'self-sufficiency'

Having examined the views of Nussbaum, Irwin, White and Cooper, we can see how Aristotle's account of the role of luck in the performance of moral actions in the *Ethics* has given rise to much debate. The reason for this appears to be that each of these competing interpretations seeks to do justice to a particular concern that Aristotle expresses in these ethical writings, and yet those concerns, themselves, seem to stand in direct tension with one another. The first of these concerns relates to Aristotle's emphasis on the need for the good life to be *teleion,* or, perhaps, complete and, thus, somehow inclusive of *all* the things that we take to be valuable. In relation to this point, Aristotle states that, '...if there is only one complete end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most complete of these will be what we are seeking.'[310] Accordingly, he points out that happiness will be 'the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing.'[311] This is the concern that Nussbaum and Irwin seek to uphold in a way which qualifies Aristotle's demand for the good human life to be self-sufficient. The second of these concerns relates to Aristotle's emphasis on the need for the good person's life to be self-sufficient and, therefore essentially unmoved by, or somehow *indifferent* towards, the loss or gain of external goods *beyond* a certain point. In relation to this point, Aristotle states that, 'by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is sociable by nature. But some limit must be set to this; for if we extend our requirement to ancestors and to descendants and friends' friends we are in for an infinite series.'[312] And this is the concern that White and Cooper clearly seek to address in a way which qualifies or reconfigures Aristotle's demand for the good human life to be *teleion.*

[310] *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1097a28-30.
[311] *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099a24.
[312] *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1097b8-14.

On the basis of our examination we can also see that which of Aristotle's concerns the proponents of this debate choose to emphasise, and, thus, which way we ourselves ought to go in interpreting Aristotle's views on this matter, is largely dependent on the role that we see for the external goods in Aristotle's conception of happiness. For one's outlook on the role of external goods in Aristotle's conception of the happiness will help to determine the two decisive factors in this debate. They are the elements that Aristotle takes to be necessary to *sustain* virtuous activity, and the capacity that we *see for* virtuous activity in generating and sustaining happiness in the face of misfortune.

According to the picture of Aristotle's conception of happiness presented by Nussbaum and Irwin, the external goods *will* play an important role in both *sustaining* virtuous activity and *determining* whether that capacity proves to be sufficient for the moral agent to ward off the ill-effects of misfortune. To this extent, luck will play a *significant role* in contributing to the loss or formation of human happiness and detracting from the self-sufficiency of the good person's life. This view is essentially grounded in Irwin's external use reading of the role of the external goods in Aristotle's conception of happiness, and Nussbaum's view of the necessity for certain external goods, on Aristotle's picture, to act as both the instrumental means to, and direct objects for, virtuous activity itself. Accordingly, the views that Nussbaum and Irwin present attempt to draw support from Aristotle's suggestion in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that, '...there are some things the lack of which takes the lustre from blessedness, as good birth, satisfactory children, beauty; for the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary or childless is hardly happy, and perhaps a man would be still less so if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death...'[313] In this respect, Nussbaum and Irwin also attempt to show the sense in which Aristotle thinks that, 'happiness seems to need this sort of prosperity in addition...'[314]

In contrast, the interpretations of Aristotle's perspective presented by White and Cooper allow no such roles for the external goods in determining the efficacy of virtuous action and, thus, no such impediments to the exercise of virtuous activity as a means for individuals to both be good and live well. For, as White and Cooper see it,

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[313]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099b 1-6.

when it comes down to it, the impediments to virtuous activity *vis-a-viz* the occurrence of disastrous events in the external world will not be *external* to the moral agent at all. Accordingly, their interpretations of Aristotle's view emphasise Aristotle's concern to establish the self-sufficiency of the good human life in a way which qualifies or reconfigures Aristotle's demand for it to be *teleion.* And, ir adopting their respective positions, White and Cooper attempt to draw support from different aspects of Aristotle's discussion within *Nicomachean Ethics.* They acknowledge Aristotle's claim that virtuous activity 'needs the external goods as well; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment'. They also acknowledge his remark that the virtue that is constitutive of happiness will be 'very generally shared', that is to say, open to all 'who are not maimed as regards excellence' but approach this task with 'a certain study and care.' And, on the basis of these remarks, they infer that, for Aristotle, the goods that are required for happiness will not only be readily *available* for the moral agent, but also ready when *needed.*[215]

Section 2: Annas' criticism of Aristotle's account

On this basis, it would appear that we cannot answer the question regarding the role that luck is supposed to play in Aristotle's account of the good human life on this particular level of morality until we have first settled this matter regarding the role that Aristotle sees for the external goods in contributing to the loss or formation of our happiness. For Julia Annas, the indeterminacy or ambiguity in the primary texts regarding this matter, and the tension which divides the two competing concerns that Aristotle seeks to emphasise within those texts, leaves this problem regarding the best way to interpret Aristotle's views as one which is essentially insoluble. According to Annas, Aristotle's writings in the *Ethics* thus form what can, ultimately, only be described as 'an unstable view' of happiness.[316] They leave us without the requisite means to reconcile two of Aristotle's competing concerns. These are Aristotle's concern to show that the good human life can be in *some sense* affected by the possession and loss of additional goods and, thus governed by luck, and his concern to show that the good human life will be *nonetheless* self-sufficient and, thus in an important sense

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^*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099b6-7.

[315]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099a32-33 and 1099b 18-19.

[316]Annas(1993a),p. 364.

immune to luck. To add to this, Annas also suggests that Aristotle leaves us without the materials we require to weigh up these competing intuitions for ourselves. Accordingly, she suggests that 'Aristotle needs, but has not thought through, a satisfactory account of just how the external goods do figure in the happy life.'[317] She also suggests that this task must await the arrival of the Stoic philosophers in the Hellenistic era.

Section 3: A closer look at White and Cooper's attempts to reconcile these competing concerns in favour of 'self-sufficiency'

To get a better insight into the basis for this indeterminacy, however, and to form a better understanding of this connection between one's assessment of the value of external goods and one's outlook on the role of luck in moral action, it may prove to be helpful to take a closer look at the outlook that Steven White has to offer. For in his explication of Aristotle's views, White *does* attempt to address these allegedly irreconcilable concerns and argue for a way in which Aristotle *can* succeed in meeting this challenge to account for the role of external goods in a life which is both *teleion* and self-sufficient. And yet, notwithstanding the problems we have raised regarding the uncertainty of the role that the external goods are supposed to play in Aristotle's account of the good life, I argue that White cannot successfully reconcile the competing concerns in favour of self-sufficiency. This casts doubt on the strength of White and Cooper's interpretation of Aristotle's view on the role of luck in the performance of moral actions. It also undermines their attempts to play down the role of luck in Aristotle's account of the good human life. But more importantly, it gives us insight into what may be a deep problem for the way we think about morality, and perhaps even moral theory itself.

Reviewing White's argument, we will remember that White means to say that Aristotle can explain how the good life can be both *teleion* and self-sufficient by allowing for a sense in which the loss of external goods, and hence the ill-fortune that gives rise to such loss, may not *be preferred* by good moral agents, but will not, of itself, necessarily lead to a *diminution* in the happiness of a person's life. This is supposed to be due to the self-sufficiency of the position shared by moral agents; their

[317]ibid.,p.384.

positive evaluation and conception of the worth of their *attempts* to continue doing well in the face of misfortune; and the idea that failure to secure the desired results in action will not undermine the choice-worthiness of these moral agents' lives. On this account, Aristotle simply means to say that so long as the virtuous person's conception of life remains intact, so too will the virtuous person's happiness. Accordingly, White suggests that for someone like Socrates, it might have been *better,* in some sense, if his life had not been cut short, but, nevertheless, such unlucky events could *never* render a life such as his *less happy.* And likewise, as Cooper says, although success in securing the desired results in action will be expected or 'preferred'[318] by moral agents, such failures will not *detract* from the goodness and happiness of a moral individual's life.

But this, I want to suggest, is exactly where their trouble begins; for in their accounts of what it takes to live well, White and Cooper fail to tell us *in what sense* it would have been 'better' if Socrates' life had *not* been cut short and *in what sense* the right results in action are to be 'preferred' albeit not taken to make a *real difference* to the good person's life. Accordingly, their interpretations of Aristotle's conception of happiness fail to tell us *why* such unfortunate events, or failed attempts to do well, do *not* leave good people with lives that are effectively any *less* happy. Indeed, the problem that Irwin sees for the *Stoic's* conception of happiness then becomes a problem for this interpretation *of Aristotle's* own view: neither appears to be able to explain the sense in which certain things, such as a lack of external goods and the failure to secure the right results through the exercise of virtue, *do* and yet *do not* make a difference to human lives.[319] The Stoics may have a *label* for this problem - preferred indifferents and *axia* - however, this doesn't really solve it. Perhaps Julia Annas is right to defend the Stoics' position here by suggesting that maybe the Stoics' whole point is that one will not *develop* this understanding until one has undergone the kind of Stoic therapy that allows for one to *grasp* the 'unique value of virtue',[320] but given that most of us are still outside that inner sanctum of Stoic wisdom, and that our present task is to uncover what

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[318]See Cooper (1999e), p. 303.

[319]See Irwin (1986), pp. 234ff. It may also be the case that this outlook that White and Cooper present undermines the formal condition that Aristotle states in *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: Ch. 8 regarding the need for the good human life to be 'the best, the noblest and *most pleasant* thing'. For more on this issue, see also *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: Ch. 2: 1172b30ff and Ch. 6: 1176b4ff, where Aristotle seems to refer to self-sufficiency as a state in which one 'does not lack anything'.

[320]In this light, Annas claims that, '...any support which the theory gets from our intuitions comes after we have been convinced by the Stoic theory, not before.' See Annas (1993a), pp. 390-391 and 396-397.

Aristotle thinks about such matters, this response will prove to be inherently unsatisfying for most people, as it cuts short any further discussion and, in any case, it provides no defence for what White and Cooper have to say about *Aristotle's* own views.

A further, and perhaps more important point, however, is that, in their efforts to show that the actual *results* of virtuous actions do not concern the goodness of a person's life, White and Cooper seem to fail to do justice to Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* as something that essentially entails actually *doing* well. Here, as my explication of Nussbaum's views has demonstrated, we need to recognise the difference between the emphasis on the need for *activity,* or *euprattein,* and the importance of actually getting things *done* well in Aristotle's conception of happiness, and what can be described as the good condition theorist's emphasis on the sufficiency of a *good character* and, hence, *being good* for living well. Clearly, Aristotle's account of human flourishing rejects that latter conception of *eudaimonia.* In contrast, White and Cooper's attempts to reduce the role for luck to play in severing the link between being good and living well in Aristotle's account of happiness rest upon aspects which are only *internal* to the moral *agent,* as opposed to the actions which are produced *by* such agents. And, as a result, White and Cooper offer an interpretation of Aristotle's position and a solution to the problem that Annas has outlined which is essentially more Stoic than Aristotelian.[321]

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[321] It is important to acknowledge that, in some sense, the Stoics' ethical theory may also be described as one which takes *eudaimonia* to be a kind of *activity,* rather than simply a *good condition.* This is true to the extent that the Stoics also believe that the good and moral individual is required to not only aim at a certain moral target, but to also succeed in *hitting* that target. However, given the fact that the Stoics believe that this kind of activity is really only constrained by *internal* impediments, it is obvious that they do not share Aristotle's conception *of eudaimonia* as a form of activity, nor our own common sense notion of what it ordinarily means to perform what I have described as a complete and successful moral action. Accordingly, this observation does not detract from the general contrasts that I have made regarding the Stoic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness, nor undermine the conclusions that I have drawn regarding the merits of White and Cooper's view on this particular issue.

Part V: Nagel's insight into the challenge for modern ethicists: a contemporary spin on an ancient ethical problem

Section 1: Striking the right balance

Examining the shortcomings of the views presented by White and Cooper on this issue may help us to understand some of the differences between the Stoic and Aristotelian conception of what it means, and what it takes, to live well and be happy. But focussing on the differences between these two schools of thought, and examining the ways in which White and Cooper attempt to borrow from each of them, may also help to illuminate a deep problem for the way we think about morality and moral theory itself. This problem relates to the need for us, in evaluating cases of moral success or failure, to strike the right balance between our emphasis on the importance of moral *agents* and our recognition of the significance of moral *actions*. It also highlights the need for us to account for the fact that we are both the *subjects* and *objects* of experience. Accordingly, we need to attribute sufficient responsibility to *individuals* in their attempts to enforce their will upon the objects within the external world, whilst still acknowledging the degree to which objects and events in the external world can actually impinge upon the wills of those individuals. And, in this way, an adequate theory of morality calls for us to look at our moral practices from both directions: from the moral agent's inner or subjective outlook onto the outside world, and from the outside objective viewpoint of the world looking back *to* such individuals. As a result, we need to recognise the importance of both the *internal* and *external* factors that contribute to human action and our systems of moral evaluation, but the problem remains as to how we ought to *weigh up* their respective values, importance and contributions.

Section 2: 'Internal' and 'external' moral perspectives

In thinking about this issue, we may benefit from v/hat Thomas Nagel has to say about a challenge that awaits modern ethicists. For these remarks provide us with a contemporary spin on an ancient ethical problem. Accordingly, in *Mortal Questions,* Nagel speaks about the need for contemporary thinkers to accommodate both an

internal and *external* view of moralky.[322] He also highlights the problems that are inherent in attempting to reconcile these two competing moral perspectives. Nagel observes that, after some reflection, it appears that not only moral agents, but their world and the results or outcomes of their actions, ought to make some *difference* to the realisation or success of their moral goals. From this perspective, it seems obvious that as soon as we allow ourselves to focus on an agent's acts, and thus give up the notion that what pertains to morality is something essentially *internal* to the moral agent, we must see ourselves *as part* of our world. And, as a result, these problems regarding luck and the role of the external goods arise. However, in adopting this perspective, we deprive ourselves of a solid foundation from which we can assess moral individuals in isolationjfawz that world, and rightfully attribute praise or blame to them for what they do; the very basis, we would say, that any plausible theory of morality should be able to provide and uphold.[323] Conversely, when we focus on agents alone, our moral assessments belie our intuitions that they are in fact a part of something bigger, namely the world at large, and that the external results of our own actions *within* that world do in fact matter. As Bernard Williams points out, the involvement of morality with luck is, therefoi-.. 'not something that can simply be accepted without calling our moral conceptions into question.'[324]

Section 3: White and Cooper's attempts to accommodate these two perspectives

Nagel's observation seems to be central to the debate that we have examined between Nussbaum and Irwin, and White and Cooper-. For in their explication of Aristotle's outlook on the role that luck has to play in moral action, each side has attempted to account for the right balance between Aristotle's emphasis on an agent's efforts, and the concern that he shows regarding the extent to which external forces in the world may obstruct those efforts. In their attempts to accommodate what Nagel has

[322]See Nagel (1979b), pp. 36-38.

[323]Nagel observes that, 'die effect of concentrating on the influence of wha; is not under his control is to make this responsible self seem to disappear, swallowed up by the order of mere events.' He also concludes that this problem appears to have no solution for the very reason that, 'something in the idea of agency is incompatible with actions being events, or people being things.' More importantly, in keeping with Nussbaum's own suggestions regarding the merits of Aristotle's ethical perspective, Nagcl suggests that we ought not to try to 'eliminate', 'reduce' or 'annexe' these *messier* subjective elements of human experience in the interests of producing a more accurate, precise and objective account of the truth about morality. See ibid., pp. 36-37 and 196-214.

[324]See Williams (1981), p. 36: n. 11.

referred to as both the internal and external perspectives on morality, and reconcile the concerns that Aristotle expresses in the *Ethics,* White and Cooper have ended up by confusing or conflating the Stoic conception of happiness, and its emphasis on *the good condition* of the moral agent, with Aristotle's conception of*eudaimonia* as a life of activity centred around *doing* things well. But, in doing so, they have also provided us with an opportunity to come to grips with what may well be a deep problem for the way we think about morality and for moral theorists themselves.

Section 4: A return to Annas' criticism

Perhaps, by way of conclusion, we may choose to side with Julia Annas in her estimation of Aristotle's failure to adequately account for, and *overcome,* this unique ethical problem. But it is important to note at this stage of our examination that this is not the only conclusion that we can draw here. For, after all, it also possible that, in thinking about this issue, and recognising the depths of this moral problem, Aristotle has chosen not to simply dismiss it, nor to attempt to provide a lasting solution for it, but to opt for the less ambitious task of mapping out the appropriate boundaries to discuss it.[325]

[325]For Aristotle's acknowledgment that we need to remember '...not to look for precision in all things alike, but in each class of things such precision as accords with the subject-matter, and so much as is appropriate, to the inquiry', see *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1098a26-28. This is an issue to which we shall return in Chapter 5.

Part VI: Aristotle's views on the role of luck in the development of moral agency

Section 1: The importance of Aristotle's remarks in *Politics*

Having considered Aristotle's views on the role of luck in the good human life in relation to this second moral link between being good and living well, let us now turn to the question of how we ought to interpret Aristotle's views on luck in relation to the first link that we have isolated regarding the development of good character and thereby moral agency itself. In many respects, this issue constitutes a far more urgent or pressing matter in so far as it calls for us to put some of Aristotle's remarks in the *Ethics* into the wider context, of Aristotle's writings in *Politics.* In doing so, we shall be able to discern the specific audience that Aristotle seeks to target with his ethical writings and the ways in which his political writings effectively widen the scope for luck to impede one's moral progress.

Section 2: Three central themes in the *Ethics*

We may begin by observing certain central themes in Aristotle's *Endemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics.* One of the most famous of these relates to Aristotle's remark that happiness will be 'very generally shared; for all who are not maimed as regards excellence may win it by a certain kind of study and care.'[326] Another relates to Aristotle's remark that actions and states of character are 'in our power and voluntary' for although they may, through the passage of time and the continuation of bad habits, become resistant, or perhaps even unresponsive,[327] towards the attempts to mould them into better shape through moral discourse and rational persuasion, these actions and states of char·i.·ier are ones for which we are *morally responsible,* in so far as it *was,* in the beginning, open to us to choose to pursue the kinds of activities that lead to the formation of good, rather than reprehensible, moral characters.[328] A third theme relates

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[326]*Mcomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099bl8ff.

[327]as Aristotle suggests in Book X *of Nicomachean Ethics,* at 1179b4ff.

[328]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book III: 1114b26- 1115a3. See also *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book III: 1114a 13-22, where, in speaking about the self-indulgent man, Aristotle writes: 'Yet it does not follow that if he wishes he will cease to be unjust and will be just. For neither does the man who is ill become well on those terms - although he may, perhaps, be ill voluntarily, through living incontinently and disobeying his

to Aristotle's suggestion, which I will take to be conclusive, that the morally good and happy life requires *phronēsis,* or what has become generally known as a certain kind of *practical* wisdom.[329]

On the basis of the first two of these central themes in the *Ethics,* many commentators, such as Steven White and John Cooper, have concluded that, according to Aristotle's account of the good human life, the development of virtue and moral agency and, in so far as it goes along with it, happiness as well, will be open to most individuals in society. From this perspective we get the claim that on Aristotle's picture, our happiness is *mostly* up to us because 'moral virtue itself occupies the leading, and controlling, position'[330] in human flourishing and we, ourselves, are responsible for cultivating that virtue. We also get the view that we are to be praised or blamed for our success or failure in attaining virtue and the prize of *eudaimonia* in so far as both are *within our grasp* and, as White suggests, *therefor the taking* to the extent that, 'most accidents of birth *can* be neutralised by education and laws.'[331] This conception of the wide access to moral agency and the life of human flourishing to which it leads, and thereby the minimal scope for luck to intervene on this particular level of morality, stems from the assumption that Aristotle seeks to address a large audience in his ethical writings, namely, *society at large.* It also stems from the assumption that, in addressing this kind of audience, Aristotle prescribes the kind of guidelines that will enable the majority of society to join in the quest for happiness.

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doctors. In that case, it was then open to him not to be ill, but not now, when he has thrown away his chance, just as when you have let a stone go it is too late to recover it; but yet it was in your power to throw it, since the moving principle was in you. So, too, to the unjust and to the self-indulgent man it was open at the beginning not to become men of this kind, and so they are such voluntarily; but now that they have become so it is not possible for them not to be so.' For an interesting discussion on whether individuals should still be morally responsible for the development of their character if they did not know that this opportunity *was* in fact open to them in the beginning, see Alexander's comments in Sharpies (trans.) (1989), pp. 36-37.

[329]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: Ch. 5. As indicated in my approach to this issue, I shall leave aside the more complex issue here regarding the extent to which Book X: Chapters 6-8 *of Nicomachean Ethics* appears to undermine Aristotle's suggestion in Books I-IX that the good human life will in fact include a practical component. For explanation and an excellent discussion on this issue, see J. L. Ackrill, 'Aristotle on *Eudaimonia',* p. 28 and Thomas Nagel, 'Amiotle on *Eudaimonia',* p. 9, in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics,* University of California Press, California, 1980. Cf. C.C.W. Taylor's approach and solution in his article entitled 'Polities', in the same publication, on pp. 251-252.

[330]On this basis, Cooper concludes that, 'Aristotle does leave a place for luck within the constitution of the best life - though he firmly gives it a secondary place.' See John Cooper's discussion in Cooper (1999e),p. 291.

[331]White(1992),p. 119.

However, the main point to note here is that this particular conception of the extent to which the various types of luck stand in the way of the development of moral agency, needs to be qualified in the light of the third central theme of the *Ethics* that we have outlined, and what Aristotle's remarks in *Politics* have to say about it. For, in stating that the good life requires the cultivation of practical wisdom, and demanding that one hold a certain position in society in order to acquire it, Aristotle's view in *Politics* appears to reduce the "we" of the *Ethics,* for whom moral agency and the life of happiness *is* there for the taking, to a far more narrow and restricted group of individuals. Accordingly, whereas Aristotle's ethical writings suggest that it *will* be open to people to choose the kinds of activities to pursue that will lead to the formation of appropriate moral character, his political writings point out that for those who make up the bulk of society; particularly those who are required to fulfil certain manual tasks in order to satisfy the demands of the city's inhabitants, this opportunity wili, in fact, be effectively *denied.*

Section 3: Aristotle's remarks on 'constitutive moral luck' in *Politics*

In *Politics,* Aristotle argues that slaves, women, artisans, farmers and manual labourers will have no share of virtue and, thus, no share in human happiness.[332] He also suggests that together these individuals wili, naturally, form the bulk or majority of any given society. This view comes as a bit of a shock to those who have only ever examined Aristotle's views on the role of luck in the good and happy human life in the context of his remarks in the *Ethics.* And in abstraction from Aristotle's specific arguments in *Politics,* the basis from which Aristotle reaches this conclusion has beer, widely misunderstood. For, *contra* Bernard Williams' depiction, and his conflation, of the ancient ethical perspectives on the importance of constitutive luck for moral agency, Aristotle does *not* think that constitutive; moral luck alone can account for the deprivation of *eudaimonia* that these individuals experience.

[332]Aristotle actually says that, 'the excellence of the slave is relative to a master', which appears to amount to the same thing as saying that the slave will not have his or her *own* share in virtue and happiness. See *Politics:* Book I: 1260a33ff; and *Nicomac'nean Ethics:* Book X: Ch. 7: 1177a8-10. In Book VI *of Politics,* at 13!9a24-26, Aristotle also writes: '...there is no room for excellence in any of their employments, whether they be artisans or traders or labourers.' For more of Aristotle's views on the deprivation *of eudaimonia* experienced by women, artisans, farmers and manual labourers, *SQQ Politicv:* Bookl: 1260alO-15, Book VI: 1319a25-7, Book VII: 1329al 8-39; and *Poetics:* Ch. 15: 1454al9-21.

What Aristotle does say in *Politics* is that constitutive moral luck[333] *will* prevent women and natural slaves from developing a level of moral agency conducive to the possession and exercise of genuine virtue. He admits that the parts of the soul that are *responsive* to reason and have a *share* in virtue will be present in both women and natural slaves, just as they are present in men. But, much to the disgust of the modern reader, he goes on to suggest that, 'they are present in different degrees' for, whereas 'the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority...'[334] He also suggests that these members of society will be more suited to play out the role of natural *subjects* of rational control, rather than *rulers* or instigators of such deliberative and self-control, due to innate deficiencies in their reasoning capacities.[335] To this extent, Aristotle does seem to share Plato's own view on the need to distinguish certain *psychological types* of people and recognise the importance of constitutive luck for moral agency.[336] And to this degree, we, as modern readers attempting to assess the merits and contemporary relevance of these ancient ethical perspectives, may quite reasonably reject both views as essentially out-dated and irrelevant.

