ARISTOTLE’S VISION OF POLITICAL EUDAEMONIA QUA THE DIVINE IN ETHICA NIKOMACHEA

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This paper firstly explores Aristotle’s moral vision of eudaimonia or ‘happiness’ in Ethica Nichomachea (EN). The ensuing discussion points out that the life of excellence (arête) in all classical Greek philosophy culminates in the attainment of eudemonic being, equivocating likeness to the divine to the highest possible degree. The paper goes on to disclose significant differences concerning happiness between Aristotle’s moral philosophy and that of his predecessors, Socrates, and Plato. In turn, the present inquiry explores Aristotle’s claim in EN that the education of a sufficient number of citizens of superior refinement best accomplishes human flourishing in both the private and public spheres. According to Aristotle, the paramount achievement of eudaimonia in individuals and the city-state happens through the moral and intellectual education of citizens of refinement in political science (politike episteme). Consequently, the present exploration carefully investigates the crux of Aristotle’s vision of educating citizens of quality as this aspect of his ethics best illuminates the holistic scope and curriculum of his proposed study in politike episteme (the science integrating all sciences). Finally, the present endeavor explores the superiority that Aristotle allots to contemplative or divine theoria in the latter part of his ethical treatise (Book X.7-8), where, he establishes a hierarchy between phrōnesis (practical wisdom) and theoria (contemplative wisdom), ascertaining the higher standing of the latter, a claim that inevitably leads him into paradox. Nevertheless, he also considers that perhaps contemplative wisdom surpasses divine reason, therefore, any form of duality between ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ between praxis and theoria. As such, eudaimonia qua contemplation is the constitutive non-dual ground of the human soul that manifests itself in the eudaimon for the sake of happiness. Further, sublime theoria—its root enduring in theos—bears the ontological power of totality, therefore, may irretrievably potentiate complete conversion in the moral and spiritual life of the individual and so doing; appears to unite practical and theoretical wisdom in service to the divine in humans. The moral conversion qua divine theoria is precisely the magnificence that effectually transforms the human psyche to an emnoble and integrated person of subtle self-refinement, in whom both practical excellence and contemplative wisdom cohere and benevolently reconcile, coalescing: into a single virtuous activity (Sophia) that benefits humanity and the whole of the social and political order. This way, Aristotle seems to contend that the divine activity of contemplative wisdom spreading-out for the sake of the whole of human welfare annuls, perhaps, withdraws the appearance of hierarchy. However, his primary purpose in most of the text (from Book I to Book X.6-8) is to disclose ways that moral excellence and the intellectual study of political science may potentially elevate both individual and politeia to a more humane and constitutionally virtuous way of life. He appropriately reminds us that the uncovering of the divine element within us discloses not divine but human happiness (anthrōpinen eudaimonia)-, which given the direction of EN, essentially translates to individual and collective political eudaimonia qua the divine (theion ti).

Keywords: Ethics, Eudaimonia, Psyche, Political Science, Meritorious citizens, Wisdom, divinity.
since politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the human good.


all knowledge and every pursuit aims at some good, what it is that we say political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action.


If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative, we have already said.


The object of our search is this—what is the commencement of movement in the soul? The answer is clear: as in the universe, so in the soul, God moves everything. For, in a sense, the divine element in us moves everything. The starting-point of reasoning is not reasoning, but something greater. What, then, could be greater even than knowledge and intellect but God?


**Introduction: Eudaimonia In Ethica Nichomachea**

Aristotle’s moral and political vision confirms the ancient conviction that *eudaimonia* presupposes the happiness of the individual but more-so concerns the flourishing of the city-state. The philosopher from Stagira makes clear that if individual happiness prevails, society fragments and the verity of political *eudaimonia* forever remains a bleak social possibility, an unrealized objective. Individual happiness, even if attained in a considerable measure, is insufficient because the genuinely happy individual best fulfills their destiny when promoting the welfare of humanity and existence.

Concerning our first encounters with the meaning of happiness, Aristotle highpoints those precious familial beings, our first intimate friends, who initially helped us realize we are political animals that love, and, who principally taught us the importance of giving and receiving love. After all, it is from the closeness of family relations that we first learn that our happiness is ultimately dependent on our capacity to love, surpassing ourselves for the sake of the happiness of others.

Remarkably, Aristotle dedicates *Ethica Nichomachea* (hereafter EN) to his most precious son Nichomachus, which incidentally was also the name of his father. This fact alone discloses that the Stagirite considers *ethica Philosophia* to be his other-most *prima* love for affirming *ab initio* the veracity of meaningful existence. Most appropriately, ethical philosophy highpoints Aristotle’s *prima* commitment conveys his dedication and first pledge to all that is valuable and precious in life. Moreover, what for him

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3 The conventional translation of *eudaimonia* favors the term ‘happiness.’ However, the terms ‘human flourishing’ or ‘flourishing existence’ seem more appropriate. For the sake of contextual clarity and the better appropriation of meaning, this paper makes interchangeable use of all the above terms.
might be more precious than the love for moral truth, which enjoins all spheres of epistemic knowledge, therefore, best grounds as well as potentiates the love for wisdom.

More than anything, EN, is an expression of Aristotle’s mature thinking. He ascertains that virtuous activity begets wisdom and happiness. It exemplifies precious moral knowledge that is the prerogative of meritorious citizens themselves to divulge those sound-minded denizens of the polis, outside the cloistered walls of the Academy and Lyceum.

Toward this end, Aristotle in EN establishes a method of education that seeks to make moral and political philosophy accessible to a competent body of citizens of high merit. This way, he envisions that virtuous activity will embed itself in society from within its own most structures. He anticipates that the exemplary life of citizens of quality will progressively unveil the inner power of knowledge, transforming the city-state’s political edifices and social realities from the bottom to the top. As such, the private and public life of the peoples will benefit immeasurably, gladdening their hearts with happiness and hope.

At the outset, it is essential to state that Aristotle’s approach to ethical and political issues diverges from that of Plato. To a certain extent, it is easy to trace his divergence. The Stagirite’s moral and political quests mature as his experience progressively ripens. As a young man, he studies in the Academy, his esteemed teacher’s political philosophy for years. There, he receives first-hand information about Plato’s harrowing involvement with Dionysius in Sicily. In turn, he establishes the Lyceum, where he accrues a lifetime of experience as a master teacher of philosophy. Moreover, he undoubtedly learns much from tutoring Alexander the Great.

On the above account, he decisively determines that it is best for philosophical activity not to emphasize the moral education of select political leaders endeavoring to transform them into philosopher-rulers. Rather, philosophy ought to extend its moral and political sphere of influence to meritorious householders and citizens of superior refinement, perhaps worthy politicians, to those beneficent civilians who already possess the insight to take heed of the powers of intelligible cognition (cf. 1095b22-1096a10).

Hence, Aristotle in EN foremost seeks to educate in the science of politics a broader audience of intellectually fertile citizens of quality, already embedded in the political affairs of the polis and intends to inspire them toward realizing a morally fulfilled and hence happier, individual and social existence. He sustains that the education of a larger group of meritorious citizens is what best frontwards moral transformation and, by extension, heights flourishing existence for the sake of the common good.4

As a whole, under the rubric of ethical reality, Aristotle’s moral philosophy succeeds in vigorously integrating the workings of cultural, sociological, psychological, aesthetic, scientific, political, philosophical, and theological dynamics. In this respect, moral truth constitutes the focal aim of his philosophic life, and eudaimonia or human happiness is the dynamic nexus that bids together and effectively unites the interconnected whole, at the heart of all fields of knowledge. As such, Aristotle in EN establishes eudaimonia to be the chief ethical aim of the process apex and telos of all human knowledge activity and endeavor.

The Stagirite’s unique appropriation of the all-inclusive meaning of happiness, in and of itself, discloses the magnitude of his spiritual genius at the root of ethical matters, and boldly reveals the greatness of his comprehension of the human predicament in its eternal search for eudemonic being and wellness. The ancient meaning of eudaimonia, being-well with one’s spirit (daimon), is apprehended anew in its political and scientific dimensions as that which amalgamates the diverse fields of epistemic truth, and integrates all aspects of human life and achievement, under the powers (dynamis) and activities (energeia) of arête—excellence—in the most comprehensive meaning of the term. In Aristotle, excellence bespeaks the cultivation of expanded philosophical activity that aims in actualizing social and

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4 A detailed exegesis concerning the reasons that led Aristotle to highlight the education of citizens of quality is clarified in forthcoming sections. Aristotle’s term for ‘citizens of quality’ is ‘citizens of superior refinement.’ This paper makes interchangeable use of both terms, as well as terms such as ‘citizens of superior merit,’ ‘meritorious citizens,’ or ‘citizens of high merit.’ Aristotle’s reference to ‘citizens of superior refinement’ applies to competent or meritorious householders, worthy politicians, and all citizens of quality.
political justice, for, in the end, it is the virtuous activity of justice that best realizes the human *ergon* ('function') of spreading-out flourishing existence. Among other things, nobility and justice establish genuine cooperation in all spheres of knowledge and action.

However, fundamental to the realization of justice and prevailing over it is the nobility of friendship. Just actions ensue for the sake of friendship. Aristotle in *EN* devotes two whole Books (VIII & IX) to illumine the nature of genuine friendship since he considers its benevolent activity assures the well-being of the community. Friendship is indispensable for the performance of acts of goodwill; it enhances the harmonious functioning of the social and political order. Beneficent friendship, therefore, founds the eudemonic concord of living well together. Loving than being loved uncovers the essence of friendship and the happy human that loves needs good friends in fortunate and unfortunate times. Above all, *philia*, or love in its ancient meaning, is most akin to what we cherish and love most—*eudaimonia*—to be happy and well with our spirit.

The all-encompassing human desire for well-being and happiness is what seems to constitute Aristotle’s psychological *factum brutum*. He understands *psychê* to be an ever-expansive *hylomorphic* ground of unlimited potential for perfecting the practice of excellence. The persistent cultivation of virtuous living leads to greater perfection of the soul, thereby, heightens the eudemonic realization of the individual, who, now-, progressively comes to apprehend that the superior meaning of *eudaimonia*, involves committing acts of goodwill that most benefit the advancement of society and the welfare of its peoples. Thus Aristotle ingeniously decrees that *eudaimonia* is *ipso facto* the ultimate *desideratum*, the complete and final good, the supreme source and cause of all good acts hence, the activity of goodness as such: the *summum bonum* of human life and accomplishment (1094a1–33, 1097b6–16, 1102a4).

*Ethica Nichomachea* has earned its place through the centuries as an immortal work of excellence that inspires every inquiring person, especially those exhibiting emotive and intellectual refinement. The ethical treatise is poignantly moving in its discourse; it touches and arouses our purest emotions because it opens the search for moral and political wisdom and evermore illumines the way to unfasten our own most desire for unpretentious felicity. After all, every human desire to better their life desires happiness, and above everything desires flourishing existence. Genuine human happiness is the aim and *raison d’être* of all our thoughts and actions. Thus *eudaimonia* is the *fundamentum inconcussum* (the unshakable foundation) of our existence.

However, curiously enough, this fundamental desire for the eudemonic way and life is foremostly subverted by our human confusion and ignorance. Irrational desires and instinctive drives frequently overshadow our being, urging us to achieve the enjoyment of eudemonic life through erroneous means, or, by miserly clinging to transitory pleasures. We fail to comprehensively bear in mind that genuine happiness is the final and intrinsic good of every value activity and life priority. Thus, discernment is indispensable, or else the mind’s power is muddled and obfuscated, misdirected, and scattered. On this, Aristotle is resolute. He repeatedly admonishes that the light of critical reason best disables and clears misperceptions, averts the prevalence of darkness. Otherwise, as *Philosophia perennis* cautious: *in absentia lucis, tenebrae vinctum*; in the absence (or better nonattendance) of light, darkness conquers.

Hence, the Stagirite, a sagacious observer of human dispositions, devotes substantive space in *Ethica Nichomachea* to elucidate the dangers that ensue from the inured movements of imprudent thoughts that befuddle the clear mind. Further, he debunks all habituations of unrestrained passions and tells of their bewildering hedonistic effects. He thus illumines the relative good conferred by all lowly desires and warns about the menaces of engrossing oneself in obsessive pleasures and excessive appetites. Moreover, if dark and compulsive desires arise within the soul, he decrees that they ought to be immediately confronted and checked by the powers of critical cognition, otherwise; they will lead with precision to the creation of additional needs and pointless attachments; or, even worse, they will embed in the soul unhealthy fixations and unfulfilled longings. Therefore, one must avoid disorienting desires, damaging cravings, unbecoming addictions, and vices of all sorts.

This way, Aristotle arduously illustrates the futility of all desires and pleasures dogged for their own sake and not for the sake of enduring happiness, and, in this respect, he discusses the vainness of desiring the possession of great wealth and the futility of harboring obsessions for power. More so, he
meticulously clarifies how the prevalence of misguided perceptions of pleasure may equate happiness with amusement and entertainment. He also takes space to impress the uselessness of seeking the conference of honor or praise.

His convincing philosophical analysis illuminates how critical thinking may frequently shun, even the kakodaimonia caused by the much coarser desires that often give way to destructive illnesses and brutish acts. At all turns, he clarifies that the moral dynamis of philosophical thinking forwards the best antidote to overcome senseless hindrances, disparaging affections, reproachful passions, and many afflicting conditions of psychē. Above all, he circumspectly recommends the cultivation of virtue and the acute activity of practical and analytical cognition as the most excellent remedy to almost all defilement.

An example will suffice to show how insightful, persuasive, and influential his philosophical analysis can be. He points out that the incontinent man is easily excitable and acts impetuously; however, incontinence is not his imperfection. His flaw is that he does not deliberate at all, and this becomes his nature with finality, but, in the end, he regrets because it brings him pain (1150b19-28). On the other hand, “the self-indulgent man,” ignoring his pangs of pain, bears “no regrets; […] he stands by his choice […]” (1150b29-30). Thus, Aristotle concludes: “[…] the self-indulgent man is incurable” but “the incontinent man curable” (1150b32-33).

Overall, a careful reading of EN offers the most excellent demonstration of how the self-cultivation of moral virtue coupled with the development of intellect enables free choice, unlocking ever more the moral power that inspires and potentiates the sincere student of ethics to embrace, the higher endowments of the eudemonic soul. Accordingly, the self-cultivation of the life of excellence (arête) is foundational at the root of the progressive improvement of character; and practicing the virtues involves exercising the critical application of self-correcting rationality, that, in the final analysis, is imperative for the advancement of profound philosophical activity.