Section 4: The importance of one's position and occupation in society

However, this is where the common ground between our assessment of Plato's and Aristotle's views on the role of luck in morality ought to end. For, in providing an account of why artisans, fanners and manual labourers will have no share of virtue and, thereby, no share in human happiness, Aristotle puts this down not to an *innate*

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[333]or, more precisely, a *lack* of this particular kind of luck.
[334]See *Politics:* Book I: 1260al2-15. There, Aristotle also states that it is impossible for children to share in the virtue that makes for happiness, in so far as they have deliberative capacities that are too 'immature'. Given that these remarks relate to merely *temporary* obstructions to happiness, however, I have chosen to exclude them from our present discussion. However, I will touch on this issue in my examination in Chapter 5.
[335]Sce *Politics:* Book I: 1260al2-15.
[336]It is important to note that Plato does *not* actually share Aristotle's views regarding the natural deficiency of a woman's rational capacities. On the contrary, he suggests that women may well be blessed with the kind of constitutive fortune and, thus, psychological type of nature, that enables one to cuUivate genuine virtue, attain happiness and join the kingdom of philosophers. For evidence of this, see Plato's discussion in *Republic:* Book V and Book VII 540c. Accordingly, my point here is the more modest one that, in so far as Plato and Aristotle think that there *will* be certain *types* of people that will be deprived of the chance to flourish on the basis of their innate constitutive capacities, and that these people will form a *majority* in society, both philosophers place *too much* emphasis on the importance of constitutive luck for moral agency. For an interesting discussion on how Aristotle and Plato's views compare on the issue of

deficiency in their capacities for reason and, thus, to some form of constitutive moral luck regarding their *psychological type* as Plato does in *Republic,* but to the *positions* that these individuals will have to take up in society. Accordingly, Aristotle suggests that although the work that these members of society do *may,* in time, lead to a corruption of their moral characters or an erosion of their *initial* constitutive capacities due to the commercial and manual nature of their occupations and the fact that these do not necessarily require virtue, but may well call on workers to make mistaken judgments about the value of their manual work[337] this is not the main reason why the positions that these individuals hold will detract from their ability to flourish. On the contrary, he suggests that the main reason why this occurs is that, in taking up so much of their time, their occupations leave them no opportunity to engage in the kind of political and philosophical activities that lead to the development of practical wisdom and thereby moral agency.[338]

In this way, Aristotle grants that these individuals *do* in fact have the initial cognitive materials and potential to make a go of their own lives, for whereas, in genuine cases of slavery, 'the slave exists by nature[1],, this is 'not so' in the case of'the shoemaker or other artisan.'[339] These individuals, in contrast with the workers who feature in Book II of Plato's *Republic,*[3*0] are not allocated an occupation and position in society based on their respective capacities for *deliberation,* but only with respect to the positions in society that need to be filled in order to meet the demands of the city and the needs of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, in so far as these individuals cannot also be

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slavery, see Gregory Vlastos, 'Slavery in Plato's Thought', *Platonic Studies,* Second Edition, Princeton University Press, U.S.A., 1973, pp. 160-161.

[337]In Book VIII of *Politics,* at I337b9-14, Aristotle proclaims '...any occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice of excellence, is mechanical; wherefore we call those arts mechanical which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind.'

[338]See *Politics:* Book VIII: !329al-2 and 1338a2-4, where Aristotle writes: 'leisure is necessary both for the development of excellence and the performance of political duties' and '...leisure of itself gives pleasure and happiness and enjoyment of life, which are experienced, not by the busy man, but by those who have leisure.' Aristotle also states that, 'happiness is thought to depend on leisure...' For more on this point, and what Aristotle believes constitutes the *right* occupation, see *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: Ch. 7: 1177a8 and 1177b4ff and Ch. 9: 118Oal5ff.

[339]See *Politics:* Book II: 1260b2ff. It is noteworthy that Aristotle does distinguish *natural slaves* from people who have been enslaved due to necessity or by convention and the apparent *expediency* rather than *justice* which pertains to the positions of the latter. See his discussion in *Politics:* Book I: 1254a 18-23 and 1254b25-34.

[340]See *Republic:* Book II: 370a-c, where Plato writes: '...our several natures are not all alike but different. One man is naturally fitted for one task, and another for another... The result, then, is that more things are

"citizens" - citizens for whom there exists the leisure and freedom to participate in certain private and public affairs - these individuals will not be able to gain, or exercise, the kind of practical wisdom that conditions the possibility of full moral agency and *eudaimonia.*

On this basis, Aristotle suggests that, 'those who are in a position which places them above toil have stewards who attend to their households while they occupy themselves with philosophy or with politics.'[341] And in taking such an individual as one 'who has the power to take part in deliberative or judicial administration of the state' and 'is said by us to be a citizen of that state', Aristotle declares that, 'it must be admitted that we cannot consider all those to be citizens who are necessary to the existence of the state' but only those people 'who are freed from necessary services' and independent from 'the servants of the community.'[342] In excluding 'farmers, artisans, and labourers of all kinds'[343] from this group, Aristotle also excludes these individuals from the 'parts of the state' to which the legislator looks when determining what needs to be done to benefit the state as a whole. In this way, Aristotle effectively denies these individuals the membership rights to that citizen body and the benefits which are said to accrue from such membership.[344]

Section 5: Nussbaum's recognition of a 'dark spot' in Aristotle's ethical theory

If Martha Nussbaum's analysis is correct, then this failure to provide the opportunity for these individuals to participate in political and philosophical affairs, and thereby cultivate the kind of virtue and wisdom required to flourish, actually exposes what must be regarded as a huge flaw in Aristotle's political theory. For, as she rightly points out, Aristotle's intention in the *Ethics* and, more specifically, in *Politics,* is to

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produced, and better and more easily when one man performs one task according to his nature, at the right moment, and at leisure from other occupations.'

[341]See *Politics:* Book I: 1255b35-7 and 1275bl9ff. For more on Aristotle's definition of'citizenship', see also *Politics:* Book III: 1275al8-21ff.

[342]See *Politics:* Book III: 1275b 19-20 and 1278a3-13; and Book VII: 1236a 16-21.

[343]See *Politics:* Book VII: 1329a36.

[3A*]*Politics:* Book III: 1278a3-5,10-11 and 12-13. See also Book III: 1283a40-42 and Book VII: 1329al9-22, where Aristotle writes: 'Now what is right must be construed as equally right, and what is equally right is to be considered with reference to the advantage of the state, and the common good of the citizens.' Moreover, '...artisans or any other class which is not a producer of excellence have no share in the state' and '...a city is not to be termed happy in regard to a portion of the citizens, but in regard to all ofthem.'

create a philosophical basis from which a political ruler can legislate to ensure that those who *do* have the internal capacity to *do well* for themselves will be distributed the necessary external goods and political or social conditions that are required for them to do so.[345] In this light, Nussbaum suggests that Aristotle does acknowledge the fact that in any city there will be manual labour to be done, and that not all of this can be done by animals or slaves who are subjected to the will of another on the basis of some *natural deficiency* in reason. Aristotle also acknowledges the fact that the individuals who are made to *take up this slack* and perform this surplus labour, wii! necessarily lack the leisure required for *full* intellectual and moral development and that, as a result, these individuals cannot despite their natural capacities be included in the citizen body. 'This', Nussbaum reflects, 'is a dark spot in Aristotle's theory', as it runs counter to Aristotle's political and philosophical ambitions and requires 'making some men who are capable of virtue and self-respect do this work so that other naturally similar men may have a good life.'[346]

Part VII: Conclusion

Our examination of Aristotle's remarks in *Politics* has demonstrated the extent to which Aristotle's writings in the *Ethics* stand in need of both clarification and qualification. These remarks emphasise the; need for individuals to enjoy the right kind of social and political conditions in order to engage in the kind of activities that allow for the development of practical wisdom and full moral agency. And, in doing so, they appear to reduce the "we" of the *Ethics* - for whom virtue, moral agency and the happiness to which it leads *is* there for the taking - to a small body of individual citizens. This group will be reduced further if we take into account Aristotle's demand for individuals to receive the right training and develop the right habits from an early stage of their youth.[347] And, indeed, it will be reduced further still if we take seriously Aristotle's suggestion that for an individual to be a genuinely good person, he or she must not only

[345]See Martha Nussbaum, 'Nature, Function, and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy,* Supplement, 1988, pp. 146, 160, especially pp. 166 and 172. See also *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book V: 1129M4-19; and *Politics:* Book III: 1282bl4ffand Book VII: Chs. 1-2.
[346]See Nussbaum (1988), p. 420. C.C.W. Taylor makes a similar point when he speaks about 'a community of free-riders whose ability to pursue the good human life is made possible by the willingness of others to forgo that pursuit.' See C.C.W. Taylor (1995), p. 250.
[347]See *Politics:* Book VIII. This is an issue to which we shall return in Chapter 5.

be a citizen, but a *good* citizen *of a. perfect state* that provides for the adequate distribution of external goods and a sufficient level of political participation.[348]

On this basis, we may conclude that Aristotle's political writings actually widen the scope for luck to impede, and often prevent, the development of one's moral progress. We may also conclude that the role that Aristotle sees for luck in the good human life is one which is far more complex than often thought. For, as our examination has shown, Aristotle recognises a significant role for luck to play in relation to both the development of moral agency and the performance of moral actions. Accordingly, Aristotle suggests that in order to live well and happily one must not only overcome the contingencies and vicissitudes of life which tlireaten to interfere with our efforts to *do* and *live* well through *moral action.* On the contrary, one must also overcome those initial hurdles in life regarding the need to possess the kind of position and occupation in society that allow one to participate in the kind of activities that lead to the development *of practical wisdom* and *moral agency.*

[348]See *Politics:* Book IV: 1293b6, where Aristotle writes: 'In the perfect state the good man is absolutely the same as the good citizen; whereas in other states the good citizen is only good relatively to his own form of government.' See also *Politics:* Book III: 1271b39ff and Book V: 1309a36-38; and *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VII: Ch. 10. Terence Irwin takes the latter suggestion seriously, concluding that Aristotle's *Politics* means to suggest that, 'without the- ideal state there will be no good men', for 'Aristotle's views about human nature and happiness imply the necessity of an ideal city for individual happiness.' See Irwin (1988), p. 410. For a discussion on Aristotle's conception of the perfect state and the problems that this conception raises regarding the need for broad-based political participation, see C.C.W. Taylor (1995), pp. 249, especially pp. 246-247. See also *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VII: 1160a27-30, where Aristotle writes: 'All the communities, then, seem to be parts of the political community; and the particular kinds of friendship, will correspond to the particular kinds of community.'

CHAPTER FIVE

ARISTOTLE'S ACCOUNT OF PRACTICAL WISDOM AND THE RELATION BETWEEN *PHRONĒSIS* AND CHARACTER

Part I: Introduction

In the last chapter we saw how Aristotle's account of the good human life places considerable importance on the issue of luck and the role that this has to play in determining one's ability to be good and live well. There we discovered that an examination of Aristotle's views in the *Ethics* and *Politics* provides us with an appreciation of the significant and complex role that Aristotle sees for luck in relation to both the development of moral agency and the performance of moral actions.

Having examined the role of luck in Aristotle's account of the good human life, and hence the things that he thinks must go our way in life if we are to be happy or *eudaimōn,* we now have a clear picture of the sorts of things that Aristotle thinks are *not* 'up to us' when it comes to happiness and the pursuit of human flourishing. To complete our account of Aristotle's conception of human happiness and his outlook on the accessibility of the good human life that he prescribes, we must now turn to those aspects of the good human life that Aristotle thinks *are* essentially 'up to us' and each and every other individual who aims to pursue the goal *of eudaimonia.* In doing so, we shall gain a better sense of why Aristotle thinks we are 'jointly responsible'[349] for the character that we develop and the sort of life that flows from it, and why he insists that *eudaimonia* must be understood not as a direct *gift* from the gods that is simply given to those few who are naturally lucky or divinely favoured, but as *a prize* that each individual must *earn* and *win* on the basis of much hard work, much effort and persistence, and the inexorable commitment to the pursuit of human excellence.[350]

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[349] *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book III: 1114b22-23.

[350] See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099b9-19. There, Aristotle claims that regardless of whether genuine happiness is 'a gift of the gods to men' or 'comes as a result of excellence and some process of learning or training', there is no doubt that it seems to be 'among the most godlike things' for the very reason that it is 'the prize and end of excellence'.

Throughout the course of this chapter, I shall focus on two central issues and divide my discussion accordingly. The first of these will relate to the role of *phronēsis,* or practical wisdom, in Aristotle's account of the good human life, and the sort of knowledge that Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of this kind of wisdom. The second will relate to those aspects of emotion and character in the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul that Aristotle sees as essential for both the development and exercise of practical wisdom. In this way, Parts II and III of this chapter will form the Aristotelian counterparts to Chapters 2 and 3 on Plato. I will argue that Aristotle's conception of practical wisdom and his recognition of the importance of certain non-cognitive requirements for its possession leave considerable scope for individual choice and personal responsibility in the pursuit of human happiness. I will also argue that these aspects of Aristotle's account of the good human life have strong links with the Socratic or early Platonic conception of moral wisdom and its dependence upon certain fundamental personal qualities.

Part II: Aristotle's account of *phronēsis*

Section 1: Two central concerns in Aristotle's *Ethics* regarding the person of practical wisdom and the way that we ought to undertake ethical enquiries

To begin our discussion of *phronēsis* and our examination of the role that it plays in Aristotle's account of the good human life, we need to reflect on two central concerns that Aristotle seeks to express in the *Ethics.* The first relates to his claim that in our efforts to discern what is virtuous and what it takes to both be a person of virtuous character and to live the virtuous life, we must look not to some abstract theoretical rule or universal moral law, but to the person of practical wisdom and the virtue that is embodied and expressed in his or her character and conduct. The second relates to his repeated remark that when undertaking any philosophical investigation we should look for no more precision in our findings than the field of our inquiry allows for. This level of precision, Aristotle insists, will vary from one domain of inquiry to another and, as a result, ought to inform both the methodology and expectations of any given philosophical enterprise.

In relation to the first point, Aristotle provides a definition of virtue which puts the emphasis squarely on the character and outlook that are embedded in the person of practical wisdom. In Book II of the *Ethics,* he writes: 'excellence [or virtue], then, is a state concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.'[351] When discussing the issue of the determination of proper pleasures, Aristotle also invites us to look to the person of practical wisdom, Thus, in Book X of the *Ethics* he states that the pleasures that complete the activities of the 'complete and blessed man' will be said, in the strict sense, 'to be pleasures proper to man.'[352] There, Aristotle also states that just as 'excellence and the good man as such are the measure of each thing, those also will be pleasures which appear so to him, and those things pleasant which he enjoys.'[353] On this basis, commentators have deduced the importance of turning to a 'concrete paradigm'[354] or 'moral exemplar' in an Aristotelian conception of virtue and the process of moral training and development.[355]

In relation to the second point, Aristotle states that, '...we must also remember what has been said before, and not look for precision in all things alike, but in each class of things such precision as accords with the subject-matter, and so much as is appropriate to the inquiry.'[356] Again, in Book V of *Nicomachean Ethics,* he writes: 'about some things it is not possible to make a universal statement which will be correct...for when the thing is indefinite the rule also is indefinite.'[357] In such cases, he insists, the error that arises in attempting to make universal statements or laws about such things is not in the law nor in the legislator but in the nature of the thing, since the matter of practical affairs is of this kind from the start.'[358] On this basis, Aristotle warns that an inquiry into ethical matters will not give rise to a kind of 'scientific understanding' of such things, nor unveil the materials required to construct anything

[351]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1106b36- 1107a2. It is noteworthy that the corresponding passage in *Eudemian Ethics* specifies that the mean will be relative 'to each individual himself.' For evidence of this, *see Eudemian Ethics:* Book II: 1222a6-12.

[352]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: 1176a26-28.

[353]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: 1176a 14-19.

[354]See Nancy Sherman's discussion of this feature of'Aristotelian particularism' in Sherman (1997), pp. 239-240.

[355]See Burnyeat (1980), pp. 72ff; and Annas (1993a), pp. 109 and 114.

[356]*Nicotnachean Ethics:* Book I: 1098a25-29.

[351] *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book V: 1137b 12-30. See also *Politics:* Book II: 1269a7-18; and *Rhetoric:* Book I: 1374al8-33.

[255]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book V: 1137b 17-20.

like a set of universal and codifiable moral rules to govern those human affairs. On the contrary, he reminds his readers that, 'this must be agreed upon beforehand, that the whole account of matters of conduct must be given in outline and not precisely, as we said at the very beginning that the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity, any more than matters of health.'[359] 'The general account being of this nature', he continues, 'the account of particular cases is yet more lacking in exactness; for they do not fall under any art or set of precepts, but the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion, at. happens also in the art of medicine or of navigation.'[360]

Jonathan Barnes has rightly pointed out that Aristotle dispenses with the notion that there is a *single* unified science or a *totality of knowledge* out there waiting to be discovered, in the belief that we must rather recognise and respect the existence of a plurality of independent sciences or disciplines.[361] He observes that, according to Aristotle, whilst some of these sciences are *theoretical,* others are *productive* or *practical* - depending on whether their objective is the discovery of *truths,* the making of *objects,* or the performance of *actions.* He also observes that given their different goals and interests, these domains will differ in terms of the sets of truths from which they derive, the concepts from which they gain their structure, the methods which they must follow, and the standards of scientific rigour that they must comply with.[362] Clearly, Aristotle's comments regarding the need to contend with a certain degree of 'imprecision' in ethical inquiries are informed by this division. His message is that ethics pertains to the domain of enquiry which is essentially *practical* in orientation[363]

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[359]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1104al-5.

[m]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1104a5-9.

[361]See Jonathan Barnes, 'Life and Work', J. Barnes (cd.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 24-26. There, Barnes suggests that, in insisting that the sciences are not unified, Aristotle was 'self-consciously pluralistic - and self-consciously anti-Platonic'

[362]See also *Eudemian Ethics:* Book I: 1216b4-19.

[363]After all, Aristotle insists, we study ethics not to *know* what virtue is but to *be* virtuous. Thus, in *Eudemian Ethics* he writes: 'Now to know anything that is noble is itself noble; but regarding excellence, at least, not to know what it is, but to know out of what it arises is most precious. For we do not wish to know what bravery is but to be brave, nor what justice is but to be just, just as we wish to be in health rather than to know what being in health is, and to have our body in good condition rather than to know what good condition is.' See *Eudemian Ethics:* Book I: 1216b20-25; and *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: 1179b2-3 and Book I: 1095a5, where Aristotle writes: '...the end aimed at is not knowledge but action.[1]

and that, as such, it ought to be approached with an awareness of the standards of scientific rigour appropriate to its particular subject matter.

Section 2: The significance of these concerns for our own examination

These observations are important, as they highlight the need for us to be ready, at the outset of our own inquiry, to accept the fact that although Aristotle regards practical wisdom as essential for the good and happy human life and encourages people to do everything in their power to find out what it is and how to get it, he does not believe that it admits of any sort of complete or precise account. The inexactness of the field of inquiry over which *phronēsis* is set is mirrored in Aristotle's account of practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is, in his view, important to understand and develop but impossible to quantify. As a result, Aristotle means to suggest that even we, as contemporary moral enquirers, ought not to expect to be able to *tiiYiQvfind or provide* a full account of the nature and content of *phronēsis.* At best, his account suggests that we may discover and discuss many helpful and instructive things to say about the form, focus and function of this particular kind of wisdom. Ultimately, however, it is up to *us* to discern the nature and content of this kind of knowledge for ourselves, via our own unique and individual experiences of the particular moral situations that we happen to encounter.[364]

So, what can we say about the form, the focus, or the function of *phronēsis* and what role does Aristotle see for this kind of practical wisdom in aiding the good person's efforts to do well and attain happiness? These are the sorts of questions that we shall now consider.

Section 3: Aristotle's description of *phronēsis* as a deliberative capacity

In Book VI of' *Nicomachean Ethics,* Chapter 5, Aristotle begins his discussion by stating that it is a mark of the person of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well

[364]I think David Wiggins makes a very important point when he says that those who feel they must seek more rigour and regularity in Aristotle's account may well be looking for a scientific theory of rationality 'not so much from a passion for science', but because they hope to uncover a 'system of rules' which will 'spare themselves some of the agony of thinking and all the torment of feeling and understanding that is

about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, but more broadly in terms of the sorts of things that are conducive to 'the good life in general.'[365] In this way, he points out that an important feature of practical wisdom is that it enables the person who possesses it to view a situation which calls for action from a more global or universal perspective. It allows a moral agent to deliberate about specific courses of action in terms of the general values and concerns that one hopes will inform and guide one's over all decision-making process. From this perspective, Aristotle defines *phronēsis* as 'a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man.'[366]

Having described *phronēsis* as a deliberative capacity which enables its possessor to discern the most important aspects and values in a good life, Aristotle limits the scope of this kind of moral insight or wisdom to the domain of inquiry which is relevant to our specific species. Rejecting Plato's idea of a *universal good* or a Form of the Good,[367] Aristotle insists that there is not one true or primordial kind of good which is good *in itself,* nor one kind of practical wisdom that exists for all species, but many types of goods and practical wisdom which are essentially species-relative in their nature and orientation. There may be many types of practical wisdom which govern the individual affairs of earthly creatures, Aristotle suggests; perhaps even 'a different wisdom about the good of each species', but, as humans, it is our job to look to the kind of *phronēsis* that relates to *human goods* and concerns ourselves, for 'the man who knows and concerns himself with his own interests is thought to have practical wisdom' and 'it is to that which observes well the various matters concerning itself that one ascribes practical wisdom...'[368]

The focus and function of *phronēsis* start to gain more definition when Aristotle moves from the important role played by this deliberative capacity in setting the *general*

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actually involved in reasoned deliberation.' See David Wiggins, 'Deliberation and Practical Reason', A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics,* University of California Press, California, 1980, p. 237.

[365] See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1140a25-28.

[366] See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1140b4-5.

[367] See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: Ch. 6; and *Eudemian Ethics:* Book I: Ch. 8. Aristotle rejects this notion on several grounds. The most important stem from his objections that the notion of the Good essentially involves a categorical mistake, and that even if such a thing were to exist, it would not be achievable or attainable by humans. For more discussion on this aspect of Aristotle's philosophical works, see Nussbaum (1986), pp. 290-294.

conception of the ends and requirements for a good human life to its importance as a means to discern what to do in particular situations. Indeed, Aristotle's most consistent description of practical wisdom is one which places an emphasis on the priority of this relation that *phronēsis* has *to* particulars.

Accordingly, in Book VI of the *Ethics, phronēsis* is shown to be concerned with 'universals', that is to say, the kinds of things which are thought to be genuinely and generally good for humans, but also responsible for the detection and recognition of particular goods that can be brought about by action. This kind of practical wisdom 'must also recognise the particulars', Aristotle insists, for the very reason that 'it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars.'[369] As such, *phronēsis* is distinguished from other scientific or theoretical types of wisdom (such as *epistēme* or *sophia* and *nous)* on the basis that this kind of knowledge is concerned with *deliberation* and *action,* and the ways in which we come to decide to *do* things as a direct result of paying attention to the 'ultimate particular' of a situation, or the 'ultimate particular facts'.[370] As a result, Aristotle also argues that practical wisdom is not the kind of wisdom that can be found in those who are still young, but only in those who are in a more advanced stage of their lives, due to the fact that the particulars with which it is concerned become familiar only through *experience?[11]*

Having noted these two specific functions of *phronēsis,* namely, its role in providing the moral agent with a general conceptual framework for the good human life as a whole, and its role in spotting the facts that determine the best course of action in any particular situation, we may begin to get a sense of the ways in which this kind of practical wisdom is supposed to aid the good person's efforts to do well and attain happiness, by providing both a general or universal conception of the good life to be pursued and the ability to discern the relevant features of a particular situation in order to act on the basis of that conception.[372] Indeed, this interplay between universals and

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[368]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1141b35-l 142a2 and 1141a20-33; and *Eudemian Ethics:* Book I: Ch. 7.

[369]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1141bl4-16.

[370]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: Ch. 3 and Ch. 8: 1142a23-30.

[37']See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1142a 12-15.

[372]Accordingly, Aristotle states that, '...excellence in deliberation will be correctness with regard to what conduces to the end of which practical wisdom is the true apprehension.' See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1142b32-35.

particulars is well illustrated by Aristotle's depiction of the process of moral reasoning as a form of practical syllogism. Thus, in Book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle suggests, by way of example, that just as we may fail to know either that *all* water that weighs heavy is bad, or that this *particular* water weighs heavy, 'error in deliberation may be either about the universal or about the particular.'[373] The judgment to be made about the universal is likened to a deliberation regarding a 'first principle' or major premise, whilst the judgement about the particular is described as a deliberation regarding 'the second proposition' or minor premise.[374] In attending to the minor premise, the deliberative capacity of practical wisdom is supposed to grasp the last and contingent facts or 'salient features' of the situation in order to work out the best practical response, and from this perspective, Aristotle describes *phronēsis* as a kind of 'perception' or 'perceptual knowledge' which enables 'the eye of the soul' to 'see aright'.[375]

Section 4: An apparent tension in Aristotle's account

From this point, however, we may also begin to detect some degree of tension within Aristotle's account. For, notwithstanding his insistence that matters concerned with ethical conduct and questions regarding what is good and bad for us 'have no fixity' and that 'the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion',[376] Aristotle's account of *phronēsis* and his depiction of the process of moral reasoning as a form of practical syllogism appear to invoke the very notion which runs counter to his warnings regarding the impossibility of 'fixed moral rules' and the dangers of misplaced rigour. I have in mind here, his notion of the universal or major premise which is supposed to guide or inform one's 'perception' of the morally salient features of a particular situation through the exercise of a practical syllogism. How, we may ask, can Aristotle speak of such universals and yet continue to believe that the content of *phronēsis* is indefinite[377] and that there are no fixed or determinant moral

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[373]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1142a22-24.

[374]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1142a18-19 and 1143b1-2. See also *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VII: 1147a Iff, where Aristotle discusses the issue of weakness of will.

[375]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1142a23-30, 1143b13-14, 1144a29 and Book VII: 1147b12-17. Aristotle also compares practical wisdom to a kind of sense perception in Book III, at 1109H20-5 and in Book VI, at 1144b 1-17. Cf. what he has to say about this in Book VI, at 1143b4-6.

[376]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1104a 1-5 and 1104a5-9.

[377]that is to say, 'unlimited', 'infinite' or *apeiron* in the sense that Aristotle defines it.

rules which can be applied to particular situations to allow for the possibility of codifiable moral knowledge?

Section 5: A way forward

To answer this question, I believe we need to take a closer look at the kind of moral wisdom that tiiese universals seek to encapsulate, and the relation that Aristotle thinks these universal 'moral rules' have to particulars. Of course, it is important to acknowledge at this point in our discussion that this kind of exercise requires us to make a certain interpretive move here. For, after all, Aristotle seems to use the term 'universal' in a variety of ways throughout his philosophical works, and not all of these references provide us with a consistent message about what Aristotle has in mind when he speaks about universals in the context of general rules for our practical and moral affairs.[378] For this reason, we must acknowledge the fact that Aristotle does seem to use the term 'universal' to denote quite different things, such as objects of knowledge, objects of definition, and certain ontological items,[379] and that he does so in different ways. Having noted this, however, we must concentrate our efforts on working out what Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of universals in the context of our ability to generate certain rules to guide us in our experience of particulars and our perception of particular moral facts.

When we take this information on board, and look at what Aristotle has to say about universals in this specific context, we can see that there is a real need for us to acknowledge the fact that Aristotle does *not* think that the content of these universals is in any *way fixed* or *static.* On the contrary, his account indicates that these types of universals are essentially built up *out* o/one'u experiences o/particulars and that, as such, they remain open to a process of endless revision in the light of the insights into morality which arise from one's experience of *new* particuhrs and new situations. In this way, we need to understand that when Aristotle speaks of universals in this context,

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[378]For more discussion on the problematic use of the term 'universal' in Aristotle's philosophical works, and the tensions in Aristotle's account regarding the types of knowledge that are available to human beings and the ways in which we can come to know 'first principles', see Stephen Everson (ed.), *Companions to ancient thought 1. Epistemology,* Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990, pp. 116-142, especially pp. 131-137.

[379]For evidence of this, see *Metaphysics:* Book XI: 1059b24-27, Book V: 1018b30-33, and Book X1II: 1086al8-29.

he is referring to the kind of rules that are supposed to act as nothing more than general 'rules of thumb'[380] for moral agents. Accordingly, Aristotle believes these universals will hold, at best, *only for the most part* and that, as a consequence, even the person of practical wisdom who possesses them will be engaged in a process of ever-evolving moral wisdom and, thus, on-going moral development. Let us now consider what Aristotle has to say in support of these ideas.

Section 6: Aristotle's account of the relation between universals and particulars

In Book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Chapter 11, Aristotle states that universals 'are reached from the particulars...'[381] In Book I of the *Ethics,* he also claims that these things can only ever be 'for the most part true' as they relate to the kind of premises which do no more than 'indicate the truth roughly and in outline'.[382] These comments suggest that one's experiences of particulars, and particular moral situations, are supposed to shape and inform the content of the general rules or universals that one employs to pursue the goal of *eudaimonia.* They also indicate that the kind of perception that Aristotle links to *phronēsis* involves an essentially *reflective* process in which the general values that a moral agent holds are not only used to *grasp* the requirements of a particular situation, but are also refined or 'fine-tuned' as a result of the insights gained from particular case studies.[383] As Richard Sorabji explains, one's general rule or conception of the requirements for a good human life does need to maintain some degree of *influence* over one's judgment about particulars, lest the exercise of practical wisdom lose its global perspective and intellectual basis,[384] however, this does not prevent one from using the insights gained from particular experiences to *alter* that general conception.

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[380]This is an idea put forward by Nancy Sherman and Martha Nussbaum. See Sherman (1997), pp. 244, 269 and 275; and Nussbaum (1986), pp. 299 and 305. David Wiggins appears to support a similar view when he states that, on Aristotle's account, 'the major premise is evaluated not for its unconditional acceptability, nor for embracing more considerations than its rivals, but for its adequacy to the situation.' See Wiggins (1980), pp. 233-237, especially p. 234.
[381]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1143b5.
[382]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1094b 12-27.
[383]For more discussion on this point, see Sherman (1997), pp. 245-246; and Nussbaum (1986), pp. 302-303.
[384]Richard Sorabji notes that this influence may sometimes occur *unconsciously.* For more on this point, see Richard Sorabji, 'Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue', A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics,* University of California Press, California, 1980, pp. 207, 209-10 and 215.

In Book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Chapter 7, Aristotle also states that practical wisdom is concerned with human things and things about which it is possible to *deliberate.* Here, he also points out that we do not deliberate about things that 'cannot be otherwise'.[385] By emphasising the importance of *plvonesir,* as a *deliberative* intellectual capacity, Aristotle makes it clear that the exercise of practical wisdom is not supposed to be viewed as an automatic or unreflective process in which the right rule is sought after and *applied* to a particular set of circumstances in order to *discover* or *deduce* the best practical response to a situation. On the contrary, Aristotle appears to restrict the utility of deductive reasoning to the domain of 'scientific knowledge', or *epistēme,* which he thinks deals only with the kinds of things that 'are *not* capable of being otherwise'.[386] As a result, we may surmise that Aristotle's account *of phronēsis* highlights the need for moral agents to make *choices* or *decisions* about particular moral problems; it calls for them to think^br *themselves,* and to respond to the complex demands and unique requirements of particular moral situations with both sensitivity and *creativity ?%1*

Section 7: The significance of this relation between universals and particulars

From these observations regarding the interconnectedness of universals and particulars and the importance of deliberation in Aristotle's account *phronēsis,* it is clear that no real tension exists between Aristotle's insistence on the impossibility of 'fixed moral rules' and his description of certain 'universal moral rules' that may be employed by the person of practical wisdom to help make judgements about particular moral problems or situations. Accordingly, we do not need to reject Aristotle's description of practical wisdom as a form of practical syllogism in favour of his description of practical wisdom as a kind of intellectual, and possibly sensual, perception.[388] Likewise,

[385]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1141b8-12 and also Book III: Ch. 3.
[386]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: Ch. 3. Cf. John McDowell's discussion in John McDowell, 'Some Issues in Aristotle's Moral Psychology', Steven Everson (ed.), *Companions to Ancient Thought. Vol. 4: Ethics,* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, p. 110.
[387]Martha Nussbaum makes reference to Aristotle's claim that, 'the person who is good at deliberation without qualification is the one who improvises according to reason at the best for a human being in the sphere of things to be done.' In doing so, she points out the importance of'flexibility' and 'perceptiveness' in Aristotle's account of practical wisdom. See Nussbaum (1986), pp. 66-67 and 301-302. See also Nussbaum (1990), pp. 37-38 and 182-318; and *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1141M2-14.
[388]jsjor (JQ we nee(j to accept juiia Annas' argument that Aristotle 'has not thought through the place of rules in the virtuous person's thought', but '...moves from the problem-solving picture of the learner to the immediate sensitivity picture of the fully virtuous without following through the question of what the

we do not need to play down or ignore Aristotle's talk of these kinds of universals in favour of his emphasis on the priority of particulars in moral reasoning. Indeed, to do so would be to fail to recognise that each of these descriptions provides an important insight into one aspect of the focus, form and function of *phronēsis* and that, taken together, they yield a more enriched picture of the way that Aristotle thinks practical wisdom helps moral agents to make decisions about how to act virtuously.[389] As a consequence, we need only appreciate that the universals referred to by Aristotle in relation *to phronēsis* act as mere 'rules of thumb' for moral agents attempting to work out a decisive course of action in particular situations. They need not prevent the person of practical wisdom from altering a general conception of what it takes to be and act wisely, justly or bravely, nor hamper one's efforts to benefit from the lessons of experience. In fact, due to the limited or 'incomplete'[390] nature of the moral wisdom that these universals seek to encapsulate, moral guidelines like these positively encourage the person of practical wisdom to take on the challenge to develop a *greater* moral awareness and a *better* moral understanding. And, in this sense, the very nature of the kind of practical wisdom that Aristotle sees as essential for *eudaimonia* provides considerable scope for *individual choice* and *personal responsibility* in relation to both ethical decision-making and moral progress. For it calls on individuals to develop their own understanding of what is required to live this kind of virtuous and happy human life.

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structure of the fully virtuous person's thinking will now be.' Accordingly, I wish to reject Annas' suggestion that Aristotle's descriptions of *phronēsis* as a form of practical syllogism and a kind of perception refer to two separate stages in the development of the person of practical wisdom. In contrast, I support Sherman's suggestion that both of these descriptions remain important guides to an understanding of the various features *of phronēsis* and the ways in which this form of practical wisdom aids the good person's efforts to act virtuously. For more discussion on this aspect of Aristotle's ethical theory, see Annas (1993a), pp. 94-95; and Sherman (1997), pp. 280-282, especially n. 104.

[389]Indeed, this is something that John McDowell, as a neo-Aristotdian moral intuitionist, fails to recognise. For in outlining the problem that he sees for 'rule-'following' and the application of universals to particulars *vis-a-viz* Aristotle's notion of *phronēsis* as perception, it seems to me that McDowell has only demonstrated the shortcomings *of one particular* interpretation of Aristotle's account *of phronēsis.* Accordingly, he has given us no more reason to *reject* than to *re-think* Aristotle's notion of *phronēsis* as a form of practical syllogism. See John McDowell, 'Virtue and Reason', *Monist,* Vol. 62, 1979, pp. 336 and 343; and McDowell (1988b), pp. 110-111 and 116.

[390]Aristotle often uses the term *aorist* in this context. This term is often taken to also mean 'unbounded'. See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book V: Ch. 10; and Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, U.S.A., 1994, p. 67.

Section 8: Comparisons with the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of non-expert moral knowledge

Having examined this account of the nature and function of practical wisdom, it is clear that Aristotle's understanding of the kind of moral wisdom that is required for the good human life has strong links with the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of the kind of moral wisdom that is required for *eudaimonia.* To begin, we may observe that both of these conceptions place great importance on the fact that we need to cultivate a kind of moral wisdom that is relevant to *human goods* and *human needs.* In this way, both conceptions dismiss the possibility of seeking insight into values or goods which are anything other than species-relative and context-specific. For the Socratic, or early Platonic, account, the attempt to uncover such a god's-eye perspective on what is good for all creatures and for all of time would amount to a 'hubris' attempt to uncover that kind of'more than human wisdom' that remains beyond the grasp of mortals.[391] For Aristotle, such a search would be practically useless, even if it were possible, for the very reason that it would not yield any results that could assist us in our specifically *human affairs,* nor provide us with anything useful or meaningful to talk about in relation to our own understanding of the world and our place within it.[392]

In addition, we may observe that both of these conceptions of wisdom distinguish moral wisdom from a kind of'scientific knowledge'. Accordingly, the Socratic, or early Platonic, and Aristotelian accounts of ethics and the nature of ethical conduct do not start from abstract principles or theoretical mles, but what are recognised as the sincere and reputable views of individuals.[393] In this respect, both accounts place great emphasis on the need to search for well-experienced and well-respected individuals who can serve as moral exemplars to those in pursuit of greater moral awareness and increased moral understanding. These conceptions of moral wisdom do not call on individuals to generateyweJ moral rules or standards of moral truth which

[39']See Plato's discussion in *Apology,* at 20d-22b. Cf. Plato's outlook in *Phaedo, Republic* and other dialogues of his middle period, as discussed in Chapter 1: Part V: Sections 1 and 2, pp 28-29.
[392]This second point is one that Nussbaum briefly acknowledges in Nussbaum (1986), p. 482: n. 36. There, in relation to a similar discussion, she makes the important observation that, 'What is outside of our limits cannot enter our discourse.'
[393]Stephen White provides an excellent discussion on this point about the similarity of their methods. Hs also defends these methods as adequate truth-seeking devices. For evidence of this, see White (1992), pp. 34-36 and 40-44. For more discussion on this issue, see also Nussbaum (1986), Ch. 8. Cf. John Cooper's discussion in Cooper (1999d), pp. 281-291.

amount to 'little hard rocks of certainty'.[394] In contrast, they prescribe a kind of practical moral wisdom which is open to a process of on-going development and endless refinement. In this way, these accounts dispense with the notion of moral wisdom as a 'closed body of explained or self-explanatory truths.'[395] They also warn us that the general rules of thumb with which moral agents aspire to attain the virtuous and happy human life may show themselves to be *inadequate* or *incomplete* in th^ light of particular experiences, and therefore stand in need of constant revision *vis-a-viz* the insights into morality gained via direct encounters with particular moral problems.

Finally, we may also observe that in prescribing a kind of ethical understanding that is always open to revision and, thus, a kind of moral development which is essentially on-going, both the Socratic, or early Platonic, and Aristotelian conceptions of moral wisdom place considerable emphasis on the importance of individuals taking on the responsibility for their own moral development and success. Both accounts agree that there are no complete *moral experts,* for whom the search for greater moral understanding would be pointless. They also agree that there are no infallible moral guide-books or general algorithms with which one can be guaranteed to always get things right. As such, they leave all individuals with the responsibility to look to shared human experiences, but to ultimately think for themselves about what virtue and the virtuous life require. Accordingly, they suggest that even though one may begin the ascent to mor. visdom and happiness by following the example of a well-respected moral individual, as both the *adhominen* aspect of the Socratic *elenchus* and the Aristotelian emphasis on the priority of the particular attest, one must ultimately develop a conception of the good, and the good human life, that best fits one's own *experience* of life and one's own *perception* of the particular facts about morality. And, in this way, they show us the important sense in which the development *ofphronēsis* is essentially 'up to us'.

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[394]This is a term that Myles Burnyeat uses to denote the kind of moral wisdom that he thinks Plato's Socrates seeks to disavow in the early Platonic dialogues. For more explanation of the meaning of this term, see my discussion in Chapter 2: Part III: Section 2, especially in n. 150.

[395]For more discussion on this point, and what Aristotle sees as the requirements of a 'science', see Jonathan Barnes' discussion in his article entitled 'Life and Work', in Barnes (ed.) (1995), pp. 25-26.

Part III: Aristotle's account of the relation between *phronēsis* and character

Section 1: Aristotle's recognition of the importance of the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul

Having examined the nature and function of the kind of practical wisdom that Aristotle sees as essential for the good and happy human life, we must now consider the relation that this kind of moral wisdom has to those aspects of emotion and character which reside in what Aristotle describes as the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul. These components of the soul are important for, as we shall see, they play a vital role in enabling individuals to receive the kind of intellectual arguments and moral habituation that enable 'the eye of the soul' to 'see aright'. In this sense, these aspects of emotion and character must be understood to play an important supportive and preparatory role in the *development* of virtue and moral wisdom. More importantly, however, Aristotle also recognises that these components of the soul give rise to certain moral virtues, such as temperance, justice, and courage, which assist the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis* with its detection and determination of particular moral problems. In this sense, these aspects of emotion and character must also be understood to play an important role in providing the basis from which the person of practical wisdom *exercises* the moral and intellectual virtues and develops a general conception of the requirements for virtue and the good human life. And given what has been said in Part II, regarding the process of endless revision to which one's conception of the latter will remain open, it is clear that the role that the non-rational components of the soul play in deciphering the lessons from experience in order to generate and improve general moral 'rules of thumb', will also be essentially on-going.

Section 2: The need for an early education to develop the right kind of character

In Books I and X of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle makes it clear that one will not be able to develop the moral and intellectual virtues and, thus, learn to 'see aright' unless one has first developed the kind of moral character that is attentive to the demands of virtue and responsive to the dictates of reason. In order to do this, he

suggests, we must first receive the kind of moral training that instils good habits and practices from an early stage of our youth. Thus, in Book I of the *Ethics,* Aristotle insists that, '...any one who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just and, generally, about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits.'[396] For Aristotle, this early education is vital as it establishes the level of psychic awareness and internal discipline required to grasp the 'starting-points'[397] from which all moral learning proceeds. Without it, he suggests, any attempts to improve one's moral character or one's conception of the requirements for a good human life will be futile. Thus, Aristotle repeats Plato's warning in *Republic* that the training of one's non-rational components of the soul from an early age will make no *small difference* to an individual's chance to benefit from the intellectual arguments designed to encourage virtue and enable one to flourish, but 'a very great difference, or rather all the difference.'[398] Accordingly, in Book X of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle writes: '...argument and teaching, we may suspect, are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must first have been cultivated by means of habits for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth which is to nourish seed.'[399] 'For he who lives as passion directs', Aristotle continues, 'will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does; and how can we persuade one in such a state to change his ways?'[400]

In this way, Aristotle suggests that anyone who has not been 'steered by the rudders of pleasure and pain'[401] from an early stage in life, will not have the 'starting points' from which we learn to value and enjoy the things that we ought, nor prove capable of receiving such principles. As such, the arguments which are used in an attempt to improve one's moral character or one's general conception of the

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[396]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1095b3-4.
[397]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1095b7-8.
[398]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1103b24-6 and 1104b 12-15; *Republic:* Book II: 377a-b; and my discussion in Chapter 1: Part II: Section 4: pp. 19-21. See also *Republic:* Book VII: 536c-d, where Socrates declares '...for we must not believe Solon when he says that as someone grows older he is able to learn a lot. He can do that even less well than he can run races, for all great and numerous labours belong to the young'; and *Republic:* Book IV: 429d-430b, where Plato compares the importance of preparing individuals through music and physical training to the importance of preparing wool before it is dyed. For the opposite view on Socrates and the late learner, see Harold Tarrant, 'Plato, Prejudice and the Mature-Age Student in Antiquity', E. Benitez (ed.), *Dialogues with Plato. Apeiron: a journal for ancient philosophy and science,* Vol. XXIX, No. 4, Academic Printing and Publishing, Canada, (December 1996), pp. 112-120.
[399]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1095a2, Book VI: 1142a 12-13 and Book X: 1179b23-26.
[400]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book X: 1179b26-28.
[401]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* BookX: 1172a21-23.

requirements for the good human life will have no effect on them; they will invariably fall on 'deaf ears'. And as for these people who neither have nor can get the essential 'starting points' for morality, Aristotle suggests, 'let them hear the words of Hesiod:

> "Far best is he who knows all things himself;
> Good, he that hearkens when men counsel right;
> But he who neither knows, nor lays to heart
> Another's wisdom, is a useless wight."'[402]

This training, jf the non-rational components of the soul is thought to be an essential pre-requisite for moral and intellectual development for the very reason that one's character helps to determine one's vision of the world and one's assessment of the sorts of goods and pleasures that are worthy of pursuit. It is in this sense that Aristotle emphasises the importance of youths learning 'both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought',[403] and from this perspective that he claims that 'the end', or general conception of the good human life to be pursued, 'appears to each man in a form answering to his character.'[404]

Section 3: The role of emotion and pleasure in Aristotle's account of the virtues

Having established the importance of the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul for the *development* of the moral and intellectual virtues, Aristotle also attributes to these components of the soul a significant role in the *exercise* of the virtues. Accordingly, Aristotle's definitions of virtue make direct reference to the importance of the moral agent's character and emotions in generating the right kind of feelings, or emotional responses, towards the virtuous actions that are undertaken. They also make direct reference to the role that these non-rational components of the soul play in generating the right kind of desires and cultivating the right sense of pleasure. As such, Aristotle dispenses with a purely intellectual or cognitive theory of virtue.[405] He also

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[402]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1095b8-12; and M. L. West (trans.), *Hesiod. Theogany & Works and Days,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p. 45: Lines 293-7.
[403]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1104b 12-14.
[404]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book III: 1114b 1-2.
[405]For an excellent discussion on this aspect of Aristotle's ethical theory, see L. A. Kosman, 'Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's Ethics', A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics,* University of California Press, California, 1980; and Nussbaum (1990), pp. 40-43.

dispenses with a purely cognitive theory of the emotions.[406] In contrast, Aristotle regards genuine virtue as a settled disposition to both *think -and feel* in appropriate ways. Likewise, he regards the passions, or emotions, as complexes which are comprised of desiderative, affective and intellectual dimensions.[407] In this sense, Aristotle insists that for one to possess and exhibit genuine virtue, one must not only perform virtuous actions from a *settled disposition* of good moral character; one must also reach the decision to perform such actions with an appropriate kind of outlook and emotional attitude towards both these actions and the particular objects or human relationships that are affected by them.

Thus, in Book II of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle writes: '...both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of excellence.'[408] In this way, Aristotle describes each of the moral virtues of character as a kind of 'mean' which aims at what is intermediate between a kind of 'excess' and 'defect' of feeling.[409] As such, each virtue is supposed to be used by us as a standard with which we gauge, direct and moderate our own feelings or emotions/From this perspective, Aristotle exhorts individuals to recognise their own faults or bad habits and to work on correcting them accordingly. Thus, he tells us 'we must consider the things towards which we ourselves are easily carried away; for some of us tend to one thing, some to another; and this will be recognisable from the pleasure and the pain we feel.'[410] Once we have considered this, he suggests, 'we must drag ourselves away to the contrary extreme; for we shall get into the intermediate state by drawing well away from error, as people do in straightening sticks that are bent.'[411] In discussing the

[406]See Sherman (1997), pp. 248-254. For an excellent discussion on the differences between cognitive and affective theories of emotions, see Michael Stocker and Elizabeth Hegeman, *Valuing Emotions,* Cambridge University Press, U.S.A., 1996, pp. 17-55; and Justin Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions,* Routledge, New York, 1992, pp. 6-37.
[407]See *Rhetoric:* Book II: Ch. 2.
[408]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1106b 19-23.
[409]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1106b 15-28 and 1109a20-24. Aristotle acknowledges that not every action or emotion will admit of a 'mean' between a kind of excess and defect. For evidence of this, see his discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1107a9-26; and his taxonomy of virtue in *Eudemian Ethics:* Book II: 1221al-12.
[410]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1109b2-6.
[411]ibid.

importance of the moral virtues of character, such as justice, temperance and courage, in providing this mean to which we must curb our feelings or emotions, Aristotle also refers to the need to mould our sense of pleasure and pain. Accordingly, in Book II of the *Ethics,* he writes: 'we must take as a sign of states the pleasure or pain that supervenes on acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is an^.yed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward.'[412]

Section 4: The role of the *alogos* components of the soul in relation to both the development and exercise of the virtues

In emphasising the importance of developing an appropriate outlook on the requirements of virtue and, thus, the need for us to harmonise our emotional responses and our sense of pleasure and pain with our particular judgments about morality, Aristotle highlights the important role that the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul play in integrating the intellectual and affective components of virtue. In doing so, he points out how important certain aspects of character and emotion are for both the development and exercise of the moral and intellectual virtues. Not only do these components of the soul aid one's efforts to bring about the kind of'psychic harmony' or integration which precedes genuine moral development, they also play an important role in generating the kind of mental outlook or attitude which Aristotle sees as constitutive of genuine virtue itself. As such, Aristotle regards these non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul as ultimately responsible for establishing both a stable moral character and the conditions from which an individual learns to value and pursue the right things and to perform certain actions *as* the virtuous person would perform them.[413]

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[412]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1104b4-14. There, Aristotle states that, 'it is on account of pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of pain that we abstain from noble ones.'

[413]For Aristotle's discussion on the conditions required to perform a virtuous action *as* the virtuous person would perform it, see *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1105a30ff. For a discussion on the grounds for 'correct choice' in Aristotle's ethical theory, see also Bumyeat (1980), pp. 83-88.

Section 5: Comparisons with the Stoics' views on character and emotion and Plato's outlook on this issue in *Republic* and *Phaedo*

Given these observations, we may surmise that Aristotle presents a far more favourable assessment of the importance of certain aspects of character and emotion for the exercise of virtue, than Plato does in the dialogues of his middle period or the Stoics dp in the philosophical works of the Hellenistic era. For, unlike Plato's directive in *Republic* and *Phaedo,* Aristotle's works do not restrict the operations of the non-rational components of the soul to a merely motivational or subservient role.[414] In contrast, they clearly regard aspects of character and emotion as important for both the pursuit and *determination* of appropriate human ends. In providing a partly cognitive theory of the emotions, they also illustrate a way in which these emotions *can* be made to be responsive to reason and to work *with* reason to determine the particular requirements of virtue and the good human life.[415] And unlike the Stoics, Aristotle clearly regards a bit of well-moderated feeling or emotion as a positively *good* thing. For he suggests that being angry, for instance, with the right person under the right circumstances and to the right degree is partly a manifestation of the excellence of our capacity for practical reasoning. Accordingly, he presents a theory of moral training and habituation which opts not for the complete removal or *extirpation* of the emotions, but the *moderation* and *regulation* of these aspects of the human psyche.[416] In keeping with his stated aim of prescribing a kind of life and a form of practical wisdom which is specifically concerned with *human goods* and *human needs,* Aristotle insists on finding a place for these unique aspects of human nature. He also insists on the need for us to recognise the unique value that they bring to human experience.

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[414]For some examples of how Plato rates the importance of the non-rational components of the soul, see *Republic:* 381 and 389d-e; and *Phaedo:* 64e-65c, 67c and 82e-83d. Cf. the general outlook that he presents on this issue in *Symposium* and *Phaedrus.*

[415]See John Cooper's discussion in 'Some Remarks on Aristotle's Moral Psychology', John Cooper, *Reason and Emotion. Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology' and Ethical Theory,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1999, pp. 238-246.

[416]For an excellent discussion on the Stoics' outlook on the emotions, see Annas (1993a), pp. 61-66; and Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985, pp. 127-181.