In Book I.7, Aristotle defines eudaimonia as virtuous activity (arête) that exemplifies excellence in the human psychē. It is an internal good consisting of a multiplicity of virtues activated in conformity to the intelligible praxes and energeiai of psychē. In Book II.6, he elucidates that the completeness of all virtuous activities (energeiai kat’ arêten) must conform to choice-worthy acts of will (praxes kata boulesen), directed toward some internal good. Action is best when performed with proairesis—a conscious choice—following soul capacity (dynamis) in concurrence with circumstance. The good intention of acts of will and choice are the determinants of virtuous activity which effectively annuls irrational desire (improper orexis or epithymia), and at once exhibits a different order of desire directed toward euzoiā (living-well) and eupraxia (acting-well).

Most prominent in the soulful character of the phrōnimos is the life of eupratein (acting well and appropriately in accord with emotive and intellectual refinement: eunoia). Practical wisdom (phrōnesis) is inseparable from the cultivation of moral virtues such as courage, temperance, and justice. Furthermore, actualizing virtue, the mean between deficiency and excess, involves a constant striving toward perfection; therefore, “virtue makes the goal correct, and phrōnesis makes what leads to it correct” (1144a8-9). The anthrōpos eudaimōn is the phrōnimos, the person of quality that bears the right motive and makes proper choices about people’s things and objectives.

Aristotle decrees that eudaimonia is something desirable solely for itself; it cannot, therefore, be “one good thing among others.” Further, it cannot be more desirable by the least addition or an excess of goods; instead, it is always the most excellent and most desirable of all goods: it “is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action” (1097b18-21). Its self-sufficiency (autarkeia) stems from the realization that it is an end-in-itself, the highest of all goods, to teleioteron tōn agathōn. Mostly, “the end

5 Cf. Ethica Nichomachea, 1098b22; Ethica Eumenia, 1219b1. Primarily based on these references, scholars often contend that Aristotle equates eudaimonia with euzoiā (living well) and eupratein (acting well). Broadie thinks differently and seems to be right. Cf. Broadie, C., “Philosophical Introduction.” In Aristotle, The Nichomachean Ethics, tr. and hist. comm. C. Rowe, Phil. intro. S. Broadie (Oxford University Press, 2002), n. 286. If anything, the chief good of eudaimonia, ultimately, equates a blessed life (makariotes).
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aimed at is not knowledge but action” (1095a6); and it cannot be a state of mind which “may exist without producing any good result” (1099a1).

Above all, *eudaimonia* is virtuous activity (energeia kat’ arêten) in accord with psychê. However, ultimately, eudemonic virtue rises beyond “man’s own interests” (1141a29) is the realization of a blessed life (*makariotes*; 1152b). The *Makarios* human participates in something godlike, something divine, and it is that divine something (*theion ti*) that confers the quality of humanness, bequests unto the human its humanity. The blessed life founds the coherence between practical wisdom and the findings of intellect. It is a blessing when coherent praxis harmoniously coalesces with circumstance as the mean between deficiency and excess: manifesting the activity-of-virtue-itself (*to prakteon*).

Nevertheless, ultimately, eudemonic being is realized introspectively in the theoretic dimension of *nous*, especially in exalted *theoria* - contemplation for the sake of happiness (cf. Book X.7-8). In the fathomless contemplation of divinity, *Makarios* is the blessed human that delights in the most refined and most genuine expression of pleasure manifesting-itself as the best life. Hence, the *Makarios* enjoys (*chairein*) the chief good as an unimpeded manifestation of pleasure without condition or qualification (1152b).

However, no matter what, divine *theoria* in Aristotle is the contemplative source of philosophical wisdom it founds practical and intellectual virtue; and it is ontologically constitutive of moral, psychological, noetic, aesthetic, epistemic, political, and, metaphysical/theological, knowledge and acumen (cf. Book VI.3-6; X.6-8). Henceforth, the height of eudemonic realization is ultimately attained through the superior clarity of contemplative wisdom (*theoria*), wherein all fields of knowledge and life activities are unified and reconciled.

Nevertheless, Aristotle opens the philosophical possibility of an investigation into the sphere of ultimate human happiness *qua* contemplative wisdom only briefly and sparsely. He fleetingly addresses the pinnacle of eudemonic life in Book I.7 and then again, briefly picks-up the discussion toward the very end of the text (in Book X.6-8), where he also informs us that contemplative wisdom or *theoria* is superior to *phrônêsis* (practical wisdom). Be as it may, we will explore his claim of an existing hierarchical relation between practical and contemplative wisdom in the last section of this paper.

For now, it suffices to say that in the final analysis, the Stagirite extensively prioritizes moral excellence or practical wisdom over contemplative *theoria*. Hence, the bulk of his ethical treatise (eight out of ten Books) addresses matters concerning *phrônêsis*. The highest contemplative realizations of philosophic wisdom are secondary to the primary intention of the text. Aristotle’s aim in writing his ethical treatise seems to be more definitive than comprehensive; he primarily seeks to communicate a new method of bestowing practical and political virtue unto culture and society at large.

Hence, *EN* primarily lights up the education of citizens of superior refinement in practical wisdom and intellectual virtue. Indeed, to complete the discourse on intellectual virtue, Aristotle briefly discusses the pinnacle of philosophical wisdom. However, in effect, the primary motif throughout the text concerns the advancement of citizens of quality in the ethical way and life. He considers their development in moral knowledge indispensable for the requisite cultural transformation, which bestows social cohesion, harmony, and justice in the city-state’s civic and political affairs. Effectually, their unswerving improvement in matters of virtue presents Aristotle’s novel way to tackle the age-old problem of how philosophical and moral activity may best bring transformation to the social beliefs and political institutions of government.

Now, the primary aim of the present inquiry is to disseminate Aristotle’s mature work in ethics, making his beautiful vision of *eudaimonia* more accessible to the general public. After engaging this paper, the reader shall attain sufficient background and confidence that hopefully will stimulate and encourage them to tackle Aristotle’s rare manuscript.

Concurrently, this paper should be of interest to the specialist is an original interpretation of Aristotle’s divinely inspired vision of political *eudaimonia* in *Ethica Nikomachea*. It endeavors to delve

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6 The nature of intellectual virtue or the meaning of cultivating the life of the mind in *EN* is clarified in forthcoming sections.
and search for the unspoken ideas those undisclosed thoughts in-between the lines of the Stagirite’s manuscript, unveil and expose through silent, and uncharted spaces, forces that first ignited the architectonics of his moral and political vision, dispensing its diachronic power and sway. Aside from being an adept of logic and theoretical reason of the highest caliber, there is an untold poetics of ethos and being in Aristotle that seems to be rarely spotted and more infrequently put in the script, yet stands-out in the empty spaces wherever words cannot.

Comparable to Confucius, though differently, there is a unique earthy, mystical bent in the Stagirite, mysticism subtle and expansive it remains invisible passing, unnoticed. He wants to conjoin and absolve the most theoretical and philosophical within the most effective and practical, the most insightful within the ordinary and prosaic, the highest divinity within the most humane. It all culminates in untold love for humanity and the earth, a friendship that knows no bounds. His splendor reaches out and befriends embraces and touches everything, freeing the all within the all, this majesty; the present inquiry seeks to lay bare.

Every section of this exploration, including the above introduction, constitutes a unified part within an integrated whole. A dialectical relationship prevails between all sections in a forward and backward movement. Each elucidates a critical aspect of Aristotle’s vision in EN, clarifying central concepts and ideas vital to his moral and political philosophy. Significant ideas comprising his ethical thinking developed in one section are picked-up and expounded in other sections, finding their rightful place within an interdependent whole of parts.

Epigrammatically, the paper explores Aristotle’s overarching critique of Socrates’ and Plato’s moral and political philosophy. Being the primary heir of Socrates’ and Plato’s ethics, Aristotle in EN rethink the ground and moral effects of political philosophy anew. Thus his eudemonic vision is uniquely driven by the pathos to succeed wherever his wise predecessors were unsuccessful. The ensuing exploration discloses central aspects of Aristotle’s magnanimous vision of educating citizens of refinement in the science of politics for the sake of a flourishing politeia. Finally, the present inquiry illuminates and reconciles the practical and theoretic dimensions of his exquisite appropriation of flourishing, political existence qua the divine. Straightaway, let us briefly explore the common ethical ground of eudaimonia in classical Greek philosophy.

**Eudaimonia Arête And Divine Realization: The Common Ground Of Classical Greek Philosophy**

The sustained inquiry of the great pillars of classical Greek philosophy, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, constitutes an investigation of the deeper recesses of psychē and nous. In one way or another, their contemplative inquiry establishes that the divine dwelling in the depths of the human soul is the source of the clear-light of nous. In other words, the unending practice and appropriation of virtue—the life of moral excellence—holds the key to unlocking the un-obscured magnificence of nous; and arête is what ultimately enables the disclosure of indwelling divinity: eudaimonia as such. In effect, eudaimonia qua the realization of arête, and divinity prevails all through ancient Greek thinking.

In this exalted sense, philosophical activity in classical philosophy bespeaks, sustained moral and intellectual inquiry aiming to appropriate the divine sphere within, the constant search that evermore recovers soul-perfection: excellence par excellence.7 The divine nous effectively discloses itself as the

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7 Cf. Michaelides, P., “Ethics and the Divine: Inflections of Otherness in Socrates,” *Phronimon* 9 (1, 2008), 57-76; Chang, K. C., “Plato’s Beautiful in the Symposium versus Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover in the Metaphysics,” *Quarterly* 52 (2002), 431-46; Sedley, D., “The Ideal of godliness in Plato.” In *Plato: Ethics Politics Religion and the Soul*, ed. G. Fine (Oxford University Press, 1999), 309-328. In essence, the life of excellence (arête) in all classical Greek ethical philosophy culminates in the attainment of eudemonic being, equivocating likeness to the divine to the highest possible degree. In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates orders his life and actions in alignment to divine daimōnion, his customary sign (40c2) involuntarily sent to him by o theos (the god) since childhood—Ek paidos (40b1); a negative sign that arrests his actions when he is about to act in a wrong way (31d3-4, 40c1-2). According to Socrates, the examined life of virtue leads to attunement to theos and eudaimonia. Likewise, in Plato, philosophy aims to attain likeness to god to the highest possible degree unequivocally (cf. *Theatetus* 176b; *Timaeus* 90a-d). In
best and highest element of the human psyche, the noblest part in our inmost depths that self-mirrors and mitigates the emotive and cognitive powers of theon ti—of something more significant and divine—through which philosophic activity steadfastly establishes excellence in both the private and public spheres.

The ethos of eudaimonia in classical philosophy betokens the full moral and spiritual transformation of self in accord to the ontological economy of divine intelligence upon which all flourishing, philosophic epistemic societal and civic is dependent. The divine nature and order of moral and intellectual wisdom realized by the Sophos of classical times; entirely calls him to realize the supreme good of flourishing human existence by dedicating his life to the service of society at large.

On the one hand, classical philosophers understood human happiness to exhibit the flourishing of virtuous activity intelligence and wisdom in the individual. On the other, they realized the completion of the moral and philosophical way and life manifested best in unswerving service toward the well-being of social existence. Hence, the activity of philosophic wisdom in classical philosophy highlights selfless service to public life and devotion to the common good. The ontological realization of psyche necessarily drives the individual to dedicate human flourishing to transforming the moral, social, intellectual, and religious structures and beliefs of the polis.

Hence, classical philosophy marshals that the nature of the ennobled soul yields to human and divine activity that potentially ushers flourishing existence in all spheres of human action. In effect, the completion stages of the philosophic way of life require the return of the philosopher sage—the par excellence light bearer—back to the cave of sorrows of political misgivings and illusory existence to forward the par example transformation of social and political beliefs and traditions.

Eudaimonia manifesting itself in the soul aligns psyche to the divine order of activity. Potentiated by divinity and the manifestation of the happy human existence, the soul is empowered to forbear and overcome common contingencies, advancing moral excellence and knowledge in all domains of cultural and political life. It is in this light that the spiritual genius of classical Greek philosophy establishes that the supreme good of eudaimonia fulfills the intertwined relation that holds between philosophical thinking and the activity of ethical, psychological, political as well as theological knowledge and wisdom.

In Greek thinking from Socrates to Aristotle, only the crowing way and life of the Sophos potentially ensouls the highest contemplative arête of wisdom: the human-divine realization of eudaimonia in its fullest sense. The Sophos is the person of supreme refinement who apprehends the entangled relation holding between knowledge, being, and ethos. He is the elevated human in whom the divine activity is blossoming, the person interminably working for the flourishing of culture, both individual and collective. Evermore, the Sophos unceasingly refines the perfection of psyche and nous through the creation of new
forms in philosophy art politics and science, forms which coalesce with the inner apprehension of divinity and cohere with the highest ethics of eudemonic being: nobility, beauty, prudence, truth, and justice.

For the philosopher-sage, the successful procuring of wealth or the achievement of any prosperity does not equivocate human flourishing. Thus philosophical activity in classical antiquity eschews and, at every turn, debunks the bestial and coarser types of transitory pleasures. In effect, egoistic intention and ill-directed desire spurns and veils long-lasting happiness. Hence, ancient philosophical acumen apprehends eudemonic being through the avoidance of an action-based self-centered moral life that values ‘doing’ or ‘what ought to be done’ for personal self-satisfaction and gratification. Rather eudaimonia in classical thinking surpasses by far egoistic or narcissistic tendencies. It grounds the way of arête advances complete moral and spiritual conversion in the life of the individual.

But verily! The stakes placed by the three spiritual pillars of antiquity are extraordinarily high. The realization of the supreme Agathon seems to be reserved only for a few exceptional philosophers of high caliber or for heroic persons of towering achievement. Individuals, that in one way or another, have unwaveringly undertaken the intense inquiry towards uncovering the source of the interior movement of divine nous——, that emotive intelligence moving the light of the natural world and shedding light on all spheres of human life and activity.

Precisely, the scarcity of wisdom-bearers drives Aristotle to discern a way that promises to make eudemonic being accessible to a larger body of competent citizens of merit, whose advancement in amplitude and excellence might benefit the social order as a whole. Though his moral philosophy prioritizes the education of meritorious citizens in matters of practical wisdom and the intellectual investigation of political science, it concurrently leaves open the attainment of supreme eudemonic realization qua contemplative theoria for those few, ultimately determined, passionately aspiring students of philosophy capable of attaining greater integration.