Section 6: Summary

In examining the role played by the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul in Aristotle's account of virtue and moral wisdom, we have seen the valuable contributions that these components of the soul make to the *development* of the moral and intellectual virtues. This is done by 'preparing' the soul of individuals with a certain kind of *readiness* and *willingness* to learn. In considering the cognitive and affective dimensions of the virtues that Aristotle outlines in his definitions of virtue, we have also seen the valuable contributions that these components of the soul make to the *exercise* of the virtues. This is done by providing the conditions in which one first learns to integrate the various aspects of character, reason, pleasure and emotion, and then adopts an outlook on the requirements of virtue so as to *think* and *feel* in the right way and, thus, perform the virtuous actions *as* the virtuous person should perform them. To develop a better understanding of the relationship between *phronesis* and character, however, we need to take a closer look at the role that these components of the soul play in assisting the intellectual virtue *of phronesis* with its *detection* and *determination* of particular moral problems. To do this, we need to examine the contribution that the moral virtues of character and, thus, the emotions which form part of them, make to the process by which we evaluate particulars and decide how to respond to particular situations.

Section 7: The role of the *alogos* components of the soul in assisting the virtue of *phronēsis* in detecting aiid determining particular moral problems

In Book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle claims that vice or wickedness 'perverts us' in a way that 'causes us to be deceived' about the proper starting points of moral action.[417] In this way, he suggests that a morally corrupt character may distort our 'perception' of the appropriate ends for human action and, thereby, detract from the ability of'the eye of the soul' to 'see aright'. Conversely, Aristotle implies that good moral character will assist the soul's apprehension of genuine human values and concerns.[418] Accordingly, in Chapter 12 of Book VI, he insists that, 'the function of man

[417]Sce *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1144a35-6.

[418]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VII: 1151al5-19. There, Aristotle states that, 'excellence and vice respectively preserve and destroy the first principle.'

is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as with moral excellence.'[419] The role of the latter, he suggests, is to make both 'the right aim' and 'the right choice' in moral actions.[420] To reach these correct aims and choices, moral agents need to rely on those aspects of character and emotion which form part of the moral virtues and aid our efforts to *detect ox perceive* the 'ultimate particular facts'. In this way, Aristotle suggests that aspects of emotion and character serve as important evaluative tools for us, which are responsible for gathering the information that we require to work out what to do in a particular situation or what to make of a particular moral problem. This may mean that they provide us with a sense of pity, or pain and grief, for instance, at the sight of someone losing a loved one, so as to generate a kind of compassionate virtuous response. It might also mean that they provide us with a feeling of loss or betrayal in the face of deception, so as to enable us to generate a kind of alarmed or angry response.[421] In such cases, the person of practical wisdom will *deliberate* over the matter at hand and reach a *decision* about how to respond to the situation which is partly informed by emotion and partly determined by the *condition* or *outlook* of the non-rational components of the soul. As Nancy Sherman points out, Aristotle makes it very clear that the aspects of character and emotion which enable us to determine an appropriate course of action in these cases must be trained and habituated, lest they become unreliable or inaccurate sources of information and decision-making.[422] However, having acknowledged this important point regarding the need for us to educate and train these aspects of the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul, we must also acknowledge the fact that Aristotle grants them a significant amount *of control* over the way that we perceive moral salience.

Section 8: An apparent tension in Aristotle's account

At this point we may begin to detect an apparent tension in Aristotle's account of the functions that the moral and intellectual virtues are supposed to perform. For in his discussion of the intellectual and deliberative virtue of *phronēsis,* as our examination in Part II has shown, Aristotle clearly attributes *this* virtue of the intellect with the responsibility for perceiving the 'ultimate particulars' or 'ultimate particular

[419]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1144a7-l 1.
[420]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1144a8-20.
[42']For more discussion oh this point, see Martha Nussbaum's discussion in Nussbaum (1990), pp. 40-43.

facts' of a situation in order to generate an appropriate practical response X here, in relation to the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul, we have sesn how Aristotle also regards the moral virtues of character, and the emotions which form part of them, as the very things which control our ability to *set* the first principles cf moral action and *perceive* the appropriate ends for humans. In this way, Aristotle appears to provide two competing descriptions of the origin or source of one's ability to detect and determine solutions to particular moral problems. One of these descriptions gives precedence to the *intellectual* virtue of *phronēsis;* the other gives priority to the *moral virtues* and those aspects of character and emotion which reside in the specifically *non-rational* components of the soul. But is this *really* a problem for Aristotle and does it reflect a *genuine* tension in his account of the functions that the moral and intellectual virtues are supposed to perform? I want to suggest that the answer to this question is no. I also want to suggest that any appearance of tension *vis-a-viz* Aristotle's descriptions of these two kinds of virtues will be removed when we consider the significance of his claim regarding the *unity* of the virtues. So, let us now consider what Aristotle has to say in Book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics* in relation to this unity of the moral and intellectual virtues.

Section 9: The significance of Aristotle's account of the unity of the moral and intellectual virtues

In Book VI *of Nicomachean Ethics,* Chapter 13, Aristotle concludes his discussion of practical wisdom and the relation that this intellectual virtue has to the moral virtues of character with the claim that, 'it is clear, then, from what has been said, that it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral excellence.'[423] This statement amounts to a claim about the unity of the moral and intellectual virtues. Accordingly, Aristotle suggests that we may 'refute the dialectical argument' which purports to establish that 'the excellences exist in separation from each other' or that an individual 'will have already acquired one when he has not yet acquired another.'[424] In this way, Aristotle maintains that with the presence of owe virtue, we may infer the presence of *all* the virtues, for the very reason

[422]See Sherman (1997), pp. 250-254.
[423]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1144b30-32 and Book X: 1178a 15-19.
[424]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1144b32-35.

that, 'with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the excellences.'[425] Thus, Aristotle also maintains that one's moral choice or decision will not be right without practical wisdom 'any more than without moral excellence.'[426]

What this claim regarding the unity of the virtui shows us is that Aristotle thinks the moral and intellectual virtues cannot work in *isolation* from one another. This, in turn, suggests that these virtues depend on each other to function well in such a way that the work that *one* virtue does will be made possible *only* by the work that the *other* virtues do. In this way, the intellectual work that the virtue of *phronēsis* does in *setting* or *spotting* the right ends will be made possible by the work that the moral virtues of character do in attuning the cognitive and affective capacities of the soul to the particular demands of virtue. Conversely, the work that the moral virtues of character do in attuning the cognitive and affective capacities of the soul to the particular demands of virtue will be made possible by the work that *phronēsis* does in setting or spotting the right ends. Accordingly, in a situation where one witnesses the physical or psychological violation of an innocent victim, for instance, the intellectual virtue *of phronesis* will help one to gain a sense of the moral injustice that has occurred. And yet, it will not only be one's rational judgment that produces this perception and thereby highlights the morally salient features of this particular situation. On the contrary, when the moral virtues of character are properly *developed* and *attuned* to the demands of virtue, one's psychological and emotional response to this situation will help to *inform* and *confirm* one's intellectual judgment that an innocent victim has in fact been wronged. And, together, these aspects of the human psyche will give one a sense of how one ought to *respond* to this particular situation.

Given this kind of interrelatedness that exists between them, and the fact that each of the virtues plays a role in providing the *groundwork* for the other virtues to operate, it makes sense to say that the intellectual virtue *of phronēsis* also plays a role in establishing a sense of responsiveness to the demands of virtue within the non-rational components of the soul. It also makes sense to say that the moral virtues of character play a role in enabling an individual to *detect* or *determine* the appropriate ends for human action. In this light, we can see that it makes *no* sense to ask whether 'the eye of

[425]*Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: 1145a 1-2.

the soul' learns to 'see aright' through one's character *or* one's intellect.[427] Naturally, it will see through *both.* Likewise, it makes *no* sense to demand an account of the respective *importance* of these aspects of the soul in relation to this particular form of apprehension. For this will inevitably depend on the angle or perspective from which one views the matter.

From this we may conclude that Aristotle regards the moral and intellectual virtues as *components* of a network or *totality* which possesses a set of integrated and mutually-reinforcing functions. These functions may differ slightly in terms of the subject matter with which they are concerned, such as the specific requirements of justice, temperance or bravery in the case of the moral virtues, or the overall coordination of virtuous concerns in the case of *phronēsis,* but, ultimately, the work that they do is directed towards the *single aim* of procuring human goods through right action and resolve. In this way, the functions of the moral and intellectual virtues are viewed by Aristotle as a whole, and we need to *analyse* them as such.

Section 10: Our role in the on-going development of *phronēsis* and the moral virtues of character

Having observed that the development *of phronēsis* is essentially on-going and that a tight connection exists between this intellectual virtue and the various moral virtues of character, we may also observe that the developments which occur in relation to moral *wisdom* will be accompanied by developments in relation to moral *character.* In this sense, the development of the moral virtues, such as justice, temperance, courage, liberality, magnificence, pride and friendship, will also be essentially on-going.[428] More importantly, this explains the sense in which virtue will be a state which

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[426]*Nicomachean Ethic •:* Book VI: 1145a4-6.

[427]In this sense, David Wiggins is right to point out that, 'it is the beginning of wisdom on this matter, both as an issue of interpretation and as a philosophical issue, to see that we do not really have to choose between Aristotle's proposition and its apparent opposite.' Accordingly, he is also right to say that, on Aristotle's picture, when it comes to the apprehension of something which is genuinely good, 'we can desire it because it seems good and it seems good because we desire it.' John McDowell also provides a useful analogy in his discussion on this aspect of Aristotle's account of the relation between character and *phronēsis.* Accordingly, he tells us 'We can see the orectic state and the doxastic state as interlocking elements in a mechanism, like the ball and socket of a joint...' For more discussion on this point, see Wiggins (1980), p. 239; and McDowell (1988b), p. 113.

[428]Julia Annas appears to support this view. For, in speaking about the task of getting control over our feelings and training them so as to assist our moral development, she suggests that, for Aristotle, 'this is a

is not only concerned with choice, but also lies in a 'mean' which is essentially 'relative to us'. For it reflects the fact that each moral agent's understanding of what it means and takes to be virtuous will be generated by his or her own general moral rules of thumb. It also reflects the fact that one's understanding of what the general moral rules of thumb require one to do will be largely determined by one's specific location within the long and engaging historical process of constantly refining our human understanding of what the good and virtuous life requires, and the particular stage that one is at in one's own process of personal moral development.

What this essentially means is that the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul will *continue* to contribute to our conception of what virtue and the good human life require. It also means that we must continue to employ these aspects of human nature in our efforts to gain experiences of *new* particulars and new situations in order to generate and improve our general moral rules of thumb. For, just as the intellectual virtue *ofphronēsis* must continually work to improve and fine-tune the general moral rules that enable us to make judgments about particulars and how to handle specific situations, the moral virtues of character must always be on the look out for new insights into morality based on our own unique and accumulated experiences of life, and all that it brings with it in the way of good and bad fortune.

In this way, Aristotle's account of the moral virtues of character, and the aspects of emotion with which they are concerned, also leaves us with considerable scope for *personal choice* and *individual responsibility* in relation to both our ethical decision-making and our moral progress. For, on Aristotle's account, these aspects of the good human life are not regarded as things that are simply *given* to us in experience or moral instruction, nor received through some innate capacity or constitutive moral luck. Likewise, they are not set in stone for all generations of human beings to find and follow. Rather, they are regarded as the very things that we must cultivate for ourselves in the light of the particular situations that we encounter within our own lifetime. In this way, we must generate our own capacity to perceive moral salience, stay open to, and

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process that never ceases, since our lives are not static; we are all the time reacting to different things and experiencing certain feelings and emotions, and the way we do so both reflects how we handled past feelings and affects the way we will handle future ones.' She also suggests that this is a process which Aristotle thinks 'begins early' and becomes 'ever more conscious and autonomous with age.' For more discussion on this point, see Annas (1993a), p. 53; and Burnyeat (1980), p. 76.

flexible about, the things that *are* in fact morally salient, and make sure that our understanding of the virtues, our perceptions of particular moral facts, and our practical responses *to* those perceptions *constantly* move in the direction of greater consistency or harmony. For, on Aristotle's picture, if we fail to do this we will also fail to utilise our full potential and thereby fall short of what it takes to live as happily as any human being can live.

Indeed, in distinguishing *genuine* moral and intellectual virtues from the kind of'natural virtues' with which some individuals are born, and insisting that genuine virtues are *only* produced when we submit our natural tendencies to a lengthy program of moral training and habituation, Aristotle also makes it quite clear that 'we are not made good or bad by nature' and that *no one* will have their fortune simply handed to them.[429] On the contrary, his account indicates that the 'prize' of *eudaimonia,* for which virtuous character and behaviour are rewarded, must be *earned* and *won* on the basis of much hard work, much effort and persistence, and the on-going commitment to the pursuit of human excellence. As our discussion in Chapter 4 has shown, Aristotle thinks that this pursuit will be all but *impossible* for those unfortunate individuals who have not been blessed with the right kind of constitutive luck, the right kind of political rule or State, and the kind of position and occupation in society that provides one with the time and leisure required to cultivate the all-important virtues. Our discussion in this chapter has also shown that those who have not received the right kind of upbringing will be *excluded* from this pursuit. However, none of this detracts from Aristotle's point that for those who *do* receive this essential head-start in life, there is still an immense amount of *individual effort* required to generate the skills that will enable them to flourish. For, as he insists in Book X of *Nicomachean Ethics,* '...it is surely not enough that when they are young they should get the right nurture and attention; since they must, even when they are grown up, practise and be habituated...'[430]

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[429]See *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VI: Ch. 13; and *Politics:* Book VII: Ch. 13: 1332a39ff. See also *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book II: 1106a9, where Aristotle states that, 'we become virtuous by doing virtuous things', implying that virtuous states *only* arise through *practice.*
[430]See *Nicomachean Eihics:* Book: 1180al-3.

Section 11: Comparisons with the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of the relations between virtue, knowledge, character and happiness

Having examined Aristotle's account of the relation between practical wisdom and good character in the virtuous and happy human life, we can see that this account also has strong links with the Socratic, or early Platonic, conception of moral wisdom and its dependence upon certain fundamental personal qualities. To begin, we may observe that both accounts suggest that the intellect, alone, will *not* be sufficient to generate the kind of moral wisdom that is required for genuine virtue and human flourishing. In the case of the Socratic, or early Platonic, account, we are shown that certain psychological qualities or aspects of character, such as sincerity, stamina, courage and humility, are *essential* for the development of the kind of non-expert, albeit elenctically justifiable, moral wisdom that underpins virtue and thereby conditions the possibility of genuine human happiness. In the case of the Aristotelian account, we are shown that the non-rational or *alogos* components of the soul play a *vital* role in integrating the various cognitive and affective aspects of moral wisdom and development. In this way, both accounts suggest that arguments, alone, will *never* be sufficient to turn 'the eye of the soul' around, in order to 'see aright'. They also agree that there will always be certain *affective* or non-cognitive aspects of human nature, such as our emotions, our desires, and our sense of pleasure and pain, which form the *fov.ndatiom* for moral knowledge or are *built into* moral knowledge itself.

Accordingly, we may also observe that both the Socratic, or early Platonic conception of human wisdom and the Aristotelian account of *phronēsis* emphasise the importance of training an individual's *character* so as to enable one to develop a kind of *readiness* and *willingness* to learn. The Socrates of Plato's early dialogues does not appear to ask the question whether certain individuals, such as the stubborn interlocutors with whom he converses in *Euthyphro, Gorgias,* and *Hippias Major,* are simply *unwilling* or actually *incapable* of listening to the arguments that he presents, and, thus, benefiting from his unique form of moral education. What he *does* illustrate, however, is that in engaging only their *intellect* in these pursuits, these individuals will fall short of what it takes to develop their own *justifiable* moral views. In the same way, Aristotle's works point out that until the souls of students are properly 'nourished' and 'prepared', so as to receive the teachings of moral exemplars with an appropriate level

of interest and understanding, the rational arguments which purport to establish virtue and moral understanding will simply fall on 'deaf ears'.

Finally, we may also observe that in emphasising the need for us to 'rise above' our naturally unruly tendencies, and to discover or work out the nature and value of the virtues for ourselves, both the Socratic, or early Platonic, and Aristotelian conceptions of the relation between moral wisdom and character demonstrate the importance of moral agents taking on the challenge to improve their *own* moral character and outlook. In Book IV of *Republic,* Plato provides a directive for the majority of humankind to endorse *zpre-given* set of moral beliefs and to adopt a policy of habitual obedience to the dictates of the prescribed 'moral experts'. In contrast with this, both Aristotle and the Socrates of Plato's early dialogues insist that for moral agents to succeed in cultivating the kind of skills, and the kind of character and wisdom, that are required to live *a. flourishing* human life, they must maintain a hold on the public perception of what virtue and the virtuous life require, but do all that they can to *transform* and *improve* it.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STOICS' AND EPICUREANS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE ABOUT MORALITY, LUCK AND HAPPINESS: A RENEWED SENSE OF URGENCY AND OPTIMISM

Part I: Introduction

In examining what Plato and Aristotle regard as the requirements for *eudaimonia,* and what they see as the main obstacles to human flourishing, our analysis has shown that these philosophers prescribe a way of life which they admit will be only open to a small and privileged minority. Despite Plato's initial support for a more Socratic, and hence optimistic and inclusive, approach to the requirements for happiness, and Aristotle's own attempts to emphasise those aspects of the good and happy human life that are essentially 'up to us', both philosophers arrive at an account of the good human life which inevitably excludes the majority of humanity. For Plato, as we have seen in Chapter 1, the impediments to the best human life begin with a form of 'constitutive luck'. This constitutive luck is said to determine one's capacity for both rational and moral development. And, according to Plato, it also determines who will gain access to the only kind of rigorous and extensive training program that enables one to become a *genuine* philosopher. For Plato, only genuine philosophers will enjoy the kind of position and occupation in society that provides one with the opportunity to develop and exercise genuine virtue. Hence, on Plato's view, only these rare and fortunate individuals will have what it takes to experience the very best human life.

In Chapters 4 and 5, we have also seen how Aristotle's account of happiness effectively reduces the role of constitutive luck in the good human life, but ultimately endorses Plato's general point about the need for one to possess certain external goods and enjoy certain social and political conditions. According to Aristotle's picture, some of these external constraints on happiness relate to the need for us to be governed by the right kind of political rule or State. More specifically, they relate to the need for us to receive appropriate measures of guidance and freedom within that State; guidance in the form of moral tuition or instruction from an early age, and freedom in the form of the

opportunity to engage in the active decision-making processes of our society. In emphasising what is required for us to actively pursue activities of the latter sort, Aristotle also makes the point that happiness will remain out of reach for all those who do not possess a moderate amount of external goods and enjoy the kind of position in society which grants them the *leisure* required to develop and exercise the all-important virtues.

Having examined what Plato and Aristotle regard as necessary for a good human life and why they come to think of *eudaimonia* as something which is essentially too difficult for most people to attain, I want to turn now to what the Stoics and Epicureans have to say on these matters. In doing so, we shall gain an important insight into how the ethical teachings of Plato and Aristotle were received by Greek moral thinkers in later antiquity. But more importantly, we shall also get a sense of the ways in which these two influential schools of Greek philosophy were inspired to *rethink* many aspects of the classical accounts *of eudaimonia.* Many of these developments, as I will illustrate, appear to be at least partly motivated by the Stoics' and Epicureans' reflections on what may be regarded as Plato and Aristotle's *grim depiction* of the prospects for wide-spread human flourishing. In this way, an examination of the Stoics' and Epicureans' views on happiness will also serve to illustrate how some of the most influential moral philosophers of the Hellenistic era continued to work with the Greek notion of *eudaimonia,* but did all that they could to *redevelop* this notion in order to make the project of human flourishing more important and relevant for everyone.

Throughout the course of this chapter, I shall focus on three central issues and divide my discussion accordingly. The first of these issues will relate to what appears to be the Stoics' and Epicureans' reactions to the essentially elitist aspects of the classical Greek moral enterprise. This will provide us with a sense of what the Stoics and Epicureans think philosophy *should* do for us and their own thoughts on what assumptions about human nature *ought* to inform this important moral project. The second will relate to the Stoics' and Epicureans' shared commitment to a project of 'self-sufficiency' and, thus, their attempts to prescribe a way of life which will guarantee an immunity from the effects of fortune and the uncertain and turbulent events in the external world. In this section we shall see how the works of these two schools of Hellenistic philosophy compare with Plato and Aristotle's own views on the

necessity of particular external goods and the need for certain social or political conditions to be met. The third and final issue will relate to the Stoics' and Epicureans' emphasis on the need for us to make the project of *eudaimonia* inclusive of all human beings. In this section we will see how these two schools of Greek philosophy attempt to ground the notion *of eudaimonia* within an account of human nature and our shared, or universal, rational capacity.

In discussing these three central issues I will argue that the Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of happiness effectively eliminate the role of luck and the external goods which Plato and Aristotle saw as so important for human flourishing. I will also argue that in rejecting these aspects of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness, these Hellenistic philosophers intentionally set out to prescribe a way of life that is essentially open and relevant to *all* of humanity.

Part II: The Stoics' and Epicureans' reactions to the essentially elitist aspects of the classical Greek moral enterprise

Section 1: The Stoics' and Epicureans' shared outlook on the need for moral philosophy to be both practical and useful

Both the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy appear to support the view that when it comes to the goal of happiness, the only kind of philosophy which is *really* important and *conducive* to human flourishing is the kind which serves to educate people about what is most valuable in a human life, and provides the impetus for them to revise their priorities and actions accordingly. Only *this* kind of moral philosophy, they insist, will actually go some way in enabling individuals to overcome the obstacles to happiness and, thus, help to eliminate human suffering. In this way, the Stoics and Epicureans approach the task ȯ scribing the best way of life for humanity with a shared assumption about what philosophy, and in particular *moral philosophy, should* actually do for us. This assumption relates to the need for moral philosophy to be both practical and useful in providing individuals with the means to both *understand* and *eradicate* the sources of human suffering.

In his writings on ethics, Porphry tells us that Epicurus once wrote, 'Empty is that philosopher's argument by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated. For just as there is no use in a medical art that does not cast out sicknesses of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul.'[431] From this report we can see just how important it was for Epicurus and his followers that arguments purporting to pave the way to human flourishing were actually effective in doing so.[432] Indeed, on this basis, we can also see why the Epicurean philosophers choose *not* to make the activity of philosophical contemplation central to human flourishing, nor attribute anything other than a purely *instrumental* value to philosophy.[433] In their view, philosophy should not be produced, or even studied, unless it relates to the kind of material that has given rise to serious human concerns and goes some way in enabling individuals *to get to the bottom of those concerns.* *$* From this perspective, Epicurus attacks the Peripatetics, who follow the teachings of Aristotle in the Hellenistic era.[435] Epicurus suggests that in supporting Aristotle's conception of the requirements for the good human life, these neo-Aristotelian philosophers commit themselves to an account of happiness which remains so far removed from ordinary people and our everyday problems, that they must inevitably 'go walking about chattering about the good in an empty fashion.'[436]

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[431]Porphry, *To Marcella.* 31, in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley (trans.), *The Hellenistic Philosophers. Vol. I.*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 155 = Usener, H. (ed.), *Epicurea,* Teubner, Lipzig, 1887, Fragment 221.

[432]This also appears to be confirmed by Epicurus' insistence that, 'One should not pretend to philosophise, but actually philosophise. For what we need is not the semblance of health, but real health.' See Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 54, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 155.

[433]See Cicero, *On ends* 1.22. in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 99 = Usener, Fragment 243, part; and Diogenes Laertius 10.31, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 100 = Usener, Fragment 257.

[434]This is evident from Epicurus' remark that, 'Were we not upset by the worries that celestial phenomena and death might matter to us, and also by failure to appreciate the limits of pains and desires, we would have no need for natural philosophy.' See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 11, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 155.

[435]The Peripatetics have been thought, by many, to be responsible for the production of *Magna Moralia.* This work is generally *not* attributed to Aristotle, however, some scholars have recently advanced arguments to the contrary. See, for example, John Cooper's discussion in 'The *Magna Moralia* and Aristotle's Moral Philosophy', in John Cooper, *Reason and Emotion. Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1999, pp. 212-236.

[436]See Plutarch's comments in 'A Pleasant Life Impossible': 109IB, in Benedict Einarson and Phillip H. De Lacy (trans.), *Plutarch's Moralia XIV, Loeb Classical Library,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1967, p. 47 = Usener, Fragment 423; and Martha Nussbaum's discussion in Nussbaum (1994), pp. 102-104. It is important to note that Epicurus does think that philosophy and philosophical discussion can be a ready source of pleasure. This is clear in the light of the letter that Epicurus wrote on his deathbed to Idomeneus. It is also important to note that both Diogenes and Cicero attribute to Epicurus the view that mental pleasures and pains are greater than bodily ones. However, this does not detract from my general point about Epicurus' concern to show that the pleasures that arise from philosophical discussion are still that - pleasures that *arise* from something - nor Epicurus' general claim

Within the Stoic camp there is a recognition of both an instrumental and an intrinsic value of philosophy,[437] but despite this point of disagreement between them, the Stoics appear to show full support for the Epicureans' edict that there is an urgent need to take up those forms of philosophy which promise to dispel our unwarranted fears and beliefs. Thus, in *Tusculan Disputations,* Cicero writes, '...unless the soul is cured, which cannot be done without philosophy, there will be no end to our afflictions. Therefore, since we have now begun, let us turn ourselves over to philosophy for treatment; we shall be cured if we want to be.'[438] Emphasising the need for us to focus on the *practical* and *therapeutic* aspects of philosophy, Seneca also insists that, 'There is no time for fooling around.'[439] As Martha Nussbaum has pointed out, Seneca is intent on attacking those philosophers who have chosen to devote themselves to puzzles of a purely *logical* nature. He calls on them to justify their failure to use their talents and techniques to actually 'treat' human suffering. '...You have promised to bring help to the shipwrecked, the imprisoned, the sick, the needy, to those whose heads are under the poised axe', he writes, 'Where are you deflecting your attention? What are you doing?'[440] Highlighting the Stoics' point that it is futile to pursue logical sophistication simply for its own sake, or in isolation from the ethical truths which give logical training its real purpose, Nussbaum also tells us how Epictetus imagines a pupil who comes to him to study philosophy for the sole reason of wanting to understand how to solve the liar paradox, and tells this pupil, 'If that is your plan, go hang.'[441] These reports, together with the Epicurean sources, clearly indicate the Stoics' and Epicureans' shared belief that if philosophy is going to serve a *useful* purpose, it must inevitably point towards a *valuable* and essentially *practical* ethical end.[442]

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about the need for us to look to the practical and therapeutic benefits of these activities. For more discussion on this point, see Diogenes Laertius 10.22, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 150-151 = Usener, Fragment 257; Diogenes Laertius 10.136-7, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 118; and Cicero, *On ends* 1.55, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 119.

[437]See Stobaeus 2.71, 15-72, 6, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 372 = *Stoicorum Veterwn Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.106, part.

[438]See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.13, as reproduced in Nussbaum (1994), p. 317.

[439]See Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 48.8, as reproduced in Nussbaum (1994), p. 317.

[440]See ibid; and Nussbaum (1994). pp. 316-317.

[441]See Epictetus, *Discourses,* 2.17.34, as reproduced in Nussbaum (1994), p. 350.

[442]See also Nussbaum (1994), pp. 349-530. There is some evidence to suggest that Aristotle also answers to these sentiments about the utility of philosophy for *eudaimonia* in his *Protrepticus.* There, he writes: 'Now he who is to consider these matters must not forget that all things good and useful for human life reside in use and action, not in mere knowledge...' He also claims that, 'It follows that philosophy too, if it is useful, must be either a doing of good things or useful as a means to such acts.' However, it appears that these remarks are at odds with the general outlook of this work, and Aristotle's repeated claim within it regarding the need for us to recognise *contemplative* understanding as the kind of knowledge that is to

Section 2: The Stoics' and Epicureans' shared outlook on the need for moral philosophy to appeal to a wide range of people

Both the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy also appear to support the view that for moral philosophy to be practical and useful, it must appeal to a wide range of people, rather than a select group or privileged few in society. They take up the notion of *eudaimonia* with the assumption that any good account of what happiness requires must not only cater for the prospects of the *elite,* but also serve to address the problems of *ordinary* human beings. And they hope, through their respective projects, to provide the means to alleviate the suffering of individuals throughout the entire world; to essentially help Greeks and *non-Greeks* alike.[443] In this respect, the Stoics and Epicureans can be seen to be reacting, at least in part, to the essentially elitist aspects of the classical Greek moral enterprise. They can also be seen to be rejecting some of the key assumptions about human nature that Plato and Aristotle had introduced in this ethical debate.

In Chapters 1 and 4, we saw how Plato and Aristotle's moral projects were permeated with prejudices against non-Greeks and non-citizens in Athenian society. Distinctions between classes and races of people are central to their ethical and political writings and in describing foreigners, workers and slaves as 'inferior'; somehow less than fully human, Plato and Aristotle treat these individuals in a hostile manner, leaving the majority of society with little or no hope of flourishing. The Stoics and Epicureans react to these works with an unequivocal pledge to help educate all those who are interested in learning what it takes to overcome hardship in order to become *eudaimōn.* They show no support for the view that one's chances of success will be *even partially* determined by factors which relate to one's membership of a particular class or race of people. On the contrary', both the Stoics and Epicureans reinstate the power of reason to dispel our unwarranted fears and beliefs. More importantly, they also demonstrate their belief that *every human being* has this rational capacity within them and, thus, *all that it*

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be valued most in the good human life. From this perspective, Aristotle claims that, 'Of acts of thought, then, '.hose which are done just because of pure contemplation itself are more honourable and better than those useful for some other ends.' See *Protrepticus:* B 53. Cf. *Protrepticus:* B 27, B 42, B 46, B 51, B 68 and B 87-94.

443 This aspect of the Stoics' and Epicureans' moral philosophy will become more evident in Part IV of this chapter, when we examine their efforts to recognise themselves as 'citizens of the entire cosmos', rather than members of a specific and allegedly superior Greek community.

takes to save their own life from being miserable or unhappy. Indeed, here, with this renewed sense of urgency and optimism, we see a return to the outlook which is characteristic of the Socratic, or early Platonic, approach to the requirements for happiness and the efforts that are exerted by Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues to help individuals to essentially *help themselves* to a better understanding and, hence, a better way of life.

In his famous *Letter to Menoeceus,* Epicurus writes the following: 'Let no one while young delay in philosophising nor when old grow weary of philosophy. For no one is too young or too oici for a healthy soul.'[444] 'Anyone who says that the time for philosophising is not yet come or hus already passed', he continues, 'is like one who says that the time for happiness is not yet come or has already passed.'[445] In saying this, Epicurus implies that all human beings have the necessary rational capacity to leam and benefn from the philosophical arguments that he takes to be instrumental to happiness.[446] He also makes the point, as reported by Stobaeus, that in this way we can be confident that nature has endowed *all of us* with the means that are required to flourish; regardless of our particular social or political standing.[447] Accordingly, Stobaeus reports that Epicurus once proclaimed, 'I am grateful to blessed Nature, because she made what is necessary easy to acquire and what is hard to acquire

[444]Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 122, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 154-155. Compare what Aristotle has to say on the prospects for youth to engage in meaningful philosophical discourse in *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1095a2 and Book VI: 1142al2-12. See also *Republic:* Book II: 377a-b and *Rhetoric:* Book II: 1389M3-15, where Plato and Aristotle rule out the possibility of elder citizens, or, as Aristotle describes them, 'men who are past their prime', from benefiting from a philosophical education.
[445]ibid.
[446]This point also appears to be supported by Martha Nussbaum's discussion of the second century C.E. Epicurean philosopher named Diogenes of Oenoanda. Nussbaum observes that this Epicurean philosopher allegedly put up a huge stone inscription in a public place as a piece of writing which he says 'goes out to the many' in an attempt 'to put in public for all the drugs that will save them* and 'to help strangers who pasc by the way.' See Nussbaum (1994), pp. 136-137.
[447]Stobaeus, *Anthology* 3.17.22, in Brad Inwood and L. P. Gevson (trans.), *Hellenistic Philosophy. Introductory Readings. Second Edition,* Hackett Publishing Company, U.S.A., 1988, p. 99 = Usener, Fragment 469. This suggestion also seems to be confirmed by Plutarch's comments in his essay entitled 'Live Unknown'. There, Plutarch takes a swipe at the founding father of Epicureanis;n for advocating a way of life which essentially involves removing oneself from the political arena. Plutarch suggests that this is entirely inconsistent with Epicurus' remarks on the importance of seeking to help others to benefit from his own moral teachings and, more importantly, contrasts with what Plutarch describes as Epicurus' own attempts to 'circulate books to every man and every woman.' Plutarch thereby implies that Epicurus *did* attempt to make his moral teachings open and available to as many human beings as possible, in the belief that he could possibly help them all. See Einarson and De Lacy (trans.) (1967), pp. 328-329; and Usener, Fragments 23-8, p. 87.

unnecessary.'[448] Again, in *Vatican Sayings,* we hear of Epicurus' intention to 'reveal the things' which he takes to be 'expedient to all mankind.'[449] On this basis, Lucretius also takes up the challenge to reassure any prospective Epicurean pupils that they *will* have what it takes to benefit from the teachings of Epicurus. In *De Rerum Natura* Lucretius assures his potential students with the following remark: 'In many respects the various natures and characteristic habits of mankind necessarily differ;...but in these matters I see that there is one thing that I can affirm: so slight are the remaining traces of our different natures that reason is unable to expel from us, that nothing hinders us from living lives worthy of the gods.'[450]

The leaders of the Stoa also affirm this move to extend one's own moral teachings to all those human beings who are in need. In recognising the presence of universal human suffering and universal human capacities to benefit from a philosophical education, they exhort people from *all* walks of life and *all* divisions within the community to join them in the struggle against human suffering. Epictetus himself was a former slave, and from this fact we can see just how far removed the Stoic philosophers are from the restrictive and exclusive mind set of the Platonic and Aristotelian teachings. Together with the Epicureans, the Stoics entreat their pupils to recognise both the power and universality of human reason as a tool to dispel human troubles.

Accordingly, in his essay entitled *On Anger,* Seneca conveys the following message to his audience regarding the power of human reason: '...nothing is so hard and difficult that it cannot be conquered by the human intellect and be brought through persistent study into intimate acquaintance', for '...Some have reached the point of never smiling, some have cut themselves off from wine, others from sexual pleasure, others from every kind of drink; another satisfied by short sleep prolongs his waking hours unwearied; some have learned to run on small and slanting ropes, to carry huge burdens that are scarcely within the compass of human strength, to dive to unmeasured

[448]See Stobaeus, *Anthology* 3.17.22, in Inwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), p. 99 = Usener, Fragment 469.

[449]See Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 29, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 155.

[450]Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* III. 314-15, 319-22, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 67-68. For more discussion on this issue, see Philip Mistsis' discussion in *Epicurus' Ethical Theory. The Pleasures of Invulnerability,* Cornell University Press, New York, U.S.A., pp. 148-151.

depths and to endure the sea without drawing a breath.'[451] 'There are a thousand examples to show that persistence surmounts every obstacle', he concludes, 'and nothing is really difficult which the mind enjoins itself to endure.'[452] In doing so, Seneca clearly affirms the Stoics' belief in the power of reason, or rational deliberation, and the potential for philosophical training to bring about significant benefits to humanity.

In his *On ends,* Cicero also speaks about the Stoics' belief in the universality of human reason and 'the universal community of the human race' which the Stoics 'seek to attain' based on their recognition of a shared, or universal, capacity for reason within human beings.[453] Cicero notes that, as a consequence of this recognition, the Stoics describe themselves as being 'driven by nature to desire to benefit as many people as possible, and especially by giving instruction and handing on the principles of prudence.'[454] 'Such is [their] inclination', he reports, 'not only to learn but also to teach...'[455]

Indeed, Hierocles goes one step further than this by emphasising the need for us to not only acknowledge the moral and rational capacity within all human beings, but to

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[451]Seneca, *On Anger* II, xii.4-5, in J. W. Basore (trans.), *Seneca: Moral Essays.* Volume I, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, London, Great Britain, 1928, pp. 193-194.

[452]ibid. For a parallel passage in Epicurean philosophy, see Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 16, in Inwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), p. 36. In this work, Epicurus affirms the Socratic paradox by suggesting that no desire is too difficult to master. Phillip Mitsis also discusses this point about Epicurus' belief in the power of reason to modify all human desires and wants. For more discussion on this point, see Mitsis (1988), p. 119.

[453]See Cicero, *On ends* 3.61, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 348-349. Marcus Aurelius' writings also reflect this emphasis in Stoic philosophy on the need for us to consider the welfare and interests of our community. For e[1] idence of this, see his discussion in *Meditations:* Book V: 16, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 397; and in *Meditations* Book IV: 4, Book VII: 23 and Book: XII: 26, in Maxwell Staniforth (trans.), *Marcus Aurelius. Meditations,* Penguin Books, England, 1964, pp. 65, 96 and 185.

[454]See Cicero, *On ends* 3.64, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 348-349.

[455]ibid. It is important to note that there is some dispute regarding the level of support within the Stoa for this claim about our moral duty extending to a *universal* community of rational creatures and hence our duty to respond to the needs of *ah* other human beings. In his essay entitled *On the fortune of Alexander,* at 329B.1, Plutarch tells us that 'the much admired *Republic* of Zeno' clearly outlines the need for us to 'regard all men as our fellow-citizens and local residents...' However, Diogenes Laertius counters this claim with his suggestion that Zeno was actually criticised for presenting 'only virtuous people in the *Republic* as citizens, friends, relations and free...' On the basis of the latter report, some commentators have argued that the founding father of Stoicism insisted on the need for us to recognise a universal membership *within* the moral and wise community, rather than a universal moral community among *all* human beings. However, it is my suggestion that Plutarch's outlook on this particular issue is well-supported in the reports from antiquity and that, as a result, we have good reason to believe that this notion of a more extensive moral duty to humanity was supported by several, if not all, of the reputable

regard the interests of those who are strangers to us as *no less important* than the interests of those who are tied to us by blood.[456] Accordingly, Heirocles talks about the need for us to recognise the 'many circles' that 'encompass the individual' and his or her ties 'with the rest of humanity'.[457] Reporting on the use of this notion in Stoic philosophy, Stobaeus suggests that Hierocles invokes this metaphor of the many circles to describe how an 'outer circle' exists which connects every individual with 'the whole human race' and needs to be both 'drawn towards the centre' by each individual, and 'assimilated' into the circles which encompass those who appear to be closest and most important to oneself.[458] This metaphor, Hierocles suggests, highlights the need for each individual to 'reduce the distance of the relationship' that separates each individual from the rest of humanity, in order to bring about 'the proper treatment' of not only each group, but all human beings.[459] Here, Stobaeus reports on the Stoics' clear recognition of the need for us to not only *assimilate* the concerns of others into *our own,* but to try our best to treat those who are strangers to us as if they were *no less important* than our own kith or kin. This, in turn, reflects the Stoics' own commitment to the task of attempting to treat all human beings alike, that is to say, with *the same measure* of attention and ethical concern, in order to produce the kind of account of human flourishing which *maximises* the prospects for wide-spread happiness and thereby brings about the greatest opportunity for *all individuals* to flourish.

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thinkers within the Stoic's school of philosophy. For more discussion on this issue, see Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 348-350 and 429-436.

[456]Compare Cicero's report on the Stoics' belief in 'several degrees of fellowship among men' in *De Ojficiis:* 53, in M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (eds), *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cicero. On Duties,* Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1991, pp. 22-23.

[457]Here, Hierocles describes this task in the following way: 'Once these [circles] have been surveyed, it is the task of a well tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow towards the centre, and to keep zealously transferring those from the enclosing circles into the enclosed ones... It is incumbent on us to respect people from the third circle as if they were those from the second, and again to respect our other relatives as if they were those from the third circle. For although greater distance in blood will remove some affection, we must try hard to assimilate them. The right point will be reached if, through our own initiative, we reduce the distance of the relationship with each person...But we should do more, in the terms of address we use, calling cousins brothers, and uncles and aunts, fathers and mothers...For this mode of address would be no slight mark of our affection for them all, and it would also stimulate and intensify the indicated contraction of the circles.' See Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.671, 7-673, II, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 349-350.

[458]See Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.671, 7-673, II, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 349.

[459]ibid.

Section 3: An acknowledgment of the Stoics' views on political reform

In acknowledging this point about the Stoics' emphasis on the need for us to recognise and respect the interests of our fellow human beings, it is important for us to note that, on the Stoics' picture, this does not necessarily mean that we need to try to alter the social and political circumstances of other individuals' lives, nor put an end to certain restrictive social practices, such as slavery.[460] For, according to the Stoics, what is important in the pursuit of human flourishing is not our freedom from certain *external* conditions or social and political constraints, but the freedom of our *minds* from the common misconception that such things do in fact matter, and add meaning or value to human lives. In this respect, the Stoics mean to suggest that whether one is free or a slave is irrelevant to one's prospects for happiness and that, as a consequence, our duty to bring our fellow human beings to philosophy is to try to help them to look past the contingent facts about their lives, and to realise the real obstacles that are impeding their efforts to flourish.

Part III: The Stoics' and Epicureans' shared commitment to a project of 'self-sufficiency'

Section 1: The Stoics' and Epicureans' reactions to some of the specific content of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness

In the last section we saw how the philosophical writings of the Stoics and Epicureans were at least partly motivated by their reaction to the essentially elitist aspects of the classical Greek moral enterprise, and what may be regarded as Plato and Aristotle's generally pessimistic outlook on both the prospects for wide-spread human flourishing and the potential for moral philosophy to alleviate the suffering of ordinary human beings. In this section we will take a closer look at the Stoics' and Epicureans' reactions to some of the specific content of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness and its requirements. In doing so, we will get a sense of how the works of these two schools of Hellenistic philosophy compare with Plato and Aristotle's own views on the

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^Notwithstanding this, there is evidence to suggest that some Stoic philosophers were actually interested in outlining agendas for political reform. For more discussion on this point, and an account of the Stoics' views on the institution of slavery in particular, see Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 434-437.

necessity of particular external goods and the need for certain social or political conditions to be met. We will also get a sense of how the Stoics' and Epicureans' reflections on the role of luck and the external goods leads them to prescribe a way of life which aims *to fortify* an individual from the effects of fortune and the uncertain and turbulent events in the external world, in a way which demonstrates their shared commitment to a project of'self-sufficiency'. But before we examine the basis on which the Stoics and Epicureans adopt this shared commitment, it is important to note some of the essential differences that exist both *between* and *within* these two schools of ancient Greek philosophy, and in relation to the intellectual climate in which these Hellenistic philosophers are working.

Section 2: Differences between the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy

Notwithstanding their agreement on the need for moral philosophy to address ordinary human concerns and to generate a greater capacity within human beings to alleviate the sources of human suffering, the Stoics and Epicureans disagree on what the 'final end' of human endeavours will consist in. Whereas the Epicureans conceive of happiness as an essentially uninterrupted state of 'katastematic' *pleasure,* in which one fulfills one's rational, natural and necessary human desires and acquires a state of freedom from pain *(aponia)* and anxiety *(ataraxia),*[461] the Stoics conceive of happiness as a state in which one exercises one's reason and virtue well by choosing, selecting and using things in a way which is 'appropriate' *{oikeiori),* 'in accordance with nature' *{kata tēnphusiri)* and reflects the 'true value' of virtue and the so-called external goods.[462] Although both the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers regard the virtues, such as courage, temperance, justice and friendship, as essential for *eudaimonia,* they also attribute different values to these virtues. Whereas the Epicureans appear to attribute *most* of

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[461]For evidence of these ideas in Epicurean philosophy, see Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127-128, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 113-114 = Usener, Fragments 416-417; and Diogenes Laertius X 136, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 118. For an excellent discussion on the Epicurean's distinction between 'katastematic' and 'kinetic' pleasures, see Annas (1993a), pp. 188-190 and 192-193.
[462]For the Stoics' views on these matters and their account of the important distinction between 'choosing' what is *good* and 'selecting' the *preferred indijferents,* see Diogenes Laertius 7.101-3 and 104-5, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 354 = *Stoiconim Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.119; Stobaeus 2.79, 18-80, 13; 82, 20-1 and 2.84, 18-85, 11, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 354-355 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.128; and the discussion in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), on pp. 357-359 and 374-377. For an excellent account of the Stoics' notion *ofoikeiosis* and its importance in Stoic philosophy, see Gisela Striker, 'The Role of *Oikeiosis* In Stoic Ethics', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 1* (1983), pp. 145-167.

them with a purely instrumental value,[463] the Stoics clearly intend to argue for the claim that the virtues are both *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions for happiness and, more importantly, that they are *constitutive* of happiness itself.[464] In these ways, and many others, we must recognise that the Stoics and Epicureans present substantially different accounts of what happiness essentially *is,* and what individuals will experience when they manage to *attain* it.[465]

Section 3: Differences within the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy

It is also important for us to note that in relation to some of the specific aspects of their moral teachings, there appears to be a significant degree of tension, or at least some degree of development and variation, within both the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy themselves. This seems to be particularly evident in relation to the Epicureans' thoughts on the value of friendship, as we shall see later in this section,[466] and the accounts that Epicurean philosophers such as Epicurus and Lucretius provide on the right way for us to approach love and the experience of sexual desire.[467] This also appears to be evident in the Stoics' treatment of the emotions as purely cognitive[468] and the ways in which various Stoic writers, such as Chrysippus, Marcus Aurelius and

[463]See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127-32, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 113-114; Athenaeus 546F, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 117 = Usener, Fragments 409 and 70; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.41-2, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 117 = Usener, Fragments 67 and 69; and Diogenes of Oenoanda 26.1.2-3.8, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 118. The virtue of friendship appears to be a general exception to this rule in Epicureanism and will be discussed in further detail in Section 10.

[464]See Diogenes Laertius 7.104-5 and 7.89, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 354 and 377 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Fragments 3.119 and 3.39. It is noteworthy that this aspect of Stoic moral philosophy closely resembles the arguments that Socrates presents in Plato's *Euthydemus.* It also has close affinities with the outlook on the relation between virtue and knowledge that Socrates presents in other early Platonic dialogues, such as *Meno* and *Protagoras.* For evidence of this, see *Euthydemus:* 278e-281e; *Meno:* 87d-89a; and *Protagoras:* 339d-340c and 359a-360d.

[465]The issue of whether the good human life allows for the participation in public and political affairs also highlights another difference between the Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of happiness. For an interesting discussion on how the Stoics' and Epicureans' views differ on this matter, see Long and Sedley (trans.) (1937), pp. 436-437; and Plutarch's criticism of Epicurus on this point in n. 421.

[466]See Cicero, *On ends* 1.66-70, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 132-133. For an interesting discussion on this point, see also Mitsis (1988), pp. 9 and 98-128, especially pp. 100-101.

[467]On this issue, see Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* Book VI, as discussed by Martha Nussbaum in Nussbaum (1994), pp. 140-191. Cf. Nussbaum report of Epicurus' perspective on this issue in *Vatican Sayings* 51, on p. 151 of this text. Nussbaum also provides some interesting observations regarding this point of tension in Epicureanism. For more on this, see Nussbaum (1994), chapters 4 and 5, especially pp. 187 and 191.

[468]See Posidonius' objections in Galen's *On Hippocrates' and Plato's doctrines* 5.5.8-26, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 415-416; and the discussion in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), on pp. 422-423.

Epictetus, incorporate the notion of 'cosmic nature' into their ethical writings.[469] It seems plausible to think that some degree of internal dissent, or at least variation and development, will be natural in any school of philosophy that attracts as many wide-ranging and influential followers as the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy did, and manages to endure throughout several centuries of turbulent political and social events.[470] But it also seems important for us to *recognise* that these aspects of dissent and difference do exist within their respective ranks, before we attempt to discuss what may be referred to as the Stoics' and Epicureans' *general* conception of the requirements for *eudaimonia,* and their shared outlook on the necessity of the self-sufficient moral life.

Section 4: Differences between the intellectual climate in which these Hellenistic philosophers were working and the one in which Plato and Aristotle wrote

Finally, in our examination of the Stoics' and Epicureans' views on happiness and its requirements we must also acknowledge that there are many important differences between the intellectual climate in which these Hellenistic philosophers are working and the one in which Plato and Aristotle's writings emerge. One of the most important differences relates to the issue of free will and determinism, which gains increasing awareness and attention in the Hellenistic era of Greek philosophy, but it is notably absent, or at least not obvious, in the ethical concerns of Plato and Aristotle.[471] We need to recognise that although this issue may go unnoticed in the classical accounts of *eudaimonia,* it essentially grounds, albeit indirectly, both the Stoics' and Epicureans'

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[469] See Diogenes Laertius 7.85-6, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 346 = *Stoiconim Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.178; and Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.6.12-22, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 395-396. Compare what Marcus Aurelius has to say about the notion of'cosmic nature' in his *Meditations:* Book VI: 9, 38 and 58 and Book VII: 9 and 75, in Staniforth (trans.) (1964), pp. 92, 99, 104, 106 and 119. For more discussion on this point, see also Annjv? (1993a), pp. 99-106.

[470] It is noteworthy that the Epicurean school of philosophy may have provided less scope for these aspects of internal dissent and doctrinal development than the Stoics' school of philosophy did. This seems to be a likely result of the Epicureans' insistence that students of Epicureanism take on the teach[illegible]js of Epicurus and follow them more strictly and obediently. It also appears to relate to the Epic[illegible]rans' insistence on the need for prospective students take on not just a set of specific moral instructions, but a completely new, and notably *communal,* way of life. As a result, there appears to have been less room within Epicureanism for the kind of progressive debates and innovative developments which we see emerge throughout the several centuries of Stoic scholarship. Martha Nussbaum has observed that this may also highlight a greater concern for the preservation *of rational autonomy* within the Stoics' school of philosophy. For more discussion on these issues, see Nussbaum (1994), pp. 129-131; and Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 3-7.

[471] For more on this issue, see Sorabji's discussion in Sorabji (1980a), chapter 4.

accounts of human flourishing and their ethical debates about the notions of self-control, autonomy and self-sufficiency. In this way, the Stoics and Epicureans can be seen to be adding another dimension to the debate about whether, and to what extent, we can say that happiness or anything else is actually 'up to us'.

Having noted that this issue about the freedom of the will and determinism does make the debate about the extent to which happiness is up to us essentially more complex in the Hellenistic era, however, I want to suggest that we may put this issue aside. For although it plays an important role in the Stoics' and Epicureans' broader conception of the elements which make up the good human life, it can be separated from the Stoics' and Epicureans' efforts to take up the very same issues that Plato and Aristotle's works address. In this way, for the purpose of our examination we need only observe that these Hellenistic philosophers do see the issue of free will and determinism as a *genuine* moral problem, that they each provide their own account of how we ought to *solve* this problem,[472] and move on to what may be regarded as the central moral issues that these classical and Hellenistic philosophers have in common.