Aristotle’s Overarching Critique Of Socrates’ And Plato’s Moral & Political Philosophy

In Ethica Nichomachea (and his other ethical works11), Aristotle recognizes the ontological priority of the divine and explicitly affirms the capacity of theoretical reason to investigate philosophical truth. Nevertheless, his moral philosophy espouses above all the practical necessity of inaugurating virtue in the politeia. In this direction, EN primarily advances an inimitable recommendation advocating the city-state’s moral, cultural, and social transformation.

The ethical treatise was not a manuscript intended to be exclusive, read-only by the students of the Lyceum. Primarily, Aristotle addresses meritorious householders and citizens of superior refinement already capable of absorbing the way, and life of excellence seeks to deepen their moral and intellectual appropriation of arête through education in political science.12 The priority of his educative intent is to enable citizens of quality to enhance their understanding of virtuous activity and expand their knowledge of statesmanship; thereby, empower them to decipher and resolve everyday exigencies of political life prudently. He seeks to ethicize the city state’s social and civil activities by promoting an education that will improve the legislative constitution of government. Thus, EN valorizes the cultivation of exemplary virtuous activity forwards, innovative ways to ensure the democratic transformation of governing institutions.

12 According to Aristotle, the discipline of ethics is a constitutive part of political science. Like ethics, political science investigates the nature of “noble and just actions” (1094b15) as well as the highest good of eudemonic being; however it does so in the broader context of the city-state’s political affairs. Furthermore, in its investigations, the science of “politics” involves “the rest of the sciences” (1094b4).
Most importantly, Aristotle’s moral philosophy prioritizing the study of *phrōnēsis*\(^{13}\) and the appropriation of intellectual virtue\(^{14}\) advances cogent political education that aims to convincingly activate the perspicacity of meritorious citizens by provoking them to foremostly establish exemplary virtuous activity in the *polis* by their honorable conduct. It is of the essence that the practical and intellectual activity of citizens of high merit bears the marks of excellence. They will eventually uphold justice by inaugurating laws that are impartial, equitable, honest, and upright.

Besides affirming intellectual cultivation in every epistemic domain, Aristotle valorizes philosophical study in matters of justice, emphasizing the upright applicability of the law. Hence, calls on citizens of quality to advance their moral understanding through persistent intellectual development in the ethics of statesmanship a critical aspect of the science of politics. Meritorious citizens ought to preserve the letter and spirit of the law overseeing it best serves the *politeia*.\(^{15}\) Thus, their ever-evolving virtuous activity will amplify the people’s confidence, ensuring the overall welfare of the *polis*.

Indeed, Aristotle’s approach to the question of excellence differs in method from that of Socrates and Plato. For him, the study of *phrōnēsis* concerns the persistent cultivation of moral virtue; however, to attain practical wisdom entails the possession of all the virtues and not only one virtue, for instance, justice. Put otherwise, to realize practical wisdom means to attain full wisdom entails complete and not partial understanding. The fullness of virtue requires moral objectivity, which translates to objective understanding in accord with theoretic ontology.\(^{16}\) As such, the *phrōnimos* is the wise person who has

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\(^{13}\) It is important to note that since practical wisdom presupposes the *phrōnimos* exhibits exemplary virtuous activity, the meritorious householders and citizens of superior refinement that Aristotle’s ethical treatise addresses are not *phrōnimoi* in actuality. However, because they have already received schooling in ethical conduct, they possess the capacity to become wise in matters of moral virtue; thus, they are *phrōnimoi* potentially. For this reason, Aristotle seeks to inculcate in citizens of superior refinement the necessity for persistent cultivation of moral virtue, and it goes without saying that the closer they come to attaining practical wisdom, the more their virtuous activity becomes exemplary.

\(^{14}\) For now, it suffices to say that intellectual virtue concerns the mind’s theoretic activity to contemplate first principles and the highest objects of truth. In contradistinction, practical intellect (part of *phrōnēsis*) concerns the intellectual investigation of moral truth (thus concerns the appropriation of virtuous conduct).

\(^{15}\) According to Aristotle, citizens of higher merit ought to be the lawgivers. For him, the law or *nomos* concerns convention. However, the mandate of a just *politeia* decrees the convention of the laws is honorable, in accord with virtue. Nevertheless, convention enshrined in law does not necessarily imply that the law is noble or just (1094b). This, because convention (or the letter of the law), represents a specific need for a law to assure right action (1133a), whereas, nobility and justice (the spirit of the law), concerns the nature of virtue itself. Henceforth, the nature of nobility-itself and justice-itself differs from what they represent by the convention of law, which essentially is a representation of their nature. According to Aristotle, the *ousia* or nature of virtue, or justice, which is a virtue, entails the objective understanding of virtue-itself *qua* being. The nature of any particular thing determines the objective understanding of what-the-thing-itself-is in accordance to the ontological appropriation of contemplative or intuitive *nous*. Thus, the noetic appropriation of the nature of virtue does not constitute a universal; instead, it is an objective understanding of the particular thing’s nature. Hence, Aristotle rejects universality but affirms the objective understanding of particularity. We will elucidate Aristotle’s meaning of ‘objective understanding’ in a moment.

\(^{16}\) Concerning the objective understanding of virtue, it is essential to note that in Aristotle, the objectivity of virtue rules out subjective understanding, a view that is very difficult for the modern person to comprehend. However, the Stagirite concedes that subjective appropriation is not in accord with highest objective understanding, because subjectivity is not ontologically grounded; therefore, it expresses the naïve perception of commonly held opinions or judgments about the nature of things or virtue (cf. Book VI.11). Alternatively, subjectivity is the result of varying cultural appropriations of *arête* based on conventional beliefs, as might be held by the mass culture of different peoples or city-states (cf. Book I.3). For Aristotle, opinion, judgment, and belief may be right or wrong, whereas; the ontological appropriation of virtue transcends falsity; it is objectively true; is *gnosis*. Contrary to the common understanding of *arête* as opinion or judgment, Aristotle pursues the ontological appropriation of practical and philosophic wisdom, which, above all, manifests itself as exemplary virtuous activity *qua* being. In differing ways, both Socrates and Plato reject subjectivity as a lower form of apprehension. A more detailed elucidation of this topic is beyond the present scope. For the ancient conception of *eudaimonia* against the prevailing modern subjectivist theory of happiness, see Haybron, D. M., “Two philosophical problems in the study of happiness,” *Journal of*
cultivated the moral virtues and therefore acts with moral objectivity—in concurrence with the theoretic apprehension of being: the ontology of reason (1144b). It is odd because if one is wise in one of the virtues, it means that they are wise in all of them. However, Aristotle’s understanding differs from Socrates’ unity of virtue theory, and Plato’s form of the Good - unifying all forms of beauty and virtue. For the Stagirite, the ontology of virtue does not equivocate a universal understanding of the meaning of virtue as in Socrates, nor presupposes an intellectual flight to the form of all forms as in Plato, instead involves the ontological appropriation of practical and theoretic wisdom, which, above all, manifests itself as exemplary virtuous activity qua being and particularity.

Regarding Socrates, Aristotle finds his dialogical inquiries concerning the universal nature and defining characteristics of arête antithetical to his more practical approach in establishing a flourishing politeia through the exemplary virtuous activity of meritorious citizens. For one thing, the exemplification of virtue by citizens of quality is primarily founded on objective understanding based on both their individual experience in matters of practical wisdom, and the noetic appropriation of the meaning of virtue qua particularity, and not qua universality.

Moreover, Socrates thinks it is implausible for one to teach virtue. However, Aristotle contra Socrates ascertains that practice makes perfect; and since arête concerns practice, one may introduce an effective practical method to advance the cultivation of virtue. Most importantly, since the Stagirite considers that practice makes perfect, one may practice teaching virtue by personal example. Hence, exemplary virtuous activity constitutes the best way to teach the ways of excellence. However, to this, we shall return in a moment.

In the final analysis, Aristotle contends that Socrates’ method goes the roundabout way of first defining the characteristics of virtue—realizing thus its ultimate or universal meaning—in order to establish it in practice. However, Aristotle denies the universality of virtue. He rather affirms the objective understanding of the specific activity of a virtuous act (praxis kat’ arête). In other words, an instantiated virtuous act is what discloses the objective meaning of arête. Of course, he acknowledges that universals are necessary for thinking; in effect, reasoning presupposes them. For instance, in scientific thinking, which seeks demonstrable truth, induction presupposes universals, and universals are the starting point of deduction (1139b14-36). In effect, the science of politics makes use of universals partly.

Aristotle contends that the soul investigates truth through practical wisdom, intuitive reason, and philosophical wisdom (1139b15-18), which are the three primary ways of examining the nature of reality comprising political science (cf. Book VI.5-8). These three forms of investigating do not exclusively make use of universals; instead, they involve interconnected ways of appropriating truth based on objective understanding; and ultimately, individual development and personal experience inform the objectivity of understanding, ontologically. As such, the three modes of investigating truth find their ontologically unified existence in the actualization of phrōnesis, which is practical wisdom reified by the salient and persistent cultivation of intellectual virtue, culminating in exemplary virtuous activity. Before returning to Aristotle’s critique of Socrates’ search for the universal meaning of virtue, let us briefly examine the Stagirite’s three interrelated ways the soul investigates truth according to political science.

In his words, “practical wisdom” is not “concerned with universals only—it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars.” Thus the persons who know best what to do “are more practical” they “have experience” (1141b15-19). Continuing, he clarifies that “practical wisdom is concerned with action” (1141b22). Moreover, it has nothing to do with the investigation of scientific truth, which concerns itself with necessary and demonstrable knowledge. However, neither does intuitive reason that grasps through intuitive intellect (nous) the first principles upon which science bases its investigations (cf. Book VI.6). Now, partly demonstrable is the knowledge of philosophic wisdom which investigates the ultimate nature of things objectively, the truth of thought.
Aristotle’s Vision of Political Eudaimonia Qua the Divine in Ethica Nikomachea

and being as a whole; “[…] since man is not the best thing in the world” (1141a22). A few lines down, he elucidates: “[…] philosophic wisdom is scientific knowledge, combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are highest by nature” (1141b2-3).

Hence, philosophic wisdom investigating the highest nature of things makes use of universals partly; its investigation of universals combines with science and joins with both intuitive reason and practical wisdom (cf. Book VI.5-8) for the sake of disclosing the nature of arête through particular virtuous actions. In effect, as previously stated, the aim of political science involves the investigation of the instantiated nature of “noble and just actions” (1094b15). Thus what virtue in-itself objectively is, can neither be ultimately defined or understood through demonstrable scientific truth nor the philosophic search for its universal meaning. It is exemplary virtuous activity qua particularity that discloses the meaning of virtue.

Returning to Socrates, Aristotle concedes that his searches for the universal appropriation of virtue, such as the virtue of justice, lack objective understanding since practical wisdom—co-emerging with intuitive nous—is based on individual experience and the particularities of circumstance can never be universal. Issues of justice must principally take into account instantiated just actions, and this involves a thorough examination of individual intentions situated circumstances and contextual particularities. Hence, Aristotle denies the universality of virtue but affirms the objective understanding of “noble and just actions,” appropriated qua individual experience and the noetic investigation of circumstance, and being.

Socrates’ dialectical method shows that all positive assertions concerning the ultimate meaning of virtue fall short of universal appropriation. However, his searches for a universal definition of virtue disregard instantiated virtuous actions. Hence, Aristotle determines the search for the universal constitutes a flight of contemplative thought that steps away from the particularity of experience. Despite the merit and greatness of Socrates’ dialogical endeavors, all he can accomplish is to lead his interlocutors into contradiction; thereby, demonstrate to them that they cannot define the universal characteristics of virtue. Of course, as we will see below, even Socrates cannot say what justice is. Conceivably, we may always be under the catch of Socratic irony.

Now, in Republic I, which notably, scholars widely consider Book I to be one of the texts closer to the teaching of the historical Socrates; Plato has his teacher elucidate to Thrasymachus that the best human accomplishments are those performed in concurrence with virtue and justice (dikaios). Hence, Socrates goes on to say, the just are those who live well (eu zein); they are blessed (makarioi) and happy (eudaimones), whereas those who are unjust are wretched (352d7-354c3). Of course, Socrates’ irony, indeed the paradoxical wisdom of the immortal sage of antiquity, is disclosed at the end of Book I, when he says: “[…] as far as I am concerned, is that I know nothing, for when I do not know what justice is, I will hardly know whether it is a kind of virtue or not, or whether a person who has it is happy or unhappy” (354c1-3). How can this most profound Socratic admission, or the fact that Thrasymachus learned that the just are eudaimones, whereas the unjust are wretched, transform the conditions of his way and life, or for that matter the life of any other unmeritorious person like him?

Nonetheless, as many scholars have shown, Socrates’ method cleanses his interlocutors of hubris. This aspect of practicing his philosophical vocation is critical. However, without overlooking its importance, it appears doubtful that this alone is powerful enough ever to transform the lives of his converses or cajole them into embracing the life of virtue. Moreover, it seems that Socrates’ philosophical activity in the polis created more enemies than friends. Besides, it does not seem to have affected much the political affairs of the city-state and certainly had little or no effect on the constitution of government. 17

17 Of course, Socrates certainly had a profound effect on Plato, Aeschines, Antisthenes, Xenophon, Critias, Glauccon, Phaedrus, Crito, Phaedo, Aristippus, and many of the other close associates or disciples who belonged to the inner circle of the philosopher-sage. Most importantly, mainly through Plato’s most compelling contribution, Socrates’ philosophical activity initiated the whole history of western philosophy; and had a high impact on the practice of Philosophia as such.
Similarly, Aristotle consummately rejects Plato’s heavenly world of unchanging universal forms and, consequently, is astutely critical of political excellence involving or equivocating resolute ascend to the world of ideas. For Plato, like Aristotle, the goodness of a thing, or its virtue, is divulged through understanding its specific nature. However, for the former thinker, the specificity of the thing is a phantasmagoria—an imitation—virtually a fall from the eternal world of forms. In the final analysis, therefore, Plato’s theory of ideas unearths the intrinsic value of a thing, its goodness or virtue, from its specific nature. Thus, Plato delegates the nature of the thing itself outside its specificity. Whereas, in Aristotle, the nature (ousia) of a specific thing, its virtue or intrinsic value, is its particular activity; it is the precise instantiated movement of the thing that discloses its telos. But otherwise, the virtue or goodness of a specific thing is the instantiated activity of its nature. Solely in the human context, the activity of virtue enshrines the specificity of praxis, which tantamounts the embodiment of excellence as an exemplary virtuous activity.

As such, Aristotle contra Plato’s essentialist metaphysical dualism contends that matters of knowledge and excellence are not dependent on ideation, or else on the remembrance (anamnēsis) of apriori perfect and eternal forms. Rather, virtuous activity best blossoms posteriorly (a posteriori) over time through self-realized practice. It is affirmed and enhanced by steadfast conviction stemming from the critical application of self-correcting cognition that consistently addresses and resolves the exigencies of circumstance. Thus, praxis, in and as excellence, confirms virtuous activity. When applying decorous or better suitable, cognitive, and emotive responses to situated experience over time, the self-arising of phrōnesis spontaneously shines-forth in and as the cultivated individual.

This way, Aristotle finds that Socrates’ dialogical investigations into the meaning of virtue, and the ontological duality of Plato’s essentialist metaphysics, tantamount to placing undue emphasis on the actualization of the theoretical. He contends that both Socrates’ universalizing of virtue and Plato’s theory of perfect archetypal essences are metaphysical positions that decontextualize the practice of excellence from particularity and the historicity of circumstance. Both positions, in differing ways, favor a top-down approach that overvalues theory and, consequently, devalues instantiated reflection upon the surrounding environment, the idiosyncrasy of context, and situational conditions. In endeavoring to effect a political transformation from above, the Socratic and Platonic moral approaches consequently undervalue the cultivation of virtue in everyday practice; therefore, they fail to address the exigencies of political life at hand successfully.

In contradistinction, Aristotle’s method strives to combat the rampant injustices that plague the political affairs of the polis by confronting each particular case on an equitable approach; therefore, he seeks to modify the most prudent response to each exigency at hand in accord to the specificity of circumstance. For instance, in matters of conventional moral truth, laws will be fair if modified in

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18 Of course, it is essential to note, that for Aristotle, the state (and properties) of natural things qualitatively differ from the moral dispositions and virtuous states of humans. Regarding eudaimonia, as Miller points out, “there is a morally best state for humans to be in, Aristotle holds, which is determined by the special or unique function [ergon] of humans” (my brackets). Cf. Miller, J., “Introduction.” In Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics – A Critical Guide, op. Cit. 9, 1-20, 12; also, see Heinamen, R., ed., Aristotle and Moral Realism (University College London Press, 1995).

19 For Aristotle, the nature (or the ousia) of a particular thing, is its ergon (or function). Therefore, the end (or telos) to which the thing tends is its activity or specific nature. Hence, its activity is what determines the thing’s virtue (its intrinsic value or goodness). In this respect, the intrinsic value of a specific thing is the instantiated activity of its nature.

20 Cf. Moran, J., “Aristotle on Eudaimonia (‘Happiness’),” Think 48, (17, 2018), 91-99, 92. Moran explains well the Aristotelian meaning of human ergon (function). “According to Aristotle,” Moran says, “eudaimonia is activity that engages and displays excellence that is characteristic of a human being. The greatest happiness is achieved by the man who performs the activity that displays the greatest excellence.” Continuing, he says: “What is the activity that displays the greatest excellence characteristic of a human being? It is an activity that a human being alone performs or a human being better than anything else performs. What a thing or person alone does or does better than anything else is its/his FUNCTION (ergon).” For Aristotle, the highest ergon of a human being is the supreme attainment of eudemonic being.
concord with circumstance; thus, the law ought to enable one to treat injustice differently, if performed voluntarily or under coercion.

Surely, Aristotle understands that victory is hard to come; hence, he unfalteringly summons the ontological power of theoretical reason to combat the wretchedness infesting civic life and the judicial foundations of the polis. Nevertheless, above all, he knows that his quest against the evils and varied tribulations at the root of political life will be inundated with success only if his method rallies for exemplary virtuous activity; it is an uncompromising method supported on a robust and resilient footing. Of course, the groundwork had been laid with the call for meritorious citizens to assiduously perfect the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtue. However, it is the call to realize an objective understanding of virtue that founds the robustness and resilience of his method. Objectivity and praxis conjoin in and as the emergence of exemplary virtuous activity qua realization of being as such. Therefore, moral truth bears the ontological conviction arising from sustained contemplation on the nature of noble acts of justice, which cohere with a careful reflection on prior experience and deliberation upon the ever-changing circumstance.

What above all legitimates Aristotle’s farsighted vision for the restoration of justice in the politeia, in comparison to the moral and political philosophy of Socrates and Plato, is precisely his call on citizens of higher merit to unwaveringly cultivate practical wisdom by exercising judicious choice in conformity to the exigencies of circumstance. Thus, the apprehension of justice is empowered, establishing its objective outcomes qua phrónesis—the ontological grounding of virtuous activity—that unifies and augments the cumulative understanding of arête with the workings of theoretical or contemplative insight in political science.21

Hence, Aristotle’s method evermore achieves a harmonious integration between praxis and theoria. His ethical approach juxtaposing the practical and theoretical cultivation of virtue, best serves competent citizens to pursue the development of nous in the direction of enhancing citizenship and civil responsibility qua exemplary virtuous activity. Performing “noble and just actions” (1094b15) solely for the sake of the acts themselves and the sake of eudaimonia will, therefore, ground the objective understanding of the nature of justice, thereby; exemplary virtuous activity shall evermore permeate the governing institutions of the polis, aligning the convention of law with virtue, solely for the betterment of social and political existence as a whole.

Granted, Aristotle is the heir of Socrates’ and Plato’s moral and political philosophy. However, his proficient ethical acumen in EN and elsewhere incisively poses a challenge to his wise predecessors’ moral and political philosophy. Although these towering philosopher-sages of classical antiquity were sincerely devoted to the city-state’s moral transformation, their method seemed to have failed in achieving the desired effects.

On the one hand, Socrates’ excellent yet lonesome example of a philosopher sage dialogically inquiring into the defining qualities and universal meaning of virtue, initially with the so-called wise of his day and in turn with every possible citizen, proved inadequate to bring lasting moral and spiritual transformation to the beliefs, affairs, and institutions of the polis. In effect, his politics of gadfly coaxing every citizen in Athens to live a virtuous life by taking care of the soul initiated more reactions than good results.

On the other hand, Plato’s insistence on the wholesome education of a philosopher-king bearing all the archetypal qualities of a just political ruler proved impractical untenable, infeasible. Furthermore, Plato’s coordinated academic program aiming to educate a few select or charismatic students to engage more profound philosophical studies seemed to be fundamentally lacking. In the final analysis, it is unsustainable to believe or expect that the possible privileged education of a select few, cultured and perhaps wise contemplative philosophers in the sheltered environment of the Academy, might ever effectively succeed to address, confront and transform, the two greatest trepidations infesting the affairs of the polis: firstly, the uncouth corrupt and damaging habituations of politicians; and secondly, the disorienting and unbridled desires afflicting the masses of uneducated citizens for nigh a long time.

21 On the relations between practical wisdom and political science, see Book VI.8.
The search for a practical solution to these two most urgent and puzzling concerns is what foremost governs Aristotle’s moral and political quests in *Ethica Nichomachea*. Both trepidations primarily revolve around two fiery and interlocked focal questions: (a) how to halt the exploitation bribery and dishonesty permeating politicians and the institutions of the city-state?; and (b) how to bring enduring transformation to the extensive *kakodaimonia* abounding in the *polis* due to the unruly unlawful and disruptive desires dominating the masses?

Bearing these concerns in mind, Aristotle ascertains that persistent cultivation of excellence through moral virtue and exemplary intellectual activity is the way to combat the ills plaguing the *polis*. He finds that the best way to cultivate *arête* becomes a matter of moral and philosophical education that solicits all the sciences to enhance the critical cultivation of *nous*, to serve best the civil constitution of government and the governmental affairs of the city-state. Therefore, Aristotle sets out in *EN* to establish the moral and political education of competent citizens of quality, whose good example may best potentiate successful social cultural and political transformation. He contends that when an increasing number of refined and well-educated citizens exemplify beneficent *arête*, it is only a matter of time for the cumulative outcomes of their flourishing existence to overflow in the social environment, transforming the moral predicament of culture, its beliefs, and conventions, traditions, and institutions.

According to Aristotle, insight is heartfelt only when it directly arises from the vestiges of practical wisdom. After that, the unifying ontological power of *nous* bearing offshoots of fruitful exemplary practice is capable of transforming unjust and wretched forms of institutionalized life, thereby improving the living conditions of the peoples. Such a stance neither implies realism nor pragmatism. The magnanimity of Aristotle’s vision is more complicated than the application of common or pragmatic sense, which often obscured by defilements, opinions, and false judgments, does not in the least make sense, nor appears ‘common,’ nor serves the common good. The Stagirite wholeheartedly recognizes that the ordinary human lives a mimetic and unexamined life repetitively follows the unreflective example of the many *(hoi polloi)*. Therefore, it is only natural for this kind of person to continue faring well, perpetuating everydayness, rather than attempting to understand the perhaps superior, however, surely *atopos* insight of an illumined and radiant wise person: whose vision differs by far from a familiar lot of humans.

Thus, only a small circle of charismatic students will evince interest in the teachings and advanced thinking methods of a wise odd-ball like Socrates, or a confounding systematic philosopher like Plato. Above all, Aristotle recognizes that it is impractical, even implausible, to expect the uneducated and unreflective person—or else the quasi educated know it all corrupt politician, he, who cares solely for wealth, power, and undeserved honor—to act in accord with virtue. More-so, to emulate the unusual example of a philosopher that questions reality itself, and who often makes unrivaled even strange claims concerning the nature of the purportedly good life.

Besides, the unreflective human and the cunning politician reckon that there is no guarantee that they will attain genuine happiness and wisdom even if s/he attempts to practice the evermore challenging ways of a ‘so-called’ wise sage. In effect, the fear of failure and disappointment seem to dominate and, in turn, dissuade or avert the unreflective person from purposely examining and objectively assessing the exemplary, yet shockingly trying way of a genuinely wise-one. In the final analysis, the so-called common folk, but more so the shrewd and calculating politicians, justify their uncultivated ways alleging that it is not their lot to become wise; after all, only a few humans accomplish such fit.\(^\text{22}\)

\(^{22}\) The same line of justification most often holds when unreflective humans witness the excellent example of citizens who are under the tutelage of a teacher or the aegis of a particular philosophical school of thought. Of course, the influence of a school of philosophy on society and culture in the ancient world was extensive. Notwithstanding, the impact of no school, including Plato’s Academy and Aristotle’s Lyceum, was ever sufficient to transform the social and political beliefs norms and institutions of the city-state. Neither was Socrates’ inner circle of disciples able to accomplish such fit. In effect, Aristotle’s purpose in *EN* was to enhance the philosophical acumen and political education of a larger body of meritorious citizens already embedded in society who did not belong under the aegis of any teacher or established school of philosophy. This way, he hoped that an extended body of citizens of quality would, in time, be capable of bringing great moral transformation to the cultural and social
Unambiguously, Aristotle realized from his personal experience and extensive tutelage under Plato, that to follow the trails of philosophic wisdom demands steadfast determination and entails an unqualified commitment to radical changes in ways of life. Bearing this in mind, he sought to efficaciously activate citizens of superior refinement who would otherwise remain silent and inactive. His is indeed a most vital and practical civil approach toward transformative change. In seeking to enhance the education of meritorious citizens in matters of practical and intellectual virtue, he successfully undertook the moral challenge of bringing philosophical activity to the earthly spheres to confront with exemplary civility, the most pressing historical exigencies of political life.

The Stagirite heralds that what founds the moral and political triumph of philosophy is its capacity to educate citizens themselves, to undertake ethical responsibility through noble and honorable acts that, at every step, intend the wholesome transformation of the polis. To advance the moral and political education of competent citizens already entrenched in society with its everyday civil contingencies is indeed judicious, constitutes an estimable and necessary approach. It is, therefore, vital to consider Aristotle’s indomitable position: the expansive meritorious activity of an adequate number of citizens of quality acts catalytically. Their exemplary virtuous activity accelerates the renewal of the city-state’s political structures and institutions, and evermore, initiates the transformation of the uneducated masses, amplifying the people’s confidence, which is so instrumental to the flourishing of culture and society as a whole.23

The Moral Aim of Philosophy: The Education of Citizens of Refinement for the Sake of a Eudaimonic Politeia

Already in Book I.4, Aristotle proclaims that “[…] political science aims at […] the highest of goods achievable by action” (1095a15-17). Put otherwise; it aims at the peerless attainment of eudaimonia, the unparalleled social and political flourishing of human existence. However, let us consider the above quotation in context. Aristotle says:

[…] all knowledge and every pursuit aims at some good, what it is that we say political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. Verbally there is a very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and faring well with being happy, but concerning what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise (1095a14-21).

It is no coincidence that at the outset of his ethical treatise Aristotle concedes that the highest political good that can be achieved by action is happiness. This way, he sets the stage and paves the direction his investigations are to proceed. He mainly cautions the reader that the ensuing ethical exposition will illumine the nature of the highest good of happiness, which all human beings by way of their knowledge and actions desire. Concurrently, he leads the reader to anticipate an elucidation of the moral and philosophical nature of political science (politike episteme), the science whose highest aim is to show how to attain the highest of all goods.

beliefs, norms, and institutions of the polis. However, what remains unknown is to what degree Aristotle recognized the vestiges of the passage of time. Many more generations than he perhaps realized are needed to bring about wholesome moral and cultural transformation to the politeia and society at large. At any rate, his moral and political vision is comprehensively educative and diachronic. It bears the power of heartfelt philosophical wisdom that runs through the generations; holds the torch and hope of posterity.