Section 5: The need to consider the Stoics' and Epicureans' reactions to some of the specific content of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness

Having acknowledged that these important aspects of dissent and difference do exist, both between and within the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy, and in relation to the intellectual climates in which the classical and Hellenistic philosophers are working, let us now consider the basis on which the Stoics and Epicureans adopt their shared commitment to a project of self-sufficiency. Let us take a look at how the Stoics and Epicureans react to some of the specific content of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness, and see how the works of these two schools of Hellenistic philosophy compare with Plato and Aristotle's own views on the necessity

[472]For a discussion on the Epicurean's notion of the swerve' and the role that it plays in the Epicureans' attempt to resolve the problem of free will and determinism, see Cicero's *On fate* 21-5, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 104-105; Diogenes of Oenoanda 32.1.14-3.14, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 106-107; and Mitsis (1988), pp. 129-166. For a discussion on the Stoics' notion of'co-fated events' and the role that it plays in their own solution to the problem of free will and determinism, see Cicero, *On fate* 39-43, in Long Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 386-387 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 1.527; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.1.7-12, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 391-2; and Sorabji (1980a), chapter 4.

of certain external goods and the need for one to enjoy certain social and political conditions.

Section 6: The Stoics' and Epicureans' views on the stability of happiness

We may begin by observing that within both the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy we see evidence of the belief that once one has acquired *eudaimonia,* one will retain that state of happiness throughout one's entire life. This contrasts sharply with the mature ethical outlooks of both Plato and Aristotle and the different ways in which they attempt to show that external goods, such as wealth and health, may either contribute *to* or detract^ro/H one's overall state of happiness.[473] It also highlights the Stoics' and Epicureans' general support for the Socratic, or early Platonic, perspective on the stability of the good human life and the efforts that are shown in the early Platonic dialogues to demonstrate that those who manage to attain the genuinely good human life cannot *lose* that state of well-being, nor have any *real* harm inflicted on them.[474] In this way, both the Stoics and Epicureans insist that the good and happy individual who has attained *eudaimonia* will *always* remain happy and that the good human life is therefore essentially stable. This is clear from Diogenes Laertius' report that, according to the Stoics, 'A good is not increased by the addition of time, but even if someone becomes prudent only for a moment, in respect of happiness he will in no way fall short of someone who employs virtue for-ever and lives his life blissfully in virtue.'[475] It is also clear in the light of Plutarch's report that, according to the

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[473]The Epicureans do, however, suggest that those who enjoy the 'final end' which is constitutive of happiness may find thai their state of 'katastematic' pleasure is *varied* by the addition of certain external goods, in so far as the experiences of those external goods are accompanied by further 'kinetic' pleasures. In this way, Epicurus claims that, 'Bodily pleasure does not increase when the pain of want has been removed; after that it only admits of variation.' He also points out, however, that the good person has no reason *to prefer* one kinetic pleasure to another. See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 130, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 113-114; and Epicurus, *Key Doctrines* 3,4, 8-10, 18, 25 and 30, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 115. For more discussion on this point, see Annas (1993a), pp. 188-193.

[474]I have in mind here the arguments that are presented by Socrates in early Platonic dialogues such as *Apology, Gorgias* and *Euthydemus.* For the relevant passages within these dialogues, see *Apology:* 30d; *Gorgias:* 509a-e and 522b-527e; and *Euthydemus:* 278e-281e. See also my discussion in n. 34.' For evidence of some internal dispute on this issue within the Stoics' school of philosophy, however, see Diogenes Laertius 7.127, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 380. There, Diogenes tells us, '...Chrysippus holds that virtue can be lost, on account of intoxication or depression, but Cleanthes takes it to be irremovable owing to secure cognitions.'

[475]See Plv'-.irch, *On common conceptions* 1061F, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 396 = *Stoicorum Vetet·:M F> agmenta,* Fragment 3.54, part; Cicero, *On ends* 1.62-3, as cited by Phillip Mitsis in Mitsis (I98S.:. f 120; and Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.81-2, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 397-

Epicureans, 'The comfortable state of the flesh, and the confident expectation of this, contain the highest and most secure *(bebaiotatēn)* joy for those who are capable of reasoning.'[476]

Having reflected on this need for the good human life to be stable, *)<:•?<* htoics o.id Epicureans suggest that those classical Greek philosophers who suggest oiL,iwise, and allow external goods and chances circumstances to play a role in *eudaimonia,* ought to be criticised for prescribing a way of life for humanity that inevitably leaves individuals subject to the uncontrollable effects of fortune and, therefore, uncertain about the kind of political and social events that may befall them.

Thus, in his *On ends,* Cicero outlines this aspect of the Stoic's objection to the classical accounts *of eudaimonia* in the following way: '...if happiness once won can be lost, a happy life is impossible. Since who can feel confident of permanently and securely retaining a possession that is perishable and precarious? Yet one who is not sure of permanence of his goods must inevitably fear lest at some time he may lose them and be miserable.'[477] 'But no one can be happy who is uneasy about matters of the highest moment', he continues, and 'Therefore [on your conception of happiness] no one can be happy at all. For we usually speak of a life as a happy one not by reference to a part of it, but to the whole of a lifetime.'[478] In doing so, Cicero illustrates the Stoics' objection to those kinds of conceptions of happiness which make both the exercise of the virtues *and* some level of external goods necessary. As Cicero points out, they believe that such conceptions of happiness inevitably make the good human life both *impossibly difficult* and *essentially unstable* for anyone who lives in a world of real and constant change and social and political uncertaint'.

In thinking about this requirement for the good human life to be stable, Cicero also reports on the Stoics' conviction that we need to *re-think,* if not reject, Aristotle's

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398. In this respect, the Stoics also claim that happiness id an ali-or-nothing affair, that it can not be increased by the addition of time and that it is, therefore, 'complete' at any given moment.

[476]See Plutarch, *Against Epicurean happiness* 1089D, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 117 = Usener, Fragment 68, part; and Plutarch's essay entitled 'A Pleasant Life Impossible': 1088b and 1090a, in Einaison and De Lacy (trans.) (1967), pp. 27-33 and 39-45.

[477]See Cicero, *On ends,* ii 86-7 in H. Rackham (trans.), *Cicero: XVII de Finibus,* Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, London, Great Britain, 1971, p. 177-179.

[478]ibid. See also Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.81-2, in Long and Sediey (trans.) (1987), pp. 397-398.

formal condition of'completeness', and the Peripatetics' continued efforts to assess whether one's life is genuinely complete, or *teleion,* in the light of the presence or absence of a moderate amount of exvernal goods. Accordingly, he explains that in rejecting the Aristotelian approach to happiness and its requirements, the Stoics choose ;o emphasise the importance of self-sufficiency as a formal condition for happiness. Thus, they respond to the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions with the following ethical demand: 'We want the happy man to be safe, impregnable, fenced and fortified so he is not just largely unafraid, but completely.' And in their defence of the moral virtues as both necessary and sufficient to accomplish this state of security, they also insist that the soul that has been 'braced' by virtue, education and 'right reason' will be 'unyielding and invincible' and immune from the experience of any genuine loss or harm.'[479]

In his own ethical writings, Epicurus demonstrates a similar ethical concern regarding those conceptions of happiness which attribute value and significance to external goods, and recognise chance circumstances in *eudaimonia,* in a way which threatens to undermine the possibility of a secure, stable and self-sufficient moral life. Thus, in his *Letter to Menoeceus,* Epicurus writes: 'Self-sufficiency we consider a great good, not so as to make use of few things at all times, but so as to make use of few if we lack many, genuinely persuaded that the pleasantest enjoyment of luxury is had by those that least need it, and that everything natural is easy to obtain, while it is what is empty that is difficult.'[480] 'So growing accustomed to simple and inexpensive means of living', he continues, 'is productive of health and makes a person unhesitating when faced with the necessary employments of life; it disposes us better when at intervals we do come on luxuries, and it makes us unafraid of chance.'[481] In doing so, he emphasises the need for us to not only pursue a secure, stable and self-sufficient moral life, but to consider the value of the so-called external goods in the light of this key objective.

479 See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.40-1, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 397; and Philo, *On every virtuous man 's being free* 97, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 432 = *Stoicorum Vetentm Fragmenta,* Fragment 1.218.

4S0 See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 130-131, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987 ;,, pp. 113-114.

48' ibid. In this way, Hpicurus also claims that we should satisfy our natural and necessary desire for food with whatever food is available to us. We should be happy with bread and water, if that is all we have to satisfy our hunger, appreciate cheese when it is available to us, but adjust happily when it is not. See Usener, *Epicurea,* Fragments 181, 182 and 202.

Again, in his *Key Doctrines*^ Epicurus tells his listeners, 'The wealth required by nature is limited and is easy to procure; but the wealth required by vain ideals extends to infinity.'[482] There, he also insists that, 'Some men want fame and status, thinking that they would thus make themselves secure against other men. If the life of such men really were secure, they have attained a natural good; if, however, it is insecure, they have not attained the end which by nature's prompting they originally sought.'[483] And, in this way, Epicurus calls on his fellow human beings to *reject* the ways in which Plato and Aristotle emphasise the importance of external goods, and to *rethink* their depiction of the onerous task that awaits individuals in their efforts to secure the kinds of material conditions that are required for *eudaimonia.*

Finally, in his writings on the nature of pleasure, Epicurus also points out the need for us to reflect on those conceptions of happiness which emphasise the importance of the external goods in a way which encourages us to pursue the fulfilment of desires that are essentially *empty* and *unnecessary.*[484] In this way, he points out that, 'He who understands the limits of life knows that it is easy to obtain that which removes pain of want and makes the whole of life complete and perfect.'[485] He also insists that, 'Such an enlightened individual has no longer any need of things which involve struggle'[486] for the very reason that, 'All desires that do not lead to pain when they remain unsatisfied are unnecessary and can be easily got rid of, when the thing desired is difficult to obtain or the desires seem likely to produce harm.'[487] Accordingly, Epicurus remarks on the need for us to recognise a different purpose for moral philosophy, together with the fact that this activity should not make people 'boastful and loud-mouthed, nor flaunters of culture', but 'modest and self-sufficient, and proud at their own goods, not those of their circumstance.'[488]

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[482]See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 15, as reproduced in Annas (1993a), p. 192; and Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 81, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 116.

[483]See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 7, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 126.

[484]In this way, the Epicureans suggest that we must direct our attention to only those aspects of our nature which need to be satisfied in order to eliminate genuine pain. Epicurus suggests that a desire will be empty, and hence unnecessary, unless this is the case, or we need to secure the object of that desire in order to be happy, remain healthy, or even stay alive. For more discussion on the Epicurean's account of pleasure and their notion of our 'empty' desires, see Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 113-114; and Annas (1993a), pp. 188-193.

[485]See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 21, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 115-116.

[486]ibid.

[487]See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 26, in Inwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), p. 37.

[488]See Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 45, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 155.

Section 7: The Stoics* and Epicureans' views on more specific social and political requirements for happiness

Having rejected these aspects of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness, the Stoics and Epicureans take up some of the more specific social and political requirements in the classical Greek accounts of *eudaimonia.* Accordingly, they react to some of the specific things that Plato and Aristotle have to say about the need for individuals to receive the right kind of education in their youth so as to benefit from moral philosophy, and the need for us to enjoy the kind of political rule and position or occupation in society that provide us with enough time and leisure to engage in pursuits of a purely philosophical nature. They also take up Plato and Aristotle's discussion on the need for individuals to possess a certain kind of 'constitutive luck' in order to develop both morally and intellectually and thereby secure a truly flourishing human life.

The Epicureans, as we have s<;en, explicitly reject the notion that one's *age* may determine one's ability to learn and benefit from the instrumental effects of philosophy.[489] To add to this, the Epicureans also rule out the need for us to participate in *political affairs* as a factor which may impede or prevent our rational and moral development.[490] And in a striking break with the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, the Epicureans also insist that in order to benefit from moral philosophy, and to secure both genuine virtue and happiness, one need *not* have been brought up in a particularly well-disciplined and 'cultured' social environment. On the contrary, they suggest that one will have a *better* chance of arriving at the truth about human nature and happiness, and thereby securing the good human life, if one steers clear *ofpaideia* altogether. Thus, in his writings on ethics, Athenaeus provides evidence of the fact that Epicurus once told a student, 'I congratulate you, Apelles, for embarking on philosophy while still untainted by any culture.'[491] And in the works of Diogenes Laertius we also hear that Epicurus'

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[489]This should be clear from our discussion in Part II: Section 2. See also my discussion in Chapter 5: Part III: Section 2, on pp. 157-159, and the references cited in n. 398.
[49d]See Plutarchs' comments in his essay entitled 'Live Unknown', in Einarson and De Lacy (trans.) (1967), pp. 323-341.
[491]See Alhenaeus 588A, in Long and Scdley (trans.) (1987), p. 155 = Usener, Fragment 117.

once wrote in a letter to his friend Pythocles, 'My fortunate friend, hoist your sail and steer clear of all culture.'[492]

In contrast with Aristotle's message in *Politics,* the Epicureans also suggest that there is no need to think that one's occupation or position in society should interfere with one's efforts or ability to philosophise. In the light of this conviction, Epicurus sends the following message to his listeners: 'We are born only once, and we cannot be born twice; and one must for all eternity exist no more. You are not in control of tomorrow and yet you delay your [opportunity to] rejoice. Life is ruined by delay and each and every one of us dies without enjoying leisure.'[493] And this, together with Epicurus' remark that, 'We should laugh, philosophise, and handle our household affairs and other personal matters, all at the same time, and never cease making the utterances which stem from correct philosophy',[454] clearly demonstrates the Epicureans' rejection of Plato and Aristotle's efforts to separate intellectual activities from manual work and our ordinary daily activities.

In relation to *all* of these points, the Stoics appear to express their genuine support and concern. Accordingly, they suggest that certain social opportunities or external goods *may* provide virtuous individuals with the opportunity to *use* things *well,* and in this sense may well be 'preferred', but they also point out that these things will in no way *determine* one's rational and moral success, and, therefore, 'it is possible to be happy even without these, though the manner of using them is constitutive of happiness or unhappiness.'[495] In inidition, the Stoics also challenge Plato and Aristotle's conceptions of the need for individuals to possess a :'and of constitutive luck and to enjoy a certain amount of leisure so as to both engage in meaningful philosophical dialogue, and to develop and exercise the all-important virtues.

In this respect, the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes serves as an excellent example of how the benefits of Stoic philosophy were intended to extend to those members of

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[492]See Diogenes Lt-rtius, i 0.6, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 156. For further discussion on this point, see also Nussbaum (1994), pp. 121-122 and 131-132.
[493]See Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 14, in lnwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), p. 36.
[494]See Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 41, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 156 = Usen.er, Fragment 20.
[495]See Diogenes Laertius 7.104-5, in Lor;g and Sed'iey (trans.) (1987), p. 354 = *Stoiconm Veterwn Fragmenta,* Fragment 2.119.

society who were not especially bright, nor exempt from the demands of industry and poverty, but were nonetheless committed to the pursuit of moral wisdom and development. For, in the reports of Diogenes Laertius, we are told that, Cleanthes, the water-carrier, had 'industry, but no natural aptitude for physics, and was extraordinarily slow.'[496] We are also told that he was '...driven by extreme poverty to work for a living' and, in fact, so poor that he had to write down the lectures of Zeno 'on oyster-shells and the blade-bones of oxen through lack of money to buy paper.'[497] And yet despite this lack of leisure and material wealth, the constant gibes from his fellow pupils who would call him 'the ass', and the fact that '...Zeno had many other eminent pupils', it was this man who succeeded Zeno as the head of the Stoics' school.[498]

To add to this picture, the Stoics also reject the idea that there may be an actual class of people who are born with rational capacities so deficient that they must be regarded as "natural slaves". In contrast, the Stoics explicitly *include* slaves in their audience of potential students and list them among the potential candidates for happiness.[499] And in contrast with Aristotle's outlook in *Politics,* they also counter the view that *women* do not have a sufficient rational capacity for philosophy and the attainment of *eudaimonia,* by enlisting female members within their philosophical community.[500]

Section 8: A shift towards the importance of our attitudes and internal capacities

Having distanced themselves from Plato and Aristotle's views on the need for certain external goods and social and political conditions in the good human life, and chosen to commit themselves to a project of self-sufficiency, both the Stoics and Epicureans shift the focus of their concern away from the demands of the external world

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[496]See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers:* Book VII: Ch. 5: 170, in R. D. Hicks (trans.) (1925), *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of Eminent Philosophers.* Vol. II, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Great Britain, 1925, p. 275.
[497]See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers:* Book VII: Ch. 5: 168 and 174, in Hicks (trans.) (1925), pp. 273 and 279-280.
[498]See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers:* Book VII: Ch. 5: 170 and 174, in Hicks (trans.), pp. 275, and 279-280.
[499]This should be clear from our discussion in Part II, especially regarding Epictetus' social origins. See also Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 45.9, as reproduced in Nussbaum (1994), p. 334. There, Seneca insists that we must judge, or 'rate', human beings 'by that part alone' which makes them human, namely, 'reason'.

and towards the priority of one's attitudes and internal capacities. In doing so, they insist that it is not the so-called external goods, nor social or political conditions, that determine whether or not one will attain genuine human happiness, but one's *attitude* towards such things. They also agree that what goes wrong when individuals encounter genuine hardship and suffering is not something for which we can blame events or things in the external world. Rather, human suffering must be seen as the product of our very own *mistaken beliefs* that such things *are* important and contribute value and meaning to human lives.

Accordingly, both the Stoics and Epicureans go to great lengths to show that the good human life - that is to say, a life of genuine and permanent security, self-sufficiency, tranquillity and contentment - awaits us all, and is there for us to enjoy, if we can just rid ourselves of the false beliefs, empty desires, and *emotional attachments* that tie us to these things and events in the external world that are essentially *beyond* our own control. In this way, they also stand united in their efforts to show that the way to *eradicate* human suffering is to simply to *understand* its source or origin.[501]

Indeed, in their efforts to show that it is neither external goods, nor particular social and political conditions that prevent us from securing genuine and permanent happiness, the Stoics and Epicureans take up the very same examples that Plato and Aristotle employ in their discussions on the role of luck and the external goods in the good human life. These examples relate to the situation in which the good person is 'strung out' and tortured on the rack[502] and the tragic story of Priam, who lost his home, his family, his wealth and his reputation during the tumultuous events of the Trojan War.[503] Accordingly, the Epicureans claim that *even* in the event than one is strung out and tortured on the rack, one will *not* lose one's capacity to flourish if one continues to focus on and value *only* those aspects of our nature that are essentially rational, natural

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[500]This is evident from Martha Nussbaum's discussion on the first century C. E. Stoic philosopher named Musonius Rufus, and his work entitled 'That Women Too Should Do Philosophy?'. See Nussbaum (1994), pp. 322-323.

[501]On this basis, Phillip Mitsis, Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson have argued that the Stoics and Epicureans also return to a kind of rationalist moral psychology wuich is essentially Socratic. See Mitsis (1988), pp. 118-119; and Inwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), Introduction, xviii-xix.

[502]See Plato's *Republic:* 361d-e; and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book VII: 1153bl9-21.

[503]See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1100al-8.

and necessary.[504] And, in a telling display of their own rejection of the classical accounts of *eudaimonia,* the Stoics also maintain that, such is the stable nature of virtue and the self-sufficient moral life, that 'happiness survives the circumstances of Priam.'[505]

From this perspective, Epicterus demonstrates the Stoics' belief that, 'it is not things themselves that disturb men, but their judgments about things.'[506] He also advises his students to '...accept everything contentedly', and indicates that whenever we are impeded, disturbed or distressed, we ought to blame no one but ourselves, or our own irrational beliefs or judgments.[507] And in discussing the fear of death, Epictetus he also tells his listeners that, '...death is nothing terrible, otherwise Socrates would have thought so.'[508] By contrast, he insists that what is actually terrible, 'is the judgment that death is terrible.'[509]

In riill support of this principle, Epicurus reminds his own students that, '...it is sober reasoning that searches out the causes of all pursuit and avoidance and drives out the beliefs from which a very great disturbance seizes the soul.'[510] He also confirms the Stoics' belief that it is, therefore, only *the mind,* as it is intellectually grasping what the end and limit of the flesh is, and banishing the terrors of the future, which, 'procures a

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[504]See Diogenes Laertius, 10.118, in Inwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), p. 42 = *Epicurea* XXV11I, Fragment 118. There, Diogenes writes: *'kan streblothe d ho sophos, einai auton eudaimona...';* 'And even if the wise man is tortured on the rack, he is happy.' On this basis, Epicurus also claims that, '...while good is readily attainable, evil is readily endurable.' See Philodemus, *Against the sophists* 4.9-14, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 156; and Plutarch's comments in 'A Pleasant Life Impossible': 1099a, in Einarson and De Lacy (trans.) (1967), pp. 27-28 and 101-102. There, Plutarch reports that while Epicurus was dying in *'the greatest pain and bodily afflictions',* he claimed to have 'found compensation in being escorted on his journey by the recollection of the pleasures he had once enjoyed.' He also reports that Epicurus once said, '...in illness the sage often actually laughs at the paroxysms of the disease.'

[505]See *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.585. In this fragment of Stephanus' commentary in Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* we are provided with the following report: 'The Stoics say that *eudaimonia* endures through even the events that happened to Priam.'

[506]See Epictetus, *Manual* 5, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 418; and Lucretius, *De Renim Natura* 2.1-61, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 119.

[507]ibid. See also Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.12.20-1, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 418.

[508]ibid. See also Galen, *On Hippocrates' and Plato's doctrines* 5.6.10-14, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 404.

[509]ibid. In the last line of his *Enchiridion,* Epictetus also shows his support for the passage in Plato's *Crito* where Socrates claims, 'Oh, Crito, if it pleases the gods, thus let it be. Anytus and Miletus may kill me indeed, but hurt me they cannot.' See Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 48.3, as reproduced in Nussbaum (1994), pp. 400-401.

[510]See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 132, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 113-114.

complete and perfect life...'[511] and, therefore, 'Correct apprehension of the fact that death is nothing to us' makes the mortality of life not only tolerable, but 'enjoyable.'[512] In reference to anger and the events which give rise to it, Epicurus also suggests that even the person who is in the presence of 'great pains' need not necessarily experience 'great troubles', for the very reason that, in human lives, 'terrible sufferings are the natural result of stupidity.'[513]

Section 9: Moral philosophy as a means to both understand and eradicate the sources of human suffering

In the light of these convictions, both the Stoics and Epicureans urge their listeners not to delay, but to urgently seek those arguments within their practical and useful moral doctrines which they themselves have designed in order to help educate people about what is most valuable in a human life and to aid their efforts to revise their priorities and actions accordingly. In this way, they maintain that moral philosophy holds the key to both *understanding* and *eradicating* the sources of human suffering and that, in so far as there are no external goods nor social and political conditions which impede one's access to it, this method of attaining *eudaimonia* is essentially open and available to everyone.

Section 10: Some aspects of tension and interpretative difficulty

There is some evidence to suggest that within the schools of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, there exists some degree of tension, or at least interpretative difficulty, in relation to their shared commitment to a project of self-sufficiency and the things that

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51 'See Epicunis, *Key doctrine* 20, in Cicero, *On the nature of the gods* 1.43-9, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 141-142.

512 See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 124, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 149-150.

513 See Philodemus, *Anger XU* 32- XLII 14, as reproduced in Annas (1993a), p. 198; and Epicurus, *Key Doctrines* 29-30, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 126. On this point, it is also important to note that the Stoics go one step further than the Epicureans by declaring that not only anger, but all human passions, or emotions, need to be extirpated for the very reason that they relate to a species of rational impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason and involves mistaken judgments about the value of virtue and the 'preferred indifferents'. The Stoics argue that these emotions ought to be replaced by the more moderate *eupatheia,* or good feelings, like 'joy' and 'watchfulness', that the wise person enjoys. For more discussion on these points, see Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 319-323 and 419-423; and Seneca, *On anger* 2.3.1-2.4, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 419. There, Seneca provides an account of how the emotion of anger can be extirpated when an individual realises that this

each of them has to say about such things as the value of friendship and love, and the importance of taking an interest in the ethical concerns and general welfare of our fellow human beings. Such comments raise the question of whether or not the Stoics and Epicureans can *really* claim to be providing an account of happiness that will make individuals indifferent towards all relations and events in the external world and, hence, immune from the effects of *all* external forces. For this reason, we must take a moment to consider these sources of tension and interpretative difficulty, and assess their relevance with respect to our present examination.

Within the school of Epicurean philosophy, a problem of this kind arises in relation to the Epicureans' accounts of friendship and the different views that they express regarding the value of friendship and the contribution that it will make to the good human life. In his *Key Doctrines,* Epicurus does suggests that, 'Protection from other men, secured to some extent by the power to expel and by material prosperity, in its purest comes from a quiet life withdrawn from the multitude.'[514] And in this respect, he also tells his followers, 'The man who best knows how to meet external threats makes into one family all the creatures he can; and those he can not, he at any rate does not treat as aliens; and where he finds even this impossible, he avoids all dealings, and, so far as advantageous, excludes them from his life.'[515] Moreover, he insists that 'the wise man' will 'avoid being in any condition of weakness or need toward his fellow humans...'[516] These comments suggest that Epicurus genuinely believes that one will have a greater chance of flourishing if one attempts to *isolate* oneself from the contact and concerns of others to the greatest extent possible.

However, in his account of friendship, Epicurus also provides the following advice to his students: 'The same conviction which inspires confidence that nothing we have to fear is eternal or even of long duration, also enables us to see in the limited evils of this life that nothing enhances our security so much as friendship.'[517] And in what appears to be an admission that friendship may hold something more than a purely

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emotion, like all the others, essentially involves a rational 'impulse' which 'never takes place without the mind's assent.'

[514]See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 14, as reproduced in Nussbaum (1994), p. 112.

[515]See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 39, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 126.

[516]See Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus,* as reproduced in Nussbaum (1994), pp. 249-252.

[517]See Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 28, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 115.

instrumental value, Epicurus suggests that, 'a wise man should feel exactly the same toward his friends as he does toward himself, that it is more important to find someone to eat with than to find something to eat', and, perhaps most disturbingly, that, 'for the sake of friendship we should run risks.'[518] Indeed, in *Vatican Sayings,* Epicurus goes so far as to suggest that the good person will feel 'no less pain' if his friend is tortured on the rack, than if he were to undergo this torture himself and that, in some cases, the wise person will actually 'die on his friend's behalf.'[519] These remarks not only add to the tension in the Epicurean's account of the value of friendship among human beings, but also undermine the strength of their conviction regarding the stability and self-yufficiency of the good human life. And on this basis, commentators like Philip Mitsis and Julia Annas have rightly pointed out that Epicurus appears to regard the virtue of friendship as something which is choice worthy for itself *apart* from its instrumental benefits.[520] They have also rightly observed that this raises a genuine problem for those who conceive of the Epicureans' moral project as one which entails a life *of absolute* self-sufficiency.[521]

Within the Stoics' school of philosophy, a problem of this nature also arises in relation to the Stoics' perceived need to make sure that, as moral philosophers, they can actually *help* individuals to help themselves to the happy life which awaits them. In this respect, the Stoics' remarks regarding our moral duty to do what is in our power to bring others to philosophy in order to help them to see the truth about virtue and happiness make it difficult for us to understand their account of the 'preferred indifferents' and the kind of attitude that we are supposed to adopt to such things. For, the outcome of these efforts does not appear to be the sort of thing that the Stoic philosopher could both seriously value and feel indifferent towards. And, as a result, it is difficult to see how the Stoics can maintain both a *genuine* concern to see some of their pupils *succeed* and their belief that, 'virtue is choiceworthy for its own sake and

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[518]See Cicero, *On ends* 1.68, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 132; Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 19.10, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1*v7), p. 127 = Usener, Fragment 542; and Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 28, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (] 987>, p. I *?6.*

[519]See Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 56-.'7, in. Inwcod and Gerson (trans.) (1988), p. 39.

[520]See Mitsis (1988), pp. 1 GO-503 ami ;24-26; and Annas, 'Epicurus on Pi?asure and Happiness', *Philosophical Topics.* Vol. XV, No. 2, 1987, pp. 12-14.

[521]See Mitsis (1988), pp. 9 and 16-22; and Annas (1987), pp. 18 and 20: n. 23. In these works, both commentators appear to resolve this tension by suggesting that the Epicureans have in mind a kind of *communal,* rather than *pure* or *absolute,* form of self-sufficiency. On this point, see also Nussbaum (1994), p. 250.

not from fear or hope of anything external',[522] because it is obvious that this is exactly the sort of thing that can *bs frustrated by* certain external circumstances.

Perhaps even *more* puzzling, however, are the philosophical writings within the Stoics' school of philosophy that appear to show signs of resistance towards the idea that good and moral individuals will used nothing more than virtue to sustain themselves throughout their lives. I have in mind here Cicero's remark, in his *On ends,* that, '...it is not virtue which retains <the wise man> in life...', but 'the primary natural things, whether favourable or adverse', and Galen's report that Chrysippus once explained the origin of vice by reference to the 'corrupting effect' of the external environment.[523] For these remarks *could* be seen to be admissions of the serious impact that certain external events may have on people's lives. They could also be taken to mean that one should consider one's material circumstances when making a decision about whether one should continue to live or die. Admittedly, these inferences may seem unwarranted in the light of the Cicero's and Galen's reports alone. However, the evidence seems to weigh in favour of them when we also consider Diogenes Laertius' reports about the alleged heterodoxy of Posidonius and Panaetius.[524] And with these reports in mind, it becomes increasingly difficult for us to understand how the Stoics can maintain that there is a completely secure and self-sufficient way of life that awaits us and is worthy of our pursuit.

Section 11: A way forward

Having outlined these sources of tension and interpretative difficulties within the Stoics' and Epicureans' ethical writings, I want to suggest that the comments we have just considered *do* create problems for these Hellenistic philosophers in their attempts to prescribe and explain a way of life for humanity which is *genuinely* self-sufficient. In

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[522]See Diogenes Laertius 7.89, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 377 = *Stoicorwn Vcterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.39.

[523]See Cicero, *On ends* 3.60-1, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 425 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.763; Galen, *On Hippocrates' and Plato's doctrines* 5.5.8-26, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 415-416; and Long and Sedley's discussion on this point in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), on pp. 385,410 and 428-429. Tliere, Long and Sedley do actually suggest that we may be able to explain at least *some* of these remarks in terms of merely *ad hominen* concessions, rather than comments intended to compromise their standard moral doctrines.

[524]See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers:* Vol. II: Book VII: Ch. 103 and 129, in Hicks (trans.) (1925), pp. 233 and 253.

some respects, this also presents them with a challenge which is similar to the one that we examined in Chapter 4, in relation to Aristotle's own account of happiness and his attempts to reconcile the formal conditions of self-sufficiency and completeness. However, this challenge appears to be even more acute for these Hellenistic philosophers in so far as they actually pledge to commit themselves to the task of prescribing a way of life for humanity which will essentially *liberate* individuals from the effects of external events and relations.[525] Nevertheless, from what we have discussed so far in this section, it should be clear by now that both the Stoics and Epicureans believe that these aspects of their moral philosophy *can* be reconciled, and that a life of genuine self-sufficiency awaits all those who come to the realisation that it is both possible and desirable. This should be clear from our discussion of the Stoics' and Epicureans' rejection of the specific obstacles to human flourishing that are outlined by Plato and Aristotle. It should also be clear from our examination of the Stoics' and Epicureans' invocation of the very same examples that Plato and Aristotle employ in their own discussions on luck and tragedy. But if there still remains any doubr as to whether the Stoics' and Epicureans' *really* believe that philosophy and, in particular, their own moral doctrines, hold the key to a self-sufficient way of life, this should be removed by the fact that in their efforts to show that they have every intention of prescribing a way of life for humanity that will essentially *fortify* individuals from the effects of fortune, both the Stoics and Epicureans claim that they are offering individuals a ticket to the kind of security and happiness which is akin to what *the gods* themselves enjoy.

Accordingly, in his *Letter to Menoeceus,* Epicurus tells his pupil, 'Practice these and the related precepts by day and by night, by yourself and with a like-minded friend, and you will never be disturbed either when awake or in sleep, and you will live as a god among men.'[526] 'For a man living amidst immortal gcds', he continues, 'is in no

[525]And in this respect, I depart from Martha Nussbaum's suggestion that the Epicureans are inevitably *less* committed to a project of self-sufficiency than are the Stoics. As my discussion has shown, these aspects of tension *vis-a-viz* a recognition of the effects of the external world are equally apparent within the Stoics' own school of philosophy. For more on Nussbaum's view in relation to this issue, see Nussbaum (1994), pp. 276-278. Cf. Phillip Mitsis' position in Mitsis (1988), p. 9; and Dirk Baltzly's position in 'Adunamic hedonism', D. Baltzly, D. Blyth and H. Tarrant (eds.), *Power, Pleasure, Virtue and Vice: studies in ancient moral philosophy, Prudentia* supplementary volume, Aucklrnd, 2001, pp. 151-159.
[526]See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 135, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 144.

way like a mortal animal.'[527] And in correspondence with his mother, Epicurus also writes: '...these things that I gain are nothing small or of little force, things of the sort that make my state equal to a god's, and show me as a man who not even by his mortality **falls** short of the imperishable and blessed nature. For while I am alive I know joy to the same degree as Jie gods.'[528]

In the same way, Seneca's famous *Letters on Ethics* demonstrate the Stoics' belief tliat 'reason' is the thing which is 'best in man' and thereby ensures that the happy and virtuous Stoic individual invariably 'follows the gods.'[529] These ethical writings also convey the Stoics' message that, 'a happy life' essentially *is* both 'peacefiilness and constant tranquillity' and, "To put it in a nutshell for you, the wise man's mind should be such as befits god.'[530]

Part IV: The Stoics' and Epicureans' attempts to ground the notion of *eudaimonia* within an account of human nature and our shared, or universal, rational capacity

Section 1: The Stoics' and Epicureans' attempts to make the project of *eudaimonia* more inclusive of all human beings

In Part III we saw how the Stoics' and Epicureans' reactions to some of the specific content of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness leads them to adopt a shared commitment to a project of self-sufficiency. We also saw how their rejection of Plato and Aristotle's insistence on the need for one to possess certain external goods and enjoy certain social and political conditions leads them to recognise philosophy as a means for all human beings to both understand and eradicate the sources of human

[527]ibid.
[528]See Epicurus' ietter to his mother in Arrighetti, *Epicuro opere,* Fragment 72.29-40, as reproduced in Mitsis (1988), p. 2: n. 2; and Lucretius' remark in *De Rerum Natura* III. 314-15, 319-22, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 67-68. See also Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 33 and 59, in Inwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), pp. 37 and 39. There, Epicurus declares that, 'The cry of the flesh: not to be hungry, not to be thirsty, not to be cold. For if someone has these things and is confident of having them in the future, he might contend even with <Zeus> for happiness.'
[529]See Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 76.9-10, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 395 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.200a; and Cicero's comments in *On the Mature of Gods 2* 153, in Inwood and Gerson (trans.) (1988), p. 159.
[530]See Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 92.3, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 396.

suffering. To conclude our examination, we must now consider how these two schools of ancient Greek philosophy emphasise the need to make the project of *eudaimonia* inclusive of *all* human beings by attempting to ground the notion of *eudaimonia* within an account of human nature and our shared, or universal, rational capacity.

Section 2: The introduction of a fourth formal condition for happiness

We may begin by observing that both the Stoics' and Epicureans' philosophical writings appear to be influenced by Aristotle's discussions on the formal conditions for *eudaimonia.* Within each school of philosophy we see evidence of the Stoics' and Epicureans' emphasis on the formal condition of self-sufficiency. We also see evidence of their acceptance of the need for happiness to be 'most final', and some evidence that they were inspired to re-think, if not reject, Aristotle's considerations of the formal conditions of'completeness' and 'choiceworthiness' outlined in Book I of *Nicomachean Ethics.*[531] But in their attempts to provide their own account of happiness and its requirements, the works of these Hellenistic philosophers also appear to introduce an additional formal condition for happiness. This formal condition relates to the Stoics' and Epicureans' shared belief that whatever happiness turns out to be, it must be something which is essentially 'natural' for human beings and, thus, in accordance with human nature itself. With this formal condition in mind, the Stoics and Epicureans suggest that our shared, or universal, capacity for reason is what defines human nature and a life lived in accordance with the best aspects of human nature. They also suggest that in so far as we are all endowed with the capacity for reason, or rationality, and, hence, have a share in human nature itself, the project of *eudaimonia* ought to be recognised as something which is essentially important and relevant for every human being.

Thus, in his *Letter to Menoeceus,* Epicurus writes: 'We must reckon that some desires are natural and others empty, and of the natural some are necessary for happiness, others natural only; and of the necessary some are necessary for happiness,

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[531] See Cicero, *On ends* 1.29-32, 37-9, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 112; Stobaeus 2.77, 16-27, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 394 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.16; and *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: Ch. 7.

others for the freedom from stress, and others for life itself.'[532] In recognising this need to discern and follow those aspects of our nature and desires which are shown by reason to be essentially natural and necessary, Epicurus also instructs his students in the following way: 'We must not compel nature but persuade her; and we shall persuade her by fulfilling the necessary desires, and the natural ones if they do no harm, but harshly rebuking the harmful ones.'[533] Accordingly, Epicurus claims to have discovered those aspects of human nature that need to be fulfilled in order to live a meaningful and happy human life and he attempts to construct an account of *eudaimonia* on the basis of those better aspects of human nature.[534] In this way, living the good human life will essentially involve living in agreement *with* them.

Within the Stoics' school of philosophy there is a similar emphasis on the need for us to recognise the value of living in accordance with human nature. Thus, Stobaeus provides the following report on the Stoics' position: 'They [the Stoics] say that being happy is the end, for the sake of which everything is done, but which is not itself done for the sake of anything.'[535] 'This consists in living in accordance with virtue', he continues, 'in living in agreement, or, what is the same thing, in living in accordance with nature.'[536] In his *Letters on Ethics,* Seneca also writes the following: '...if every thing, when it has perfected its own good, is praiseworthy and has reached the end of its own nature, and man's own good is reason, if he has perfected reason, he is praiseworthy and has attained the end of his nature.'[537] And in his own writings on the lives of eminent philosophers, Diogenes Laertius reports that, 'The nature consequential upon which one ought to live is taken by Chrysippus to be both the common and, particularly, the human...'[538] There, Diogenes also reports on the Stoics' belief that in

[532]See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127-32, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 113.
[533]See Epicurus, *Vatican Sayings* 21, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 115-116.
[534]However, as Phillip Mitsis rightly points out, Epicurus does not tell us exactly *which* desires are necessary for happiness. For more discussion on this point, see Mitsis (1988), pp. 120-121; and Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127-128, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 113-114.
[535]See Stobaeus, 2.77, 16-27, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 394 = *Stoiconan Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.16.
[536]ibid. See also Stobaeus, 2.75, 11-76, 8, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 394. There, Stobaeus reports that Cleanthes and Chrysippus later changed this formulation to 'living in agreement *with* nature' and, then, 'living in accordance with experience of what happens *by* nature'.
[537]See Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 76.9-10, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 395 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.200a.
[538]See Diogenes Laertius, 7.87-9, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 395; and Plutarch, *On common conceptions* 1069E, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 359 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.491. There, Plutarch reports that Chrysippus once said, 'What am I to begin from, and what

living the good human life, one will not only be living in accordance with *human* nature, but also in agreement with the nature of the *cosmos* itself. In this way, Diogenes reveals that the Stoics go one step further than the Epicureans in their discussion on nature, by recognising an essentially *divine* element within us all, namely, reason, which is said to link us to God and the order of the entire universe. The Stoics also go further in suggesting that this divine element within us ensures that whatever *happens* to us will, in fact, be 'appropriate' or 'suitable', given the; fact that we are subject to the forces of fate and a divine providential plan which is both all-encompassing and thoroughly rational.[539]

Section 3: The significance of this requirement for the good human life to be 'natural' and the Stoics' and Epicureans* outlook on the role of reason in human flourishing

When we consider this emphasis within the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy on the need for the good human life to be 'natural' and lived in accordance with the definitive element of ouv human nature which is in fact shared, or universal, we can see how the Stoics and Epicureans identify themselves with a much larger audience than the likes of Plato and Aristotle. And when we consider the role that reason is supposed to play in their respective accounts of human flourishing, we can also, understand how the Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of happiness make *eudaimonia* more available to a wider audience. For, unlike Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans do not believe that we must exercise our reason through the activity of *theoria,* or contemplation, in order to live a truly flourishing human life. On the contrary, and as we have seen, they encourage their pupils to steer clear of those aspects of philosophy which do not have a practical ethical end. In this way, the Stoics and Epicureans insist that all their listeners must do is allow their reason to distinguish the better aspects of human nature and internalise the key ethical doctrines that they themselves have outlined. Nothing more is required in order to both understand and

am I to take as the foundation of proper function and the material of virtue if I pass over nature and what accords with nature?'

[539]This also implies that the good human life will be one in which one lives out the life that one has been assigned by fate both willingly and to the best of one's ability. On these aspects of Stoic philosophy, see Diogenes Laertius, 7.85-6, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 346 = *Stoiconun Veterum Fragmenta,* Fragment 3.178; and Cicero, *On ends* 3.62-8 and *On fate* 39-43, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), pp. 348-349 and 386-387.

eradicate the sources of human suffering. And, in this sense, they suggest that the task that awaits us all is essentially an easier one, in so far as it does not stretch our *intellectual* capacities beyond our respective means. They also point out that this kind of human life must be one which is essentially *open* and *available* to every human being for the very reason that it is based on those aspects of reason and human nature which are common to us all.

On this basis, the Stoics and Epicureans choose not to regard themselves as members of a specific and allegedly superior Greek community, nor to pledge their commitment to the welfare of such a small or specific group. In contrast with this, and the outlooks of both Plato and Aristotle, they clearly recognise themselves as 'citizens of the whole cosmos'. Accordingly, the Epicurean philosopher, Diogenes of Oenoanda, conveys the following message to his audience: 'In relation to each segment of the earth different people have different native lands. But in relation to the whole circuit of this world the entire earth is a single native land for everyone, and the world a single home.'[540] And in other writings on Stoic moral philosophy we also hear of Zeno of Citium's insistence on the need for us to 'regard all men as our fellow-citizens and local residents' and Epicterus' directive to have his pupils remind themselves that each and every one of us is essentially 'a citizen of the world and a part of it...'[541]

From this perspective, the Stoics and Epicureans also acknowledge that there is both a *real possibility* and a *genuine need* to provide an account of *eudaimonia* that will essentially help all human beings, that is to say Greeks and non-Greeks alike. In the early part of the twentieth century, historians such as Edward Zeller put this recognition of a larger philosophical audience down to the social and political events which took place in Greece prior to the Hellenistic era, during the reign of Alexander the Great and his imperialist efforts to broaden the cultural and intellectual mind set of ancient Greek citizens, together with the expanse of the Greek empire itself. However, since then, commentators like Phillip Mitsis have pointed out that it was dangerous for historians such as Zeller to read too much into history when attempting to explain the Stoics' and Epicureans' recognition of a larger philosophical audience and their reasons for revising

[540]See Diogenes of Oenoanda 25.2.3-11, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 133.

the outlook of the- classical Greek moral enterprise.[542] Mitsis rightly points out that it is wrong to presume that these Hellenistic conceptions of happiness were simply a natural reaction to the social environment in which the works of these Hellenistic philosophers emerged.[543] Indeed, he makes the important point that when we consider the works that were produced by Epicurus, Zeno and Pyrrho - the founder fathers of the three main schools of philosophy in the Hellenistic era - we can see that they contain *no* signs of anxiety regarding the changes that had occuiTed in relation to the traditional political practices in ancient Greek society. On the contrary, the works of these philosophers seem to show concern about the fact that social institutions and political ambitions continue to *dominate* the moral outlooks of their prospective students and fellow human beings. And, in this sense, it is more likely that the Stoics' and Epicureans' attempts to revise earlier conceptions of happiness reflect their own efforts to encourage people to try to *ignore,* rather than *compensate for,* the political and social developments which were happening all around them.

Section 4: Conclusion

With this information in hand, we may conclude that the Stoics' and Epicureans' attempts to ground the notion *of eudaimonia* within an account of human nature and our shared, or, universal, rational capacity also helps to explain why these important philosophers of the Hellenistic era choose to reject Plato and Aristotle's outlooks on the role of luck and the external goods in human flourishing, and set out to prescribe a way of life that is essentially open and relevant to *all* of humanity. For, in introducing a requirement for the good human life to be 'natural', and lived in accordance with an aspect of human nature that is common to us all, the Stoics and Epicureans suggest that there is no human being who lacks the tools that are required to cultivate happiness. And in pointing out that we must simply use the rational capacity that we have been given to distinguish the better aspects of human nature and internalise the moral doctrines that they provide, they suggest that Plato and Aristotle were wrong to suggest that any kind of external good or social and political conditions may be required for a

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[541]See Plutarch, *On the fortune of Alexander* 329A-B, in Long and SecMey (trans.) (1987), pp. 429-430 = *Stoicorum Vetenim Fragmenta,* Fragment 1.262, part; and Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.10.1-12, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 364. See also my discussion in n. 429.

[542]For an excellent discussion on this topic, see Mitsis (1988), pp. 2-5.

[543]ibid.

good human life. Accordingly, both the Stoics' and Epicureans' conceptions of happiness suggest that a good and self-sufficient moral life awaits us all, and is there for the taking, if we can simply utilise this shared, or universal, capacity for reason to *understand* and thereby *eradicate* the source of all human suffering.

CONCLUSION

Part I: Introduction

In the last chapter we examined the Stoics' and Epicureans' reactions to Plato and Aristotle's conceptions of happiness and its requirements. In doing so, we saw how these important and influential moral philosophers of the Hellenistic era continued to work with the notion of *eudaimonia* but did all that they could to *rethink* and *redevelop* this notion in order to make the project of human flourishing more important and relevant for everyone. Rejecting Plato and Aristotle's views on the importance of particular external goods and the need for certain social and political conditions to be met, the Stoics and Epicureans effectively eliminate the role of luck and the external goods which Plato and Aristotle saw as so important for the good human life. They argue that moral philosophy provides the means for *all* individuals to both *understand* and *eradicate* the sources of human suffering. They also argue that in so far as moral philosophy holds the key to a self-sufficient and genuinely happy human life, and every human being has the natural and rational capacity to'take up and learn from the moral doctrines that are designed to secure this way of life, the life of happiness they prescribe will also be open and available to *every* human being. And yet, despite this renewed sense of urgency and optimism regarding the project *of eudaimonia* and the potential for moral philosophy to alleviate the suffering of ordinary human beings, the Stoics and Epicureans, as we shall see, ultimately agree that most people will/m7 in their attempts to secure this way of life. Accordingly, they, just like Plato and Aristotle, come to think about the good human life, that is to say, the kind of life which they themselves prescribe./*?/- humanity, as something which will prove to be *too difficult* for *most* human beings to achieve.

For the purpose of this chapter, I would like to reflect on the fact that each of these schools of ancient Greek philosophy ultimately regard the goal of *eudaimonia* as something that will remain out of reach for most human beings and offer some explanation for why they came to think about happiness in this way, and what we, as modern thinkers, may learn from this. In doing so, I will conclude this examination of these various schools of ancient Greek philosophy and their contributions to the debate

about morality, luck and happiness, by outlining what I regard as a central theme which runs throughout both the classical and Hellenistic schools of ancient Greek philosophy and their attempts to provide an account of happiness and its requirements. I will show that this central theme underpins my discussion in each of the preceding chapters and also provides the groundwork for us to undertake further research in this area so as to develop a more comprehensive account of the link between our understanding of human nature and our conception of human flourishing. I will argue that this theme serves to explain not only the competing concerns which lie at the heart of these ancient Greek conceptions of the goal of *eudaimenia,* but also the challenge which we ourselves face in thinking about what we regard as most *important* and *valuable* in a human life in the context of our own awareness and appreciation of the *dynamic* aspects of human nature.

Part II: Reflections on the prospects for human beings to actually *achieve* the good human life and what this tells us about the notion of *eudaimenia*

We have seen how Plato and Aristotle come to think about the project of *eudaimonia* as one that will inevitably prove to be viable for only the rare and fortunate few in the very best of social and political arrangements. We have also seen how the Stoics and Epicureans attempt to distance themselves from Plato and Aristotle's *grim depiction* of the prospects for widespread human flourishing. They also attempt to distance themselves from Plato and Aristotle's bleak outlook on the potential for moral philosophy to address the needs and concerns of ordinary human beings. But despite the Stoics' and Epicureans' attempts to provide an account of happiness that is both open and available to everyone, there is evidence to suggest that the Stoics and Epicureans agree with Plato and Aristotle's suggestion that the goal *of eudaimonia* will not only be *difficult,* but *impossible* for *most* people to achieve. This is evident in Plutarch's report that the founder of Epicureanism once proclaimed that, 'except for himself and his pupils no one had ever been a sage.'[544] It is also evident in Cicero's remark that, 'life is passed not in the company of men who are perfect and truly wise, but those who do very

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[544]See Plutarch's essay entitled, 'A Pleasant Life Impossible': 1099-1100, in Benedict Einarson and Phillip
H. De Lacy (trans.), *Plutarch's MoraliaXJV,* Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1967, p. 103 = Usener, Fragment 146.

well if they show likenesses of virtue...'[545] And it is equally clear in the light of the fact that prominent Stoic philosophers, such as Seneca and Chrysippus, did not even regard *themselves* as truly wise individuals.[546] Indeed, these remarks seem to illustrate an outlook on the prospects for widespread human flourishing which is not so far removed from the one that Plato expresses in *Republic* and Aristotle endorses in *Politics.*

But what are we to make of this general and unanimous concession in ancient Greek moral philosophy and what does it tell us about the notion of *eudaimonial* Does it leave us with a shared approach to human happiness which is *fundamentallyflawed,* in so far as it encourages humans to aspire towards a way of life for which the majority of humanity is *unfit,* or can it actually provide us with a *valuable insight* into happiness, human nature, and perhaps even the very essence of the human condition itself? I want to suggest that the answers to these questions lie in an understanding of a central theme which runs throughout both the classical and Hellenistic schools of ancient Greek philosophy and their attempts to provide an account of happiness and its requirements. This theme relates to their shared endeavours to outline a way of life that will capture and remain true to both those mortal *and finite* aspects of human nature, and those aspects within us which enable us to aspire to great heights and *transcend* the existing boundaries of human expression, experience and understanding. This theme also illustrates the competing concerns which lie at the heart of the notion of *eudaimonia* and these ancient Greek philosophers' attempts to ground their conceptions of happiness within an account of human nature. For in their efforts to prescribe a way of life for humanity, these philosophers recognise that whilst some components of the good and happy human life require us to *fulfil* certain aspects of human nature, others require us to *transcend* particular aspects of our nature and, therefore, any account of happiness which seeks to accommodate this kind of essential *dynamism* within human nature must also reflect this kind of dynamism, or perhaps even tension, within the genuinely *eudaimon, or flourishing,* human life.[547]

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[545]See Cicero, *On duties* 1.46, in Long and Sedley (tranp) (1987), p. 424.