23 Perhaps an agricultural metaphor will best illustrate how Aristotle’s moral vision in EN aims to harmonize earth and heaven in the politeia: the illustrious farmer (Aristotle the philosopher), cultivates the earth and sows the seeds of arête in fertile souls. The meritorious souls themselves, separating the wheat from the chaff, reap and gather the pure harvest of nous, to spread the activity of justice far and wide; they also farm the granaries of government, and carry out the balance; heralding the abundance and the joy, they gladden the hearts and bellies of the peoples.
Overall, Aristotle’s principal intention is to light up the way to attain the supreme good of human flourishing, both individually and collectively. Firstly, he tells us that all persons agree that human flourishing is the highest good. However, elucidating further, he distinguishes that the view of “the general run of men” concerning what happiness is, differs from the perception of citizens of superior refinement, and, in turn, both views above differ from the knowledge of the wise. Continuing, he ascertains that aside from the wise (a few select individuals), all other citizens equate euzoía (living well) and eupraxia (acting well) with some form of “fairing well.” Assuredly, there is a qualitative difference between the prevailing view of the many and the superior view of citizens of quality; however, both social groups equate living and acting well with some form of prosperity. The principal interest here is neither how the many (hòi pollloi) nor how citizens of greater refinement perceive the nature of happiness. Instead, the spotlight falls on how the wise understand the verity of the highest eudemonic good.

Now, let us carefully examine the reason that might have led Aristotle at the outset of EN to distinguish the account of the wise concerning the nature of happiness from all other humans. Of course, one may claim that this gives credibility to his ensuing articulation regarding the supreme good because he necessarily leads the reader to expect from the author of EN to be wise, an authority in matters of the highest possible wisdom. Otherwise, he would neither be able to irradiate what the wise apprehend happiness is; nor be able to disclose how to attain and actualize the highest good vis-à-vis political science. However, be as it may, Aristotle wrote the ethical treatise in his mature years after he established the Lyceum well, and well recognized was also his reputation as a man of wisdom. Surely, he is not concerned with issues of credibility rather his prominent intention here is to establish the moral aim of Philosophia, and, by extension, highlight the place of the wise— the philosophoi—who, given the direction of EN, come to the fore as specialists in matters of highest eudemonic realization.

Essentially, Aristotle grants that the wise are the epicenter of genuine wisdom because their searches concern the ultimate objects of philosophic truth. The wise agree that the realization of eudaimonia constitutes the uppermost aim of moral and political philosophy. Moreover, they understand that the actualization of all learning and all human searches are for attaining happiness. In one way or another, the wise ascertain that the realization of eudaimonia happens through virtuous living, epistemic knowledge, and philosophic wisdom. Therefore, the contribution of the wise is indispensable.

For one thing, the wise can determine the requisite moral scope and curriculum of education in political science. Most importantly, without the crucial contribution of the wise, one can neither comprehend the real nature of eudaimonia nor the nature of political science—the means to realize by action the highest happiness—which at the end of the day is the moral aim of Philosophia.

However, here, one has to be careful. The insight of the wise is crucial; however, EN categorically does not exclusively address the bearers of philosophic wisdom. Indeed, Aristotle wanted to stir philosophers (and aspiring philosophers) to read EN, for he thought that the ethical treatise would inevitably disclose things of great interest to them. Further, he considered philosophers and aspiring philosophers would gain from reading his ethical text because it especially illuminates his unique insight concerning the political aim of Philosophia. For this reason, the study of EN was critical for aspiring philosophers at the Lyceum.

Notwithstanding, it is imperative to understand that EN discloses the moral and political aim of Philosophia to be the highest happiness, what the wise already apprehend for they would not be wise, despite edifying variations in their way of benefiting others. Hence, the ethical treatise, forming an integrated whole, seems to address philosophers only secondarily. The primary audience Aristotle addresses is meritorious householders and citizens of higher refinement (cf. 1095b22-1096a10), perhaps worthy or aspiring politicians, those citizens of quality who are most capable of directly effecting change in the political affairs of the polis. 24

Incontestably, the wise cannot be Aristotle’s primary audience. Nonetheless, his insight to bring to the fore the apperception of the wise (namely philosophers) hits the mark. It pins down his intended audience, and, best discloses his aim in writing EN, establishing his educative intent. By specifying his primary audience, comprising citizens of superior merit already rooted in the social life of the city-state, Aristotle sets the stage for the philosophic education EN will unravel. It is precisely his primary audience that defines his educative intent. He considers that worthy, meritorious citizens hold the most exceptional promise for enhancing the city state’s welfare; and animating the generations. His aim in writing the text is to remit a cogent ethical discourse on happiness that will effectually actuate meritorious citizens to take to heart his advanced education in moral and political matters of the highest standing.

Hence, Aristotle sets up a convincing presentation of moral education that aims to stir and inspire citizens of quality to act responsibly with political acumen and resolve, both individually and collectively. Individual action must be in accord with the power of the mind and adhering to one’s varying responsibilities and stations in life. Whereas, collective action involves the collaboration of a tenacious community of learning, united by the common goal to set bare—the excellence that lights up—the way to flourishing existence.

According to Aristotle, the responsible individual (student of ethics) inevitably moves toward excellence in all domains of epistemic knowledge is a movement that unswervingly strengthens the community of learners. He resolves that meritorious citizens as individuals must; therefore, responsibly cultivate the life of virtue and concurrently improve the mind in all fields of scientific thought. Their development in moral and scientific areas of knowledge is bound to advance the most fruitful cooperation among the various disciplines of learning.

Further, excellence in learning inspires and unifies the community of learners toward the flourishing of culture and human life. Of course, what indeed reconciles all fields of virtue and intellectual knowledge under the rubric of flourishing existence is philosophic wisdom. The expansiveness of contemplative insight harmonizes the individual with the community of learners toward the shared vision of self-realizing the dispensations of being-itself. Thus the manifestation of flourishing existence apportioned in measures qua being enhances and preserves the moral and political potential of philosophic insight: totality. To this, we shall return.

For now, let us examine the place held by the ordinary run of men, the polloi. Aristotle makes clear that the unrefined masses are not the focal interest of EN. As previously indicated, lacking the necessary education, the polloi are incorrigible; flagging in knowledge and strength, they dwindle therefore would rather unreflectively languish in following the conventional view of the many. Their ultimate cares for preserving the status quo of “faring well” make them ipso facto incapable of attending to the teaching of the philosopher-sages. They would rather perpetuate their illusory opinions and judgments concerning the nature of happiness.

However, on the other side of the same coin, citizens of superior refinement possess a distinctively good character and have exercised their cognitive powers well, and are open to taking heed of the comprehensive insight of the wise concerning the good and happy life. Thus, at the outset of his treatise,
Aristotle distinguishes this body of meritorious citizens as best suited for moral philosophical and political learning. Their already cultivated qualities render them fertile to receive teachings in political science. Moreover, in contradistinction to the masses, citizens of high merit realize that happiness does not consist “in any of the obvious things that anyone would recognize, like pleasure or wealth or honor” (1095a22-23).

In effect, Aristotle vies that commendable householders and citizens of superior merit already embedded in society incorporate those qualities that advance their readiness to pursue moral and political education. Nevertheless, it is essential to keep in mind that the virtuous qualities and acute intelligence of citizens of quality are not sufficient to bring about flourishing existence neither in private nor in the public sphere. Their schooling is elliptical, lacks comprehensive philosophical, political, and scientific insight. It is precisely this gap in their knowledge that the moral and philosophical teaching in *EN* aims to seal by way of forwarding an education in *phrōnesis*, concomitantly enriched by expansion in the searches of intellect. Hence, in one way or other *EN* makes clear that the distinctive class of citizens of superior refinement ought to apprehend practical wisdom in conjunction to cultivating the expansiveness of *nous* in all directions of human life and action; and this, with the sole aim of perfecting moral cultural and political excellence (cf. 1095b22-ff.).

However, there exists a reoccurring catch in *Ethica Nichomachea*; thoroughgoing education in *phrōnesis* and political science involves critical understanding of the deficient ways the masses appropriate the meaning of “living well.” For this reason, almost every Book of the ethical treatise, more or less, addresses the way unreflective humans lack an understanding of virtue as the mean between two extremes, therefore, either fall prey to deficiency or excess. Undoubtedly, for the philosopher-sage from Stagira, one of the most significant factors concerning the cultivation of excellence in all spheres of knowledge entails comprehending the psychology of the masses, the way the average person thinks acts and lives.

Most importantly, Aristotle’s pedagogical strategy encourages citizens of quality to pursue the cumulative study of ethical philosophy and political science; by centering on the moral cultivation of character and the noetic investigation of all fields of truth: ethical, social, psychological, philosophical, scientific, and political. This way, unsullied, citizens of quality will be enabled to advance exemplary virtuous activity in the city-state’s social and political affairs. However, to be effective, they ought to determine what moves the masses and what might best move them toward the fruitful change of way and life. Only thus will they be enabled to accomplish real transformative change in the social moral and political activities of the *polis*.

Henceforth, the quintessence of *EN* addresses citizens of superior merit; however, the ethical treatise epitomizes unified teaching effectuated by the wise—appropriated by citizens of superior merit—intending to affect the masses and all citizens for the greater good of the collective. Therefore, Aristotle resolves that since meritorious citizens take their stance in the middle, in-between the wise and the masses, they constitute the best social group to forward transformative change in the cultural and political affairs of the *polis*.

Firstly and foremost, Aristotle’s moral philosophy aims to inculcate to his readers the absolute necessity for wide-ranging and comprehensive knowledge in political science—*politike episteme*—the *Scientia par excellence*. The passage below best discloses Aristotle’s holistic educative intention in writing *Ethica Nikomachea* in his mature years:

[… ] since politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the human good. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worth-while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states. These, then, are the ends at which our inquiry aims, since it is political science, in one sense of that term (1094b4-12).
Now, Aristotle’s ethical philosophy valorizes the intertwined cultivation of moral and intellectual virtue as constitutive to the spoudê (study) of political science. It is, therefore, essential to clarify the relation between phrônêsis, political science, and philosophic wisdom. In toto, phrônêsis involves noble praxês of justice coalescing with the coherence of knowledge steeped in scientific truth and contemplative insight for the general welfare of all the peoples (cf. Book VI.5-8). As such, the spoudê in practical wisdom and the sciences activates the political through virtuous praxês that ground philosophical wisdom for the betterment of the whole. Above all, phrônêtic insight furnishes the grounding practice of virtuous activity wherein, the conjunction of scientific truth and theoretic nous endow the cultural social and civil affairs of the polis with eudemonic being for the sake of a flourishing politeia.

This way, Aristotle’s moral philosophy outrightly pursues the ergon (function) of human flourishing in the prakteinon (the virtuous deed)—grounding political praxis and theoría in the life of moral, scientific, and intellectual activity qua excellenta. The cultivation of excellence appertains to the whole gamut of the sciences and the entirety of philosophic knowledge, therefore; the constant refinement of practice applies to all human activities, all disciplines, all communities of learning, all civic-political institutions and affairs, and; passing into the transcendent beyond; it involves wisdom and totality.

Henceforth, the philosophical study of politike episteme constitutes comprehensive science. It aims at the eudaimonia of the polis, its citizens, and the whole of life. However, it is phrônêsis that grounds promotes and propels virtuous activity founded on the profound intellectual understanding of political science. Of paramount importance is that phrônêsis empowers the development of nous for the cumulative actualization of the sciences in civic and political life. The prerogative of meritorious householders and citizens of superior refinement is to actualize political eudaimonia to the highest possible degree for its own most excellence and totality.

The Primacy of Phrônêsis; and the Prominence of Intellectual Virtue in Determining the Aim Scope and Curriculum of Political Science

Let us recapitulate; take things from the beginning. Book I, virtually sets the basis and direction of the whole exposition on eudaimonia in EN. Here, Aristotle discusses the necessary and sufficient conditions of arete as activity of soul (psychê); and also sketches an outline that centers on eudaimonia as the perfect most complete virtue (teleian arete), encompassing a multitude of carefully chosen goods of virtuous activity, favored for their intrinsic worth (1098a16-20).

Moreover, apparent goods of intrinsic value include not only virtuous activity according to soul capacity but also chosen external goods such as health, pleasure, children, friends, good looks, and resources (1178b33-1179a4). Aristotle finds that a sufficient amount of external goods when used appropriately not only favors but also potentiates the practice of phrônêsis and intellectual or contemplative activity. The import of external goods depends solely on their capacity to serve goods of intrinsic value, thus, accentuating the practice of virtue.

Most importantly, practical wisdom constitutes the foundation for the cultivation of all forms of excellence. For one thing, practical wisdom determines as well as grounds Aristotle’s priority in EN, which is non-other than to forward the education of meritorious householders and citizens of higher merit already embedded in the social and political affairs of the polis. Phrônêsis constitutes the necessary moral prerequisite for attaining intellectual knowledge and contemplative, philosophical acumen. Therefore, the backbone of Aristotle’s ethical treatise expounds moral virtue in terms of practical wisdom. After all, ingrained in the collective consciousness of the peoples is that practical wisdom rather than contemplative, philosophical insight prevails in everyday life of interpersonal relationships and contextual contingencies.

We ought to always keep in mind that for the Stagirite, human beings are political creatures “born for citizenship” (1097b11) who may potentially flourish only in the context of the polis. It is not meant for humans to live solitary or isolated lives; instead, as situated political creatures, they are mostly

25 Of course, Aristotle’s choice of external goods discloses his overarching emphasis on the humanity of the human.
householders who care for parents, children, friends, and other fellow citizens. For this reason, Aristotle insists that the question of ethical life highlights interpersonal and social-political excellence. He considers that individual well-being is mostly dependent on the welfare of all citizens and institutions in the polis.

In effect, to underscore the necessity for harmony in social relations and the enhancement of cooperation among citizens for the overall welfare of the polis, he dedicates two Books of the ethical treatise (VIII & IX), highlighting the beneficent concord of genuine friendship. Indeed, his discourse concerning friendship directly relates to the cultivation of practical wisdom. For the actualization of unpretentious friendship beyond utilitarian motives and purposes of pleasure is founded on the accrued wisdom of experience. Besides, the establishment of genuine friendships and, by extension, the cultivation of an attitude of friendliness, augments the qualitative basis for authentic human relations; unveils the humanity of the human. Hence, phrōnēsis, conjoined, and coalescing with the genuine expression of friendship, aims toward realizing the total welfare of both individual and fellow citizens.

Since the fulfillment of personal and interpersonal happiness occurs in a wholesome manner only through the flourishing existence of the collective, Aristotle establishes that the primary concern of moral and political philosophy should be the well-rounded education of citizens of higher merit entrenched in everyday life. He adamantly believes that eudemonic being will best manifest itself in the polis only when citizens of quality become adept in ceaselessly perfecting phrōnesis.

Contrary to some scholarly interpretations, Aristotle in EN does not prioritize the question of contemplative philosophy. Contemplative philosophy seems to be an interminable epiphenomenon of having perfected virtuous activity to a considerable degree, especially in the practical domain of attaining excellence in the cultivation of moral virtue. Put otherwise, at all turns, the dispensation of philosophic wisdom arises in measures as the aftermath of significant realization in matters of practical wisdom.

Precisely, for this reason, Aristotle devotes at least eight out of the ten Books, in other words, the bulk of EN from Book II to X.6-8 (with the exemption of Book VI, which addresses the activity of intellectual virtues), to an elucidation of virtuous activity in terms of phrōnesis. Conversely, the frugality of his exposition regarding the cultivation of nous is self-evident. He devotes only one Book (VI) out of ten, to elucidate intellectual virtue which addresses the cumulative study of political science. More so, he is indeed parsimonious in his exposition of the nature and place of contemplative wisdom; he allots a mere three chapters (IV.7 & X.7-8).

The reason Aristotle highlights phrōnesis and is frugal in addressing matters concerning the cultivation of the intellect is apparent. Phrōnesis is what establishes his unwavering conviction that a few sages, adepts in matters of philosophical wisdom, are incapable of bringing extensive and lasting transformation to the institutions of the politeia and the polites (citizens) en masse. Hence, as previously indicated, his ethical discourse addresses adepts in contemplative wisdom, including aspiring philosophers in the Lyceum secondarily.

The most critical moral factor that oversees his chief political aim is highly dependent on the composition of his audience; those he considers to be the most appropriate and promising human medium to ensure the flourishing of the polis and life of its peoples. He thus determines the moral content of political knowledge and science in alignment with the audience he seeks to address. Accordingly, citizens of superior refinement (the potential phrōnemoi), must advance their phrōnetic insight by deepening their perspicacity of virtue in all spheres of intellectual knowledge and scientific inquiry, for only thus will their social and political activities be morally acute and convincing to the polloi. To be effective, those who possess practical wisdom must also exhibit knowledge in the science of politics.

Undoubtedly, the Stagirite considers the cultivation of phrōnetic excellence indispensable for enhancing the welfare of the peoples; however, by no means does he think that practical wisdom is sufficient to bring-forth the politeia of eudemonic life. Above all, citizens of superior acumen (the potential phrōnemoi), must advance their phrōnetic insight by deepening their perspicacity of virtue in all spheres of intellectual knowledge and scientific inquiry, for only thus will their social and political activities be morally acute and convincing to the polloi. To be effective, those who possess practical wisdom must also exhibit knowledge in the science of politics.

Political science encompasses the integration of all the sciences and all domains of philosophic inquiry, because practical wisdom (phrōnēsis) does not only concern itself with acting intelligibly in
Aristotle’s Vision of Political Eudaimonia Qua the Divine in Ethica Nikomachea

accordance to the calculative and critical reason for the sake of attaining the various external as well as internal goods of life; but among its objects of knowledge includes acting in conformity with the chief intellectual virtues, which are: a) scientific knowledge, that investigates and grasps necessary and demonstrable truths (VI.3); b) art, the knowledge of the way things are made (VI.4); c) intuitive reason, the knowledge of the first principles that constitute the bedrock of scientific inquiry (VI.6); d) contemplative wisdom, the philosophic truth which unites intuitive wisdom and science (VI.7); and most importantly, e) moral apprehension of the intrinsic relations holding between practical wisdom (phrônësis) and political science which makes use of all the other sciences (VI.8).

The teaching on intellectual virtues in Book VI determines the immense possibility of the practice of excellence. Phrônësis, conjoined with the cultivation of virtuous intellectual activity, mediates, defines, and distinguishes the vast expanse of political science, the flourishing existence of the individual, the collective, and totality. The development of virtuous qualities of character and mind capacity heightening the life of excellence redefine the meaning of the term eudaimonia, to encompass the politeia of arête qua episteme. Hence, practical wisdom, the root of moral virtue, founds its completion in the prominence of the scientific and philosophical investigations of intellect, which, in the final analysis, determine the holistic aim, scope, and comprehensive curriculum of political science. Practical wisdom and political science conjoin and amalgamate in the moral domain of noble and just actions.

Both practical wisdom and the science of politics of which it is a part, aim to investigate and actualize noble acts of justice from differing yet alternating perspectives. Of course, Book V, which illumines the moral virtue of justice and its relation to the law, concerns phrônësis. Nevertheless, the examination of the nature of justice in Book V and the cultivation of intellectual virtue in Book VI co-emerge and conjoin, since Aristotle’s aim in both Books is to enable the actualization of a more profound understanding of “noble and just actions” (1094b15); which is the overall aim of political science. Most importantly, what best enables praxes of noble acts of justice is an in-depth knowledge of psychê, the ministrations of philosophic nous. Practical wisdom as an activity of psychê, discloses the nature of justice and the place of law in the constitution of government, whereas; the prominent investigations of political science qua philosophic nous, also an activity psychê, augment the phrônëtic actualization of just and noble acts.

Henceforth, the continuous refinement of phrônësis in conjunction with the comprehensive learning of the chief intellectual virtues, form the two entangled aspects of cultivated existence comprising the moral bedrock of spoudê in politike episteme. The intertwined cultivation of moral and intellectual virtue heightens the activity of psychê, establishing the foundational education of citizens of quality for the greater good of the people en masse.

Aristotle envisions that activation of the mind (philosophic nous) through the study of political science will enhance the exemplary virtuous activity of an adequate number of citizens of superior merit. Their effected civil excellence, burgeoning example, and rippling futural accomplishments, will surely spill-over and multiply, advancing the overall welfare of the polis and its peoples.

Law & Psychê: The Cumulative Effect of Citizens of Quality on the Uneducated Masses

Aristotle envisions that given sufficient time, the paradigmatic activity, virtuous character, and flourishing life of citizens of higher merit is bound to influence and inwardly move the masses to reconsider and at best change their distorted views, affective habituations, and tainted actions. However, the polloi will indeed alter their stunted ways only when they directly experience the exemplary virtuous existence of an ever-expanding, mushrooming multiplicity of meritorious citizens exhibiting lofty refinement, extensive application of knowledge, and obeisance to what is appropriate: balanced orderly and lawful. Above all, the Stagirite promotes the understanding that the flourishing of the polis is dependent on the virtuous activity of soul evinced by citizens of higher merit. The superior man, best understands the interconnection holding between psychê, justice, and the law.
Aristotle says, “the true student of politics, […]” must “have studied virtue above all things; for he wishes to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws” (1102a7-10). In his introduction to *EN*, Brown points out that for Aristotle, “laws ordain certain aspects of child-rearing; they set standards for good behavior, and people respond better when laws, rather than despots, seek to impose standards.” Thus, Aristotle places neither a despot nor a philosopher-king as the absolute authority of law and justice. Instead, he concedes that those who institute the laws and oversee matters of justice ought to be citizens of higher virtue, those who attained profound soul capacity for learning by receiving a well-rounded education in the science of politics. Empowered by astute education in practical and intellectual virtue, they will become impeccable in perfecting the soul to attain the state of virtue. Therefore, their appropriation of the soul-workings of *arête* will more often than not permeate in just laws; *nomoi* whose excellence will mirror and disclose the moral law in accord with the magnanimity of *psychē* (1103b3-6). Laws must, therefore, discerningly mirror echo and replicate the flawless harmony of the moral law (cf. Book V).

It is Aristotle’s firm conviction that the laws ought to reflect the state of mind of the lawmakers, namely the citizens of superior virtue educated in the comprehensive study of political science. In time, when the masses become habituated in seeing an ample number of citizens of quality adhere to the laws of the *polis*; they will effectually seek to emulate their good example, by paying their obeisance to the judicial system. Ultimately, the *polloi* will recognize that the *raison d’être* of laws is to replicate virtuous activity leading to eudemonic being in self and the *politeia*.

Hence, laws must implicate rectitude and justice in concurrence with the soul;27 and citizens of superior merit should gain a profound understanding of law and *psychē* as well as their inherent interrelation. To achieve this implies that virtuous activity already surmises the pure intend of actions in concurrence with the law. Actions best aligned to circumstance and given context will mirror the magnanimity of *psychē*.

To obey the laws constitutes a matter of conscious choice (*proairesis*) that recognizes the intrinsic right and the good of actions.28 Here, one ought to bear in mind that virtuous actions reflect emotive and rational choices performed freely—*praxes kata boulesen*—for the intrinsic value of the actions themselves. Nevertheless, Aristotle warns that acting in conformity with the law does not necessarily mean one is good, fair, or happy. Continuing, he cautions against “those who do the acts ordained by the laws either unwillingly or owing to ignorance or for some other reason and not for the sake of the acts themselves […]”; moreover, “[…] in order to be good, one must be in a certain state when one does the several acts, i.e., one must do them as a result of choice and for the sake of the acts themselves” (1144a13-20).

Be as it may, Aristotle establishes that given the sufficient passage of time, many citizens who act out mimetically will begin naturally and reflectively to pay their obeisance to the laws. They will gradually realize the intrinsic value of the law. Through the vigilant and wise appropriation of experience, they shall, more often than not, recognize that the laws reflect what is reasonable and appropriate. In time, an increasing number of citizens will begin to realize that the laws reflect the astute knowledge of the lawgivers (*nomothetes*): those circumspect, eudemonic beings of superior refinement.

Effectively, numerous citizens will increasingly begin to trust the city state’s *nomoi* and desire to realize human flourishing, as exemplified in the lives of the persons of higher virtue. They will gradually come to recognize that it is not entirely beyond their ken to accomplish the honorable stature of virtuous existence and eudemonic being. This way, the standard to be emulated will be reflected in the way and life of citizens of superior virtue: their noble countenance, refined and cultured comportment, their happy existence, and all the moral virtues their state of excellence self-evidently radiates; virtues such as

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27 On the nature of justice, see Book V. Toward the end of this section, we will address the way Aristotle understands the *psychē* relates to justice.
28 On the way justice involves choice, see Book V.8.
sophrōsynē (soundness of mind), engrateia (temperance), eleutheria (freedom), megalopsychia (greatness of soul), philotis (friendliness), and megaloprepeia (largesse benevolence and munificence).

Of course, for Aristotle, political eudaimonia bears its roots in issues far more profound than a naïve trust in the institution of law. Unquestionably, he did not believe that the laws were the panacea for accomplishing human flourishing in the city-state. He was well aware that lawmakers’ interests would often affect their judgment resulting in biased and unjust laws, as he was exceedingly conscious that many citizens would disobey even the most just of laws. Indeed, he did not consider citizens of superior merit flawless beings who would always adhere to the ministrations of law and justice. Moreover, he did not solely place his trust on the conception that meritorious citizens of high quality would eventually (or progressively) attain excellent knowledge, consequently self-correct injustice they (or even perhaps others) instituted in-laws.

Instead, above all, Aristotle trusts the wisdom of psychē its direct relation to the nature of justice and eudemonic being. In this respect, the consciousness of lack of eudaimonic attainment is what will provide the measure for self-corrective conduct. In effect, the lack of eudaimonia is eventually going to register in consciousness as a lack of virtuous activity, pointing to incomplete knowledge of the soul (cf. 1102a12-18). Likewise, defective laws mainly display distortion in the soul of the lawgivers and contraction of virtuous activity; therefore, ellipsis in eudemonic being. Now, since happiness is the aim of all knowledge and action (1102a1-2), distorted knowledge or unwarranted action points to a deficiency in exemplary activity and lack of eudemonic attainment. Most often, this deficiency will, in time, consciously register in one’s own most soul and noticed by others in the community of learners.

Given the passage of time, necessary corrections ought to happen based on the conscious appropriation of experience and the furthering of knowledge. For both self and others will oversee deficient actions and the lack of exemplifying eudaimonic being. The schism manifested within oneself and between oneself and others, is what ultimately provides the measure for deeper reflection and self-corrective conduct. The law constituting an epiphenomenon of the cultivation of practical and intellectual virtue mirrors the state of the lawmaker’s soul. When the inauguration of biased or unjust laws materializes, it only shows that in effect—the prakteon—is in discord with theoria and nous consequently with the rightful appropriation of psychē. The blemish reflects the actions of the lawgiver(s); therefore, it is the responsibility of the community of learners, fellow citizens of higher merit, to call on the detractor(s) to make amends.

Henceforth, Aristotle places his foremost trust in the cultivation of virtue as the best and highest expression of genuine knowledge of the soul and not on ‘just laws,’ which in effect may turn out not to be in concurrence with justice. On the other hand, social and political convention, law and order, are necessary for the well-being of society, and just laws represent an epiphenomenon of exemplary virtuous activity; they constitute the refined medium for achieving political equity and flourishing human existence. To accomplish the art of instituting just laws requires meticulous education in practical and theoretical wisdom at the root of the knowledge of soul; and eudaimonia.

With no further ado, let us briefly explore Aristotle’s unique understanding of the soul. In his treatise On the Soul (De Anima; hereafter DA), he claims contra Plato that psychē is hylomorphic, a combination

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29 For Aristotle’s elucidation of the virtues, see Book IV. Also, for a good and comprehensive articulation of Aristotle’s virtues, see Broadie, “Philosophical Introduction.” In Aristotle, The Nichomachean Ethics, op. Cit. 5, 9-91, 23-34.

30 After all, Aristotle decrees that no human is flawless save the gods who live in pure contemplation devoid of productive activity. Therefore, the gods have no place for law and justice (cf. 1178b9-23). Accordingly, the superior self-sufficient perfection of the gods makes us assume them “to be above all other beings blessed and happy; but what sort of actions must we assign to them? Acts of justice? Will not the gods seem absurd if they make contracts and return deposits […]?” (1178b9-13). A few lines down he tells us: “[…] the activity of god, which surpasses all others in blessedness (makariotes), must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness” (1178b21-23). Thus, human knowledge and activity ought to steadfastly aim toward divine eudaimonia strive to become as perfect as possible; it should model the lives of the gods.
of form (morphē) and matter (hyle). The human soul is not solely an immaterial and eternal form; its substance does not encompass within-itself unchanging archetypal essences. Instead, the ensouled living body is hylomorphic, an instantiation of an in-formed material substance undergoing, a change (DA 413a3-5), even when engaging the simplest instinctive activities like nutrition, digestion, and movement, but also when engaging the more complex activities of thinking, conception, and choice (cf. DA 413a32; 415a9). Thus, contrary to Plato’s metaphysical theory of the immortality of the soul, Aristotle concedes that the ensouled human animal is incapable of existence and activity apart from the body (DA 433a5-16).