[546]See Seneca's remarks in *Letters on Ethics* 116.5, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 423. There, Seneca suggests that both he and the student to whom he is writing 'are still a great distance from the wise man...' See also Martha Nussbaum's discussion in Nussbaum (1994), pp. 359-360: n. 2.

[547]In this sense, an etymological understanding of the notion *of eudaimonia* may also prove to be instructive. For in so far as this notion appears to connect the life of human flourishing, or *well-being,* with the condition of one's *daimon* or spirit, and one's *daimon* is understood to be the very thing which resides in mortals and links us to all that is divine, *eu-daimon-ia* could be understood as a state or activity

This central theme also serves to demonstrate how the conceptions of the good human life that we have examined tend to shift from thinking about the goal of *eudaimonia* as one which requires us to become *good* examples of our kind, to thinking about the goal *of eudaimonia* as a project which demands that we become *outstanding* examples of our kind. This essentially involves a transition from thinking about the need for us to *become* what we *already* are, by 'growing into our humanity' or *realising* our *existing* human potentiality, to thinking about the need for us to *stand out* from and beyond the rest of humankind. The latter also reflects the thought that the goal of *eudaimonia* is one which requires us to essentially become *more* than we *already* are by *transcending* conventional views about what it means for humans to *be,* and what the perceived boundaries for human wisdom and experience are. To add to this, this central theme also highlights these ancient moral philosophers' shared concern to provide an account of human flourishing which pays due respect to Socrates' caution against an attitude of 'hubris' in philosophical endeavours and, thus, heeds his warning for mortals to 'think mortal thoughts', but balances this proviso with a recognition of the need for us to also encourage some individuals to go *bey md* ordinary standards of human wisdom and experience in order to create new ways for humanity to engage in and think about our place in the world at large. And it is on the basis of the latter concern, that these ancient Greek moral philosophers come to think about the goal of *eudaimonia* as something which *will,* and in some sense perhaps even *should,* prove to be *too difficult* for *most* human beings to achieve.

In thinking about this central theme, and the way in which it reveals two competing concerns at the heart of the notion of *eudaihionia,* we can see that it underpins our discussion in each of the preceding chapters. From early and middle Plato, to Aristotle and the Stoics and Epicureans, this central theme, and the tension with which it is concerned, works its way into both their accounts of what the good human life *requires* and their individual attempts to outline and describe just what it is that the genuinely *eudaimōn* person *will focus on, secure* and *enjoy* when he or she manages to secure a life of genuine virtue and happiness. In this way, each of the schools of ancient Greek philosophy that we have examined seek to accommodate those aspects of *fulfilment* and *transcendence* in the good human life and their efforts to

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in which one's *daimon* has made one aware of one's central connection to both the mortal and divine realms. On this point, see Diotima's speech in *Symposium,* at 202e-203b.

reconcile these aspects, together with formal conditions for happiness such as completeness and self-sufficiency, inevitably influence their findings on the nature and availability of human flourishing.

This is most obvious in the context of our discussion in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, in relation to Aristotle's attempts to account for the role of *phronēsis* and luck in the good human life, and the Stoics' and Epicureans' efforts to outline a way of life which will guarantee that the happy and self-sufficient moral person remains free from the effects of all external events and relations. There, we saw how all three of these perspectives on happiness appear to exhort individuals to *make the best of a human life,* and yet each, in their own way, also describe *eudaimonia* as a state or activity which is so close to perfection that it must be regarded as either 'godlike' - in so far as it commands the praise and respect of the gods[548] - or genuinely *divine,* in the sense that it provides us with a way of life which is akin to what the gods *themselves* enjoy.[549] We also saw how each of these philosophers attempt to evaluate the value and importance of certain human faculties, such as those which relate to our sense of pain and pleasure, our desires, and emotions, in the light of their capacity to generate the kind of *epistemic tools* and *stable character* that will serve us in good stead in the face of fortune and keep us mindful of the true value of the so-called external goods.

But it is also apparent that this central theme underpins our discussion in Chapters 1 and 2. For in these chapters, we saw how Plato's works emerge from a rather humble beginning or origin; they essentially recognise the need for us to *acknowledge* who and what we are, to *remember* our proper place in the world, and to *respect* the distinction between a kind of 'human wisdom' for which we are destined and a kind of 'more than human wisdom' which will forever lie beyond our mortal grasp. We also

[548]as Aristotle suggests in *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: 1099b9-19 and I discuss in Chapter 5: Part I: p. 143. For evidence of a similar outlook in Plato's middle dialogues, see *Republic:* 465d, 500c-d and 613a. Cf. Socrates' remarks in *Cratylus* at 398b-c.

[549]as the Stoics and Epicureans suggest in a number of key texts that I cite and discuss in Chapter 6: Part III: Section 11: pp. 199-201. Indeed, there appears to be something telling in Plutarch's report that in the midst of his discussions on the nature of the virtue of justice, Chrysippus admitted to his audience, '...we seem to be talking fiction and not on the level of man and human nature.' And perhaps there are also grounds for us to reach similar conclusions regarding the Skeptics' outlook on the task that awaits us, as human beings, given Diogenes Laertius' report that, 'When he [Pyrrho] was once scared by a dog that set on him, he responded to criticism by saying that it was difficult to strip oneself completely of being human...' See Plutarch, *On Stoic self-contradictions* 1041F, in Long and Sedley (trans.) (1987), p. 423

saw that these works become increasingly concerned with the issue of how, and to what extent, we may need to *overcome* aspects of our *embodied* nature in order to 'rise above' the merely visible and sensible realm and glimpse the true realities. And yet, notwithstanding these obvious changes or developments in relation to Plato's philosophical ambitions and expectations, our discussion in these chapters, together with the focus of our examination in Chapter 3, clearly demonstrates Plato's intention to encourage individuals to go *beyond* standards of virtue, wisdom and character that are common to *civil* society, in both his early and middle dialogues.

In these ways, and many others, we may observe that Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans, all begin their search for the truth about morality, luck and happiness with a recognition of the need for the project of *eudaimonia* to address what is *ordinarily* encountered in human experience and, thus, most *common* to humanity. But we may also observe the fact that, despite these initial starting points for their enquiries, they also recognise the need for us to *ignore* or *transcend* some of these aspects in a way that inevitably points to a kind of life which is less *recognisably* 'human'. This, in turn, highlights the central theme that runs throughout both the classical and Hellenistic schools of philosophy and their individual attempts to provide an account of happiness and its requirements. And it helps to explain why each of these ancient Greek philosophers come to believe that the good human life will be not only *far superior* to the lives that most human beings get to experience, but only ever *rarely* acquired and enjoyed.

Having considered this central theme which runs throughout both the classical and Hellenistic schools of ancient Greek philosophy and their individual attempts to provide an account of human flourishing, and looked back over the ways in which it underpins our discussion in each of the preceding chapters, we are now in a position to see *why* these important and influential moral thinkers in antiquity may have come to think about the goal of *eudaimonia* as one which will prove to be *too difficult* for *most* human beings to achieve. But why should we think that there is anything for us, as modern thinkers, to learn from this? Should we believe that this general and unanimous concession in ancient Greek moral philosophy leaves us with a shared approach to

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Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, Fragment 3.545; and Diogenes Laertius 9.66-7, in Long and Sedley

human happiness which is *fundamentallyflawed,* in so far as it encourages humans to aspire towards a way of life for which the majority of humanity is *unfit,* or should we think that it can actually provide us with some *valuable insights* into happiness, human nature, and perhaps even the human condition itself in a way which provides the groundwork for us to work out what *we* think is most important and valuable in a flourishing human life? These are the questions that remain unanswered. We must now turn our attention to these questions, and attempt to provide some answers for them, in order to assess the merits and contemporary relevance of these ancient ethical perspectives on the issue of happiness and human nature.

Part III: A tension at the heart of the project of *eudaimonia.* Is it problematic or instructive, and where do we go from here?

In recent discussions on ancient Greek moral philosophy, attempts have been made to assess the merits of these ancient Greek moral perspectives in the light of the value of the contributions they can make to contemporary debates about the relations between morality, luck and happiness. Some of these debates have focused on the importance of Aristotle's recognition of the need for us to incorporate *a. practical* component in the good human life. In doing so, they have also recognised that Aristotle's views on this matter may actually conflict with some of the other things that he has to say in Book X, Chapters 6-8, of *Nicomachean Ethics* regarding the kind of state or activity which is 'most final' for humans. In this way, commentators have also recognised that there is an apparent tension at the heart of Aristotle's account of happiness and its requirements.[550] More recently, Martha Nussbaum has observed that a similar kind of tension may also exist in relation to the Epicureans' outlook on happiness, and the sorts of concerns that shape these ancient Greek philosophers' views on what is valuable in a human life, and both possible and desirable for human beings to achieve.[551] For a while now, debates have also focused on the differences between Plato's outlook in dialogues such as

(trans.) (1987), p. 14.

[550]Indeed, this has given rise to the debate between those who support an 'inclusivist' reading of Aristotle's position on the role of the external goods in happiness, such as Amelie Oksenberg Rorty and John Cooper, and those who support an 'exclusivist' reading of the latter, such as Thomas Nagel and J. L. Ackrill. For more discussion on this issue, see Amelie 0. Rorty (ed.)> *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics,* University of California Press, California, 1980, chapters 1-2 and 20; and John Cooper, 'Contemplation and Happiness: A Reconsideration', in J. M. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion. Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1999, pp. 212-236.

Republic and *Phaedo,* and his remarks on the connections between virtue and happiness in early and transitional dialogues, such as *Apology* and *Gorgias.* In these ways, we have become increasingly aware of the fact that significant kinds of tension may exist within these ancient Greek moral perspectives on happiness and its requirements.

But, despite these important observations, the possibility that there may be a common and significant source of tension which runs *throughout* both the classical and Hellenistic schools of philoso^y, and *unites* their efforts to account for the requirements of a good human life, appears to have been largely ignored. Moreover, where commentators *have* recognised aspects of tension *within* these ancient Greek moral perspectives, they have more often than not sought to 'explain them away', or at least reconcile them with other considerations, in a way which reveals their belief that these aspscts of tension are essentially *problematic.* In this way, there has been a general tendency in recent debates to either move swiftly in the direction of interpretations which offer cohesion and consistency or, when faced with an account of the good human life which seeks to accommodate aspects of fulfilment *and* transcendence, to presume that we must inevitably take sides and decide *yjhich one* of these aspects *will* and *should* take priority in our understanding of these ancient ethical perspectives, and our own attempts to work out what is necessary for a flourishing human life.[552] As a result, the possibility that there may be both a common and significant source of tension which lies at the heart of the project of *eudaimonia,* and informs each and every one of these ancient ethical perspectives in a way which is both

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[551] See Nussbaum (1994), p. 276.

[552] It is noteworthy that even Martha Nussbaum's discussion in 'Transcending Humanity' in the final chapter of her book entitled, *Loves' Knowledge* proves to be no exception to this general trend. There, Nussbaum does acknowledge that Aristotle's account of the good human life calls on individuals to transcend certain aspects of human nature. But she goes on to describe this aspect of Aristotle's moral philosophy as an appeal to a kind *of descent,* rather than *ascent,* which is designed to have one '...delving more deeply into one-self and one's humanity, and becoming deeper and more spacious as a result...', in a way which makes it no longer look like a *genuine* appeal for transcendence. Indeed, Nussbaum also appears to employ a similar strategy in relation to her assessment of how the Epicurean philosophers both *can* and *should* fine-tune the 'finitist side' of their argument in order to have this aspect prevail over the 'immortalist side' of their moral philosophy. For more on this issue, see Nussbaum (1990), pp. 365-391, especially pp. 378-9; and Nussbaum (1994), pp. 277 and 497-99. For more on the critical and probing reviews of Nussbaum's earlier work which led her to articulate her reading of Aristotle's position on these issues more clearly, see C.C.W. Taylor, 'Critical Notice: A Review of Martha C. Nussbaum's *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy', Mind.* Vol. 96,1987, pp. 407-414; and Charles Taylor, 'Critical Notice: A Review of Martha C. Nussbaum's *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy', Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Volume 18, No. 4 1988, pp. 805-814.

insightful and *instructive,* rather than essentially *problematic,* has not been seriously considered.

In the light of this omission, I want to show that there *is* something important and instructive about the kind of tension which runs throughout these ancient Greek ethical perspectives on happiness and leads these ancient Greek moral philosophers to think that the flourishing human life will remain out of reach for most human beings. In this way, we cannot simply .*&\\tm* ourselves with either one or the other of the competing concerns that their accounts of the good human life seek to address, nor deny the complexity of their outlooks on happiness in an effort to reduce this tension which resides within them.[553] On the contrary, we need to recognise that this kind of tension lies at the heart of the project of *eudaimonia* and, in offering us some *valuable insights* into happiness, human nature, and perhaps even the human condition itself, provides the groundwork for us to develop a more comprehensive account of human flourishing for ourselves.

The reason for this is that, in attempting to outline a way of life for humanity that will essentially capture and remain true to both those mortal *and finite* aspects of human nature *and* those aspects of human nature which enable us to *transcend* existing boundaries of human wisdom and experience, these ancient Greek moral perspectives on happiness and its requirements demonstrate a unique awareness of two essential points in this debate. The first is that, however we may conceive of the good human life, we must inevitably do so in the context of our understanding of human nature. This means that we cannot either discover or determine what it takes for humans to live *well,* *andjfGurish,* until we have first considered what it means for us to *be human,* and thought a great deal about what we think *defines* human life and our particular manner of existence. For only when know what sort of creatures we are, will we know what is *good for us* and, thus, what ought to be considered as the *telos,* or 'final end', of *all* human efforts and endeavours.

[553]In this respect, I think Martha Nussbaum is also mistaken in thinking that the intellectualism which Aristotle displays in Book X, Chapters 6-8, of *Nicomachean Ethics* is not just '...at odds with the general anthropocentricism of Aristotle's ethical method', but something that he rejects 'in the bulk of his mature ethical and political writing.' Indeed, given my argument regarding the need for us to try to accommodate these two *competing* concerns that we have examined, we may also need to *rethink* her suggestion that there is nothing significant about the way that Aristotle employs the terms *'eudaimonos'* and *'makarios'*

The second of these points is that, in attempting to develop a conception of the good human life in the context of our understanding of human nature, we must do so in the light of the fact that we often use the concept "human", and speak about what is 'natural' in a human life, in a *normative,* rather than purely *descriptive* or *empirical,* sense.[554] More importantly, we need to think about the possibility that human nature and identity are not the sorts of things that are 'fixed' for all time, nor 'static' and immutable, but continue to evolve and transform, within certain parameters, in a manner which reflects the fact that our way of*being* is always in a prpcess of change or *becoming.*[555] In this way, our conception of the good human life will need to reflect the fact that human nature is essentially *dynamic,* rather than *static,* and, in taking the form of an *ideal,* allow for the possibility that even the *majority* of humanity may, and perhaps even *should,* fail to.acquire and enjoy this v.iy of life for the very reason that it seeks, in part, to *transcend* what is *ordinarily* encountered in human life and experience.

On this basis, we may conclude that both the shared approach to the project of *eudaimonia* that these ancient Greek moral philosophers adopt, and the central tension which resides in their conceptions of the good human life, leave us with much to think about. Indeed, these ancient Greek moral perspectives on happiness and its requirements provide us, as modem thinkers, with a starting point and a useful strategy to decide what *we* think is required for a flourishing human life. For they make it clear that in order to develop our own account of what is *important* and *valuable* in a human life requires, we must first address these questions regarding what, if anything, defines human nature, and what kind of life could possibly reflect our own understanding of the needs and concerns, functions and capacities, that are important in a human life.[556] More

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in Book I of' *Nicomachean Ethics.* For more discussion on these points, lee Nussbaum (1986), Appendix to Part III, pp. 373-377 and pp. 329-333. See also Annas (1993a), p. 44: n. 62.

[554]For an excellent discussion on this point and the recognition of this fact within the various schools of ancient Greek philosophy, see Annas (1993a), pp. 135-220. For more on Aristotle's views on this particular issue, see his remarks in *Eudemian Ethics;* Book II: 1224b30ff; and Irwin (1988),, pp. 373-375. For a similar outlook on our use of the terms 'natural' and 'person' in ethics, see Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy,* Fontana Press, London, 1985, pp. 47-48; and Harry G. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *Journal of Philosophy.* Vol. lxviii.No. 1,1971,pp. 5-20.

[555]For an interesting discussion on this point, and the relevance and significance of Heraclitus' remark that, 'a man's character *[ethos]* is his fate *[daimon]*\ see Charles H. Seibert (trans.), *Heraclitus Seminar. Martin Heidegger and Eugen Fink,* Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 1970, chapters 8-10. See also Jonathan Barnes (trans.), *Early Greek Philosophy,* Penguin Books, England, 1987, p. 124 and my earlier discussion in n. 547.

[556]Some excellent work has already begun in this area of research. For more on this, and some examples of how recent feminist writings have stimulated these debates, see Martha Nussbaum, 'Human

importantly, they make it clear that in order to produce an account of human flourishing which reflects the truth about human nature and the human condition itself, we must think about these matters in the light of our own awareness and appreciation of the *dynamic* aspects of human nature. For only then can we develop an account of the good human life which reflects our beliefs about what is both *possible* and *desirable* for human beings to achieve.

In this way, the challenge for us, in thinking about what it would *take* and *mean* for us to live a flourishing human life, remains essentially the same. We may choose to reject what Plato and Aristotle have to say about the specific things that define human nature, or what the Stoics and Epicureans have to say on what is 'natural' and 'appropriate' in a human life. We might also reject some of their findings on those aspects of human nature that need to be *fulfilled* in order to *realise* our human potential, and those aspects that we ought to be encouraged to try to *transcend* in order to generate new ways for us to think about the world and our place within it. And we might also have different things to say about how we ought to think about this kind of tension, or dynamism, that exists within human nature and is indicative of the good human life, in order to strike a *different* balance between these two competing concerns. But we must also acknowledge that *the form* and *method,* if not all of the specific *content,* of these ancient Greek ethical perspectives and their shared approach to the project of *eudaimonia* remains important and relevant to us all. For we are now in a position to see what these ancient Greek moral philosophers are *trying* to do, and it is clear that we, too, must think about how we can accommodate these two competing concerns. Only then can we devise a conception of the good human life that will not only reflect our current understanding of what it means for us to *be,* and live a *human* life, but also provide the impetus for some of us to create ourselves anew.

Functioning and Social Justice. In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism', *Political Theory.* Vol. 20, 1992, pp. 202-246; Martha Nussbaum, 'Aristotle, Politics, and Human Capabilities: A Response to Antony, Arneson, Charlesworth, and Mulgan\ *Ethics,* October 2000, pp. 102-140; and Louise Antony, 'Natures and Norms', *Ethics,* October 2000, pp. 8-37.

APPENDIX

MODELS OF VIRTUE

MODEL 1 - One-dimensional model of virtue:

:————.———virtue: 1 kind for all————------------------------:

(guided by knowledge or true belief)

This model represents Plato's view in *Meno* regarding the kind of virtue that is available to human beings and the level of understanding that is required to attain it. It indicates that when Plato wrote *Meno,* he believed that there is only one type of virtue that is available to human beings, regardless of how human beings may vary in their phyiscal, intellectual, moral or psychological abilities. It also indicates that this kind of virtue may be arrived at through the cultivation of either actual knowledge or true belief, as these cognitive achievements are said to lead to one and the same form of virtue. An important implication of this model of virtue is that it presents a less onereous challenge for human beings in their efforts to develop the kind of wisdom that is required for genuine virtue. This, in turn, suggests that the requirements for a good and happy human life may be more accessible to the many human beings who do not receive the kind of rigorous and highly specialised training that Plato will go on to prescribe for philosophers in *Republic.*

MODEL 2 - Dichotomy collapses into a one-dimensional model of virtue:

:——virtue of the philosophers————————————:

:-------------——virtue of the non-philosophers——-----------------------:

(shown to be 'illogical' or 'illusory')

This model represents Plato's view in *Phaedo* regarding the kinds of virtue that are available to human beings. It reflects Socrates' discussion within the *Phaedo*'where he initally tells Simmias that both philosophers and non-philosophers are capable of acquiring virtue, but ultimately denounces the kind of virtue that non-philosophers are

capable of as something which is 'illogical[5] or 'illusory'. ices the initial dichotomy that Socrates speaks of into a one-dimensional &w-uttat of virtue, suggesting that only the virtue that the philosophers are capable of is worthy of the name 'virtue'. This model indicates that when Plato wrote *Phaedo,* he still believed that there is only one type of genuine virtue that is open and available to human beings, as Socrates had suggested in *Meno.* However, in this dialogue Plato suggests that this virtue will not be available to all human beings, but restricted to philosophers, who possess the kind of values, intentions, pleasures and motivations that it takes to acquire it. This lias significant implications for Plato's outlook on the availability of human flourishing, as it means that the majority of human beings who do not share in the philosophical way of life will fall short of this requirement for happiness.

MODEL 3 - One-dimensional model of virtue:

:————virtue: 1 kind for all who are educated------------------------:

(guided by knowledge or true belief)

This model represents Vlastos' view of what Plato has to say about the kind of virtue that is available to human beings in Book IV *of Republic.* It reflects Vlastos' view that when Plato wrote *Republic,* he no longer believed that there is one kind of virtue which ordinary human beings are capable of and another for which genuine philosophers are destined. On the contrary, he believed that there is only one kind of virtue that is available to human beings, and that this may be arrived at via knowledge or true belief. Vlastos insists that this 'new conception' of virtue in Book IV *of Republic* requires an individual to develop the knowledge or belief that is required for virtue as a result of education, rather than sheer luck. However, this is his only proviso on interpreting more broadly Plato's view on the availability of human flourishing in *Republic.* This model has significant implications for our understanding of Plato's mature conception of the prospects for the majority of human beings to flourish, as it suggests that Plato means to suggest a far more optimistic than the one that Socrates presents in *Phaedo.*

MODEL 4 - Trichotomy collapses into a dichotomy:

:——virtue of the philosophers———————————————:

(guided by knowledge)

:---————virtue of the educated non-philosophers——————————:

(guided by true belief produced by the right sort of education)

:—virtue / moral principles of the uneducated non-philosophers——————:

(guided by true belief not produced by the right sort of education)

This model represents an alternative way of understanding Plato's views on virtue in Book IV of *Republic.* It suggests that Plato means to distinguish between three types of virtue, namely, the kind that is based on the true beliefs of those who are *uneducated;* the kind that is based on the true beliefs of those who are *educated;* and the kind that is based on actual knowledge and is acquired by genuine philosophers. This model takes into account Vlastos' point about Plato's intention in Book IV of *Republic* to distinguish between the kinds of virtue that are and are not produced by the right sort of education. It also distinguishes between the kind of virtue that is said to develop from knowledge in this dialogue, and the kind that is said to develop from true belief. The suggestion is that there are three types of virtue and hence three possible routes to one of the key requirments for happiness. However, this trichotomy is reduced to a dichotomy when we take into account Socrates* important distinction between 'genuine' and 'civic' virtue and acknowledge Plato's point that it is 'genuine' virtue' that is required for happiness. This is because the virtue that is depicted in the third or bottom tier of this model is exposed as something which falls short of'genuine' virtue. This reinstates Plato's point about the need for individuals to receive the right sort of education; the implication being that anyone who misses out on this will also fail in their attempts to secure the requirements for *eudaimonia.*

MODEL 5 - Dichotomy:

:——virtue of the- philosophers-----------------------------------:

(guided by knowledge)

:----————virtue of the non-philosophers——————------:

(guided by true belief produced by the right sort of education)

This model represents what Plato has to say about the types of virtue that are available to human beings once we take into account Socrates' important distinction between 'genuine' and 'civic' virtue in Book IV of *Republic.* It indicates that Plato means to suggest that virtue may be guided by knowledge or true belief, and enjoyed by both philosopher and non-philosopher alike, so long as it is the sort of virtue that is informed by the right sort of education. As in the case of Model 4, the implication here is that those who receive the right sort of education have every chance of developing the kinds of virtue and wisdom that are required for *eudaimonia.* Conversely, it implies that those who do not receive this education will fall short of what it takes to live a flourishing human life.

MODEL 6 - Continuum or scale of virtue:

:———less virtuous——————————————more/most virtuous-——--:

(virtue of the educated non-philosophers) (virtue of the philosophers)

This model provides an alternative way of representing Plato's views on virtue in Book IV of *Republic.* It seeks to accommodate Socrates' distinction between 'civic' and 'genuine' virtue, together with Plato's comparison of the virtue that the philosophers are said to enjoy, and the virtue that is said to be available for other human beings who have been given the right education but do not share in the philosopher's way of life. However, unlike the other models, this model allows us to think about them as being located at different points along a scale or continuum of virtue, rather than being different in kind. It may also provide some scope for the non-philosophers to advance towards the level of virtue that the philosophers enjoy. Nevertheless, the implication here is that the philosophers' virtue ranks higher up on the scale of virtue than does the virtue that is accessible for the majority of human beings.

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