Further, he maintains that the human is a composite ensouled animal driven by the interface of emotive desires, perception, reason, and action. As such, the soul undergoes transformation and change based on individual emotions, perceptions, cognitions, and actions. However, Aristotle concedes that all flawed undeserved and unjust activities bear the unwarranted influence of the body on the activity itself. Whereas paradoxically, all virtuous rational and noble activities have little or nothing to do with the body, they instead have everything to do with nous and soul (as morphē), which in turn also affects the body—in-forms hyle (cf. DA 430a17-18). At any rate, Aristotle in De Anima avoids following Plato’s tripartite division of psychē. He leaves the nature of the soul an open quest and ultimately, as in Metaphysics XII, comprehends the psychē as the unmoved mover—it is what issues forth the enérgēia and dynamis of divine nous. The conjunction of desire and perception originate the cause of motion, and desire is the mover as well as the motion (DA 433b15).

Therefore, intelligible cognition must critically rule the arising of desires; otherwise, the soul’s hylomorphic activity is moved into action by irrational needs, wishes, longings, or cravings in accord to perceptions of attraction towards pleasurable things, or else in the direction of avoiding painful experiences. Most interestingly, Aristotle considers that the soul works uniformly even-in the nutritive digestive and locomotive aspects of the body (DA 415a ff.).

For the Stagirite, paideia confers the wholesome recognition of the unfathomable nature of the soul. Hence, the cultivation of arête encompasses the whole gamut of the human experience; it is mostly activity in accord with psychē and nous and not an activity of the body. After all, the freedom of will and choice is noetic and not corporeal. The body responds, feels, and reacts to unwholesome noetic impulses within self or in the environment, whereas, free choice in accord with the virtuous emotive activity of mind mostly pertains to the soul, not corporeity.

Hence, virtuous activity is quintessential for resolving all forms of kakodaimonia and is constitutive; it depends on personal insight, emotive, and cognitive perception, as well as free choice coupled with personal responsibility. Perhaps, there is, after all, a mind over body (mentis in corporis) bias in Aristotle. In the final analysis, Aristotle valorizes above all arête as soul activity; therefore, virtue does not involve the body but is the result of the cognitive activity of the mind in appropriation to ever-changing

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31 Many scholars find De Anima 430a17-18 contradictory. Here Aristotle introduces the concept of active mind (nous poïētikos), a concept that does not appear in any other place in his corpus. He concedes that nous poïētikos is ‘substance’ (ousia) and energeia “separate, unaffected and unmixed” (chôristos, apathēs kai amīgēs; 430a17-18), and five lines down, he tells us that this substance is “immortal and everlasting” (athanaton kai aidion; 430a23). In essence, nous poïētikos seems to contradict 413a3-5, where Aristotle ascertains that the ensouled living body is an instantiation of in-formed material substance that is affected; in other words, changes. It is beyond the present scope to discuss this seeming contradiction in Aristotle. Of course, contradiction and paradox appear elsewhere in his corpus, for instance, through his comprehension of divine nous, and divinity. In Metaphysics Book XII, he apprehends theos as the unmoved mover (ho ou kinoumenon kinei), the first uncaused cause, which is indivisible unchanging and eternal substance, perfect beauty, contemplation — contemplating itself as perfected ‘self-contemplation.’ Nevertheless, paradoxically, the ‘unmoved mover’ independent of all movement is the cause or source of all movement. Also, Aristotle in Physics maintains that the unaffected “final efficient cause” is “the first source of change or rest” (194b29–30). In the final analysis, one is right to marshal that the incomprehensible divine in its perfect self-contemplation, so-to-speak, receives as well as resolves and absolves within-and-as-itself, all seemingly unresolved paradoxes or contradictions in thinking.

circumstance; and as for bodily well-being, it is the consequence—an epiphenomenon—of intellectual development. Concerning the flourishing existence of the individual in coordination with social and political life, virtuous activity is directly dependent on the interrelated appropriation of praxis and theoria—the prakteon—the actualization of law and justice coalescing with the instantiated event of soul.

In a most revealing passage in Ethica Nikomachea, Aristotle discloses his aim and intention concerning his inquiry into the very vestiges of human eudemonic life qua politike episteme. He states:

This inquiry [concerning eudaimonia] belongs to political science, […] But clearly, the virtue we must study is human virtue (anthôtinen arête); for the good we were seeking was human good and the happiness human happiness (anthôpinen eudaimonia). By human virtue we mean not that of the body but that of the soul; and happiness also we call an activity of soul. But if this is so, clearly the student of politics must know somehow the facts about the soul […] (1102a12-18).

Accordingly, the student of political science must ultimately understand that the supreme human flourishing of the individual psychê and concurrently of the politeia concerns both the practical and theoretical dimension of virtuous activity and no matter what; the highest divine eudaimonia (cf. 1177a11-18) “the activity of […] proper virtue” (1177a17) attained within the soul is anthôpine eudaimonia (human happiness). In this light, citizens of superior virtue, apprehending the meaning of the soul, take their standing by becoming truly human (eudaimones anthropoi). Their incomparable lives, bearing the effectual truth of persistent spoudê in political science, only and purely disclose anthôpine eudaimonia; thus, their unsurpassed apprehension of psychê is more accessible; and their extraordinary accomplishment ordinary, more human. Precisely for this reason, their tireless cultivation of practical and intellectual virtue shines forth in selfless service to humanity.

Ultimately, the refined and prudent person knowing “somehow the facts about the soul” (1102a18), uncovers evermore eudaimonia within psychê, thereby in a forward thrust recovers that divine something (theion tê) potentiating every stage of individual development, and aims for the flourishing existence of the whole. The cumulative philosophical search for the political meaning of virtus (arête) involves the intertwined exploration of homo humanus, anima, Scientia, divinus, et Felicitas. Hence, practical and theoretical education in political science enables one to realize humanness. In recognizing one’s ultimate kinship with humanity, ever-more-so heightens the need to work for the human collective’s flourishing existence, unyieldingly.

Above everything, Aristotle places his trust not in the law but the Sapientia of Homo sapiens. For human prudence, discretion and wisdom are the driving forces cajoling humanity to realize the edemonic activity and vast potential of the soul. S/he who apprehends the nature of the soul comprehends the ethical value of aurea mediocritas (the golden mean); that is of virtus reaching far and wide to balance and harmonize between two extremes. In Aristotle, the Delphic adage of Medên Agan (Nothing in Excess) determines moral and political education becomes the mark of the refined and wise soul. Concurring with Philosophia perrenis, the Stagirite might have uttered: sola nobililat virtus (virtue alone ennobles).

Besides, the activity of virtus prevails against darkness and excess; conquers vice at all turns. “Vice,” as Virgil says, “thrives and lives by concealment” (Alitur vitium, vivitque tegendo).34 Indeed, Aristotle’s vision of virtuous activity—energeiai kat’ arête—vanquishes vice, un conceals, and brings into the light of day political trickery secrecy and concealment. The Stagirite envisions that his unique and prototypical edemonic politeia in EN will perhaps enlighten, ennoble and activate an advancing number of citizens of superior merit, already embedded in the social and political life of the polis. He envisions their exemplary virtuous activity bringing into unconcealment the dishonesty corruption and misuse of power exercised by an elite class of aristocrats and politicians plunged in vice and excess; those stalled and pitiful beings mired in duplicity fraud and secrecy, who exploit the masses at every turn with

33 Brackets added.
their illusory distorted and debased conceptions of human happiness. More so, the Stagirite envisions the
ennobling virtue of meritorious citizens bringing into the light of day the deceitful habituations the
boorishness and ignorance abounding in the hearts of the uneducated masses. So the polloi might consider
ere but a little, the betterment and improvement of their souls and lives.

Aristotle takes his stance as the first philosopher in the ancient world that recognized the ontological
power unbleached unto the collective through the exemplary activity of an ever progressing multiplicity
of citizens of superior merit. He sought to advance their elevated thinking, emanating radiance, lawful and
purposeful existence, knowing all too well that virtuous activity bequeaths evermore the best and only
way to stir the desire and interest of the masses to emulate the loftier way and life of arête. Thus he sets
out in EN to educate and inspire clear-minded citizens on how to best realize political science and attain
uncommon insight in matters of moral and philosophical excellence.

The philosopher-sage from Stagira thought the attainments of citizens of superior refinement were
bound to influence family and friends, bearing notable impact on social circles. Hence, he anticipates the
evolving force of their virtuous activity spilling-over in social affairs. In time, he must have reckoned, a
virtuous activity which distinguishes no social boundaries will follow the snowball effect evermore
rousing the masses from their slumber, to consider that the cultivated life of arête is the only path to
flourishing existence. Thus, he envisages an adequate and ever-increasing number of ordinary citizens,
effectually realizing that lawful existence translates to knowledge of the soul. This way, slowly but surely,
the peoples will begin demanding that all abide by the law.

Empowered by the masses and feeling the wind of change on their backs, the community of citizens
of superior merit will increasingly conquer vice, bringing into unconcealment political machinations.
Most importantly, Aristotle understood that the advancing force of political knowledge within the
community of ennobled citizens of accomplishment would by necessity, in the light of arête, psychē, and
eudaimonia, keep-check on self and other; hence, safeguard justice through equitable laws and
democratic procedures.35

*Ethica Nikomachea* brings moral and political philosophy down to earth, making it more accessible
to a significant number of citizens. Of course, the primary audience Aristotle addresses is not
philosophers but worthy householders and citizens of superior merit, some of whom perhaps aspire to
become philosophers. Unquestionably, Aristotle’s original intention to enthuse a good number of already
refined meritorious persons toward fulfilling an advanced order of the ethical life evinces his
megalopsychia (greatness of soul). His is indeed an advancing vision that promotes the marriage of
heaven and earth in psychē and politeia. His beneficent understanding of the meaning of soul illumines
best its profound and most humane relation to paideia and eudaimonia. Above all, his comprehension of
psychē advances anthrōpos to apprehend arête, philia, nomos, dikaios, politeike, theos, and episteme, in and
as the flourishing of *polis* and *kosmos*. His is a heartfelt love for the earth and anthrōpos.

Henceforth, Aristotle’s benevolent and holistic vision, his highest intention in educating citizens of
quality bears the more practical effective and realizable political aim and concern of ameliorating,
enriching, and upgrading the social and political reality of the masses, and society as a whole. He
unequivocally counts on the soundness of mind and greatness of soul, the benevolence and friendship, of
citizens of superior merit, to bring flourishing existence to the city-states and the nation of Hellas,
embracing the whole order of being as such.

35 Even today, the magnanimous beings of higher virtue seem to be on the rise; they are those great souls that hold in
the palm of their hands the noble ideas that found and establish great civilizations that flourished. Thus they are the
ones holding the key for the advancement of democracy and the blossoming of the human future. Their virtuous
activity indeed holds the towering anticipation of posterity. Aristotle is indeed a majestic forerunner of these great
souls.
Divinity Reconciles *Phrōnēsis* and the Seeming Superiority of Contemplative *Wisdom* in *Ethica Nichomachea* Book X.7-8

In chapters 7 and 8 of Book X, Aristotle presents two interrelated positions as proof for the superiority of the contemplative life of theoretic reason. Both positions are substantiated based on the self-sufficiency of the investigations of theoretical reason afford. In the first position (a), Aristotle asserts that while “the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly,” so does the brave and temperate person and all other persons who excel in any of the moral virtues (1177a29-32). However, “[...] the philosopher, even when alone, can contemplate truth, and the better, the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still, he is the most self-sufficient”. For the philosopher, because the activity of contemplation “alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action” (1177a33-b3).

In the second position (b), Aristotle concedes that our composite nature consists of a human and divine admixture, and contemplation is more akin to theoretic reason is something divine (*theion ti*); it is part of our immortal predilection (cf. 1177b27-32); therefore, we must “strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything” (1177b33-1178a2). In and through the investigations of the theoretical reason, we become immortal “so much as we can” (1177b33). Moreover, it is the power of theoretical reason to investigate truth that leads to a happy life, therefore, to live “according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man” (1178a7-8). Concluding, in chapter 8 of Book X, Aristotle resolves that human life must be modeled on the blessed and noble life of the gods, for they are the most self-sufficient beings. Unlike humans, the gods do not participate in any form of productive activity; therefore, they need neither law nor justice. They live in pure contemplation, perfect happiness.

However, contradictorily, if we take a close reading of Aristotle’s opening paragraph of chapter 7 (Book X), we will realize that he is skeptical as to whether theoretic reason (or *nous*) is the highest, most noble and divine element in us. He states:

> If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said (1177a11-18).

Although in chapter 7 of Book X, Aristotle consummately apportions hierarchical standing to the investigative power of theoretical reason based on the self-sufficiency argument. In the opening paragraph of the same chapter, he formulates an indefinite uncertainty regarding the supremacy of divine reason.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{36}\) Broadie and Long illumine well the Aristotelian conception of how human life ought to model itself on the blessed life of the gods. Cf. Broadie, “Philosophical Introduction.” In Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics, op. Cit.* 5; Long, A. A., “Aristotle on eudaimonia, *nous*, and divinity.” In Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics – A Critical Guide, op. Cit.* 9. Elsewhere, Broadie makes a point that piety towards the gods is one of Aristotle’s “commonly esteemed excellences.” Cf. Broadie, S., “Aristotelian Piety,” *Phronesis* 48 (1, 2003), 54-70, 54. In Aristotle’s *Politics*, Broadie points out (56), the Stagirite “takes it for granted that the *polis*, the necessary matrix for developing good and happy individuals, will attend to the cults of the gods, and that this is one of the most important public duties” (cf. *Politics VI*, 1322b19-29; VII, 1328b11 and 22; 1329a26-34; 1330a8; 1331b4-7 and 17-18).

\(^{37}\) Brown in his “Introduction” to *The Nichomachean Ethics (op. Cit.*) 1, affirms that when Aristotle in chapter 7 of Book X ascertains that reason is “the best thing in us,” he is not speaking about “reason in general” but only “one aspect of reason [...]. It is the aspect that studies unchanging objects and necessary truths; the highest activity is contemplation, and its virtue is wisdom (*Sophia*), in that special sense confining it to excellence in *theoretical,* i.e., philosophical, thinking” (xvi-xvii). Brown’s interpretation is correct. It is based on Aristotle’s discussion of the self-
He is at odds: wonders whether “the best thing in us” is the divine reason or whether there is “something else,” another more significant divine element within us—“thought to be our natural ruler and guide”—that transcends divine reason. However, let us carefully decipher Aristotle’s intended meaning in the opening paragraph of chapter 7 (Book X). The words “something else” are the main focus of the inquiry at hand.

Aristotle is uncertain as to whether there exists within us another element—“something else”—more divine apart from divine reason (first case), or whether ‘reason’ is the most divine (second case). Accordingly, if this other more divine element this “something else” exists (first case), it namely must be that “which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide,” that which moves us “to take thought of things noble and divine.” However, Aristotle’s intended meaning is best clarified when he asks, “whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us.” The ‘it’ refers to reason.

In the first case, if ‘reason’ “be itself also divine,” it means that there is an element of divinity within us—“something else”—more divine that transcends divine reason. If this is the case, then this “most,” divine something (theion ti) that exists beyond reason, is “our natural ruler and guide.” Further, it is this most divine, something—that moves or guides us “to take thought of things noble and divine”; moreover, the attainment of perfect happiness occurs in and through the contemplative activity of this “something else” divine.

Now in the second case, if ‘reason’ is “the most divine element in us,” then “our natural ruler and guide” is wholly motivated by reason. Hence, it is ‘reason’ that moves us to “take thought of things noble and divine,” and the attainment of perfect happiness occurs in and through the contemplative activity of divine reason. Therefore, in the second case, there is nothing (else) more divine within than divine reason; ‘reason’ is the best thing in us (cf. 1178a8).

Notwithstanding, in the ensuing discussion of chapter 7 (Book X), Aristotle seems to forget the initial question he raised in the opening paragraph of the chapter; he proceeds on the premise that reason is: “only the most divine element in us” (1177a16). Without a second thought, he bases the rest of his discussion in Book X.7 on the self-sufficiency argument, telling us, that theoretic reason, which investigates first principles and necessary truths, “more than anything else is man” (1178a8): “it is the authoritative and better part of him” (1178a2-3). He appears to have entirely forgotten that in the opening paragraph of the chapter as mentioned above, he leaves the question open as to whether the divine reason is in actuality “the best thing in us, […] the most divine element” (cf. 1177a13-16). In essence, he...
overlooks that merely two pages before he ascertained that “something else” beyond divine reason may be the most divine element in us. Alternatively, he decides that divine reason is the best thing in us and, therefore, decisively closes the question.

Put otherwise, Aristotle completely (or perhaps decisively) disregards his previous quest where he allowed the possibility that what is, namely, “thought to be our natural ruler and guide” might be more akin to divinity than divine reason and, therefore, it is the best and most divine part in us. However, on the other hand, if the question remains an open quest, it means that more than every other thing, this divine element in us, this “something else,” is more akin to the being we are. It is our most authoritative guide and ruler; it is that which overcomes in might and expansiveness, the investigative powers of theoretic reason in matters of contemplative truth. Furthermore, if this is the case, contemplation is the most loved for its own sake because it brings us closer to the closest divine-thing-within, namely “our natural ruler and guide”; that is, it brings us closer to the divine than the closeness of divine reason in us.

Notwithstanding, for one reason or other, these potentials behoove Aristotle as he does not further investigate the possibility of that “something else” his inquiry first initiated at the beginning of his quest. However, no matter what, it should be noted that Aristotle posed the question; therefore, the quest for that “something else” forever remains open—for him. It endures as an open possibility, regardless of whether he perhaps decisively closed the possibility of a most divine something other than divine reason in the ensuing discussion of X.7.

Most importantly: what is the gist of the matter concerning the opening paragraph of chapter 7 (Book X)? In effect, Aristotle is directly confronting the impossibility of determining through reason as to whether there is something beyond reason. The only way to ascertain whether the divine in us surpasses divine reason is to experientially attain, at least for some time, the purest so-called higher contemplative life of theoria. Then, only then, one may unequivocally proclaim with the might of certainty, that the inner realization of the divine bespeaks, even ere but a while, the silencing of reason as such. Nevertheless, there is a catch: what persists and endures with any such claim is that it suffers the lack of proof.

Furthermore, even if one discovers in and through direct experience the silencing of reason as a contemplative fact of being, all they can say is that in us abide, divine reason and “something else” divine beyond “reason.” The two are conjoined. Both together compose our most authoritative guide and ruler. In the final analysis, it is incorrect to even pose the issue at hand as an ‘either/or’ question.

Be as it may, we can never really decipher Aristotle’s intended meaning in the opening paragraph of chapter 7 (Book X). The only thing we can indubitably ascertain is that even though in the opening paragraph, he leaves open the question as to what is the most divine element in us, in the ensuing discussion of the same chapter he does proclaim that the investigations of theoretical or divine reason indeed constitute the highest realization of philosophic wisdom. Notwithstanding, in Ethica Eudemia (hereafter EE), Aristotle’s claim is straightforward and leaves no doubt regarding the place of reason within us. In EE, he marshals that the divine transcends intellectual accomplishments and all rational understanding (cf. 1249b12-25). Here, the search focuses on discovering, uncovering, and recovering, “the commencement of movement” (EE 1248a24). We should also keep in mind that in De Anima and Metaphysics (as discussed in the previous section), movement commences in the divine element-within-us; it pertains to the human psychē.

Aristotle’s passage in Ethica Eudemia reads:

The object of our search is this—what is the commencement of movement in the soul? The answer is clear: as in the universe, so in the soul, god moves everything. For, in a sense, the divine element in us moves everything. The starting-point of reasoning is not reasoning, but something greater. What, then, could be greater even than knowledge and intellect but god? (1248a24-27)³⁹

³⁹ One line down, Aristotle says:
Here, Aristotle decrees that “the starting-point of reasoning is not reasoning” (1248a26). He essentially points out that we cannot know what the starting point of reasoning is through reasoning. For as he says: “the starting-point of reasoning is not reasoning, but something greater.” Now, a few most provocative questions arise in the probing mind. If god commences movement in the soul, does god do so from the outside? Moreover, how can we know that god is the unmoved mover if god as the unmoved was not already in the soul moving it?

Is god something like an efficient first cause that moves all things in the universe and the soul from the outside, without bearing an intrinsically direct relation to them, without existing within them? Further, how can Aristotle (or anyone) have an apprehension that god surpasses in greatness episteme (knowledge) and nous (intellect) if, in some way, god was not directly accessible within his soul? Or else, is Aristotle’s conception of god a first principle, derived through theoretic reason probing ad infinitum down the chain of causality?

In this small passage, Aristotle definitively answers all the above questions. For him, god is a living actuality. God, the unmoved initiates movement in the soul; god not only moves everything in the universe and the soul from the outside. The unmoved also moves everything in the universe and soul from within us. “The answer is clear,” Aristotle says, “[...] in a sense the divine element in us moves everything”. 40 Why is it a sense? Because as he goes on to elucidate, god is “something greater” than reasoning; it is “the starting-point of reasoning [...] not reasoning”. 41 Continuing, he proclaims: only god “could be greater even than knowledge and intellect.” Thus, god, the unmoved that is greater than intellect, is within the soul moving it, and we can discover it by searching inside for the commencement of movement.

Unquestionably, Aristotle had a real apprehension of the soul in its intrinsic relation to the divine (god); otherwise, he would not be painstakingly grappling with ultimate questions in Ethica Nichomachea, Ethica Eudemia, Metaphysics, De Anima, and elsewhere. However, resembling the high scholastics after him, for instance, Thomas Aquinas, he attempted to put in words what refuses enshrinement in the script. In attempting to put down in rational terms what rejects intellectual acumen or ratiocination, he is thus naturally led to paradoxical thinking. At this juncture, it ought to be made clear that what lies beyond reason must be non-dual. Moreover, non-duality bespeaks that “something else” exists, something divine, beyond all dual conceptions of ‘this’ and ‘that’—of ‘outside’ and ‘inside’, ‘higher’ and ‘lower’—otherwise, any talk about god is sheer speculative nonsense, conceived rationally under the rubric of endless causality. 42

Granted, Aristotle’s understanding of eudaimonia qua the divine cannot be ‘speculative nonsense’ since he is speaking of contemplation for the sake of contemplation. For him, contemplative wisdom does not merely pertain to the investigations of the theoretic reason it above all pertains to theoria,

[...] those are called fortunate who, whatever they start on, succeed in it without being good at reasoning. And deliberation is of no advantage to them, for they have in them a principle that is better than intellect and deliberation, while the others have not this but have intellect; they have inspiration, but they cannot deliberate. For, though lacking reason, they attain the attribute of the prudent and wise—that their divination is speedy; and we must mark off as included in it all but the judgment that comes from reasoning; in some cases it is due to experience, in others to habituation in the use of reflection: and both experience and habituation use God. This quality sees well the future and the present, and these are the men in whom the reasoning-power is relaxed (EE 1248a29-40).

40 Italics added.
41 Italics added.
42 Put otherwise, meeting the divine beyond the movement of rational cognition or the ministrations of divine nous, in and through so-called highest contemplation, annuls all sense of duality. Thus, one may say that from the vantage point of attaining contemplative wisdom, all dualities are reconciled and resolved qua divinity-itself (for instance, the dualities of ‘lower’ and ‘higher’, or else moral virtue and intellectual virtue: prónesis and theoria).
etymologically grounded in *theos* and *theion* *ti*. Hence, the crowning lives of the immortal gods their perfect contemplation, perfect happiness, becomes the standard model to be emulated by the advancing human.

There exists a seemingly irreconcilable tension between practical and theoretical wisdom in Aristotle; it appears as an unsolvable duality and puzzle indeed a rift that Aristotle himself cannot overcome, however, the fault does not lie in his thinking. The rift simply expresses a paradox in human thought that is impossible to resolve through discursive reason. The paradox is reconciled only through the divine in contemplative wisdom; it concerns the age-old paradox between the one and the many. It is not by chance that Aristotle elucidates and illumines *eudaimonia* as *telesioteron ton agathon* only sparsely in Book X.7-8. The other extremely brief reference to the ultimate ground of human flourishing is in Book I.7. Here, referring to the function or *ergon* of man as an intelligible animal, he briefly outlines the “human good […] to be activity of soul exhibiting virtue, and if there are more than one virtue”, they must be “in accordance with the best and most complete.” Continuing, he states the attainment of *eudaimonia* occurs over “a complete life” (*teleion bion*); for indeed: “a short time, does not make a man blessed (*makarion*) and happy (*eudaimon*)” (1098a15-18). After Aristotle’s brief sketch of *eudaimonia* as best and most complete good in Book I.7—whereby completeness means the inclusiveness of a multiplicity of virtues—he postpones the discussion of ‘happiness’ as the chief good, assuring us that he will return to it later, only to pick-it-up again nine Books down in X.7-8.

Most modern scholars contend that in Book I.7, Aristotle’s brief outline of *eudaimonia* as the apex and most complete virtue refers to the one highest virtue as being inclusive of a multiplicity of virtues. On the other hand, the so-called exclusivists basing their interpretation on Book X.7 claim that *eudaimonia* is a single higher virtue exclusive to contemplative wisdom. Modern scholarship has mostly in vain tried to resolve the seemingly irreconcilable puzzle between practical and theoretical wisdom through the introduction of the distinction between inclusive and exclusive virtue. However, it is beyond the scope to discuss these matters. As previously stated, the paradox between the one and the many is impossible to resolve through discursive reason. Undoubtedly, much is illumined and can be learned from the voluminous literature comprising the recent discussion, but, in the final analysis, to add another duality (inclusive/exclusive) in order to resolve Aristotle’s already existing duality between practical and theoretical wisdom seems pointless and effectively only deepens the chasm.

In the final analysis, it seems that in Aristotle, the contemplative realization of “the most divine element in us” constitutes the single and “highest virtue, […] perfect happiness” (1177a11-18). The attainment of the chief good of eudemonic being is so to speak, what reconciles and unites in itself the multiplicity of virtuous and intellectual activities; thus, evermore clears the tension between practical and theoretical wisdom, elevating the aim of moral philosophical and political life to the noblest stature it deserves. *Phrônêsis* and *theoria* meet wherein supreme human happiness coalesces with the soul; and

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political *eudaimonia qua* the divine is their effectual meeting ground, bequeathing the flourishing of *psychē* and *polis*: excellence and totality.

Unquestionably, Aristotle in Book X.7 claims that contemplative wisdom (*theoria*) is superior to practical wisdom (*phrōnesis*) when it comes to apprehending supreme *eudaimonia*. However, this seems to be the case only when the ultimacy of *theoria* is perceived from the perspective of practical wisdom and not from the vantage point of perfect happiness realized in and through contemplative wisdom. As already pointed out, from the vantage point of attaining the so-called highest contemplation—the perfect eudemonic excellence—all tensions and dualities like those of *praxis* and *theoria* are dissolved; there is no ‘higher’ and ‘lower,’ no ‘one’ and ‘many.’ Human happiness is unimpeded, happiness (cf. 1152b).

In the grandeur skim of the ethical life, Aristotle’s moral and political philosophy prioritizes *phrōnesis*, and the cultivation of intellectual virtues, and not the so-called superior *eudaimonia* attained through contemplative wisdom. It is no surprise then that Aristotle in *EN* elucidates in *passim* *eudaimonia* as the chief good in Book I.7; and only toward the very end of the ethical treatise (viz. Book X.7-8) does he return to a very brief discussion of supreme happiness as *to teleiōteron tôn agathōn* (the most perfect of goods). As previously indicated, the bulk of the ethical treatise is concerned with *phrōnesis* since practical wisdom is foundational to the education of citizens of superior refinement.

Aristotle is primarily addressing citizens of superior quality, and only secondarily addresses philosophers or aspiring philosophers. The ethical treatise illumines what the Stagirite considers is the best way to bring about the flourishing of the *polis* and its peoples. Of course, Aristotle favors *phrōnesis* not because the cultivation of moral virtue brings the highest happiness to the most considerable number of people. His ethical philosophy is not utilitarian. That a more significant number of people will benefit is the effectual truth. Instead, his primary ethical aim concerns ameliorating the political affairs of the city-state. Principally, he focuses on the best and most practical way to institute justice by amending the constitution of the *politeia*. His care for improving the institutions of government is his immeasurable love for the *polis* and its citizens.

Indeed, Aristotle understands the need and benefit for a select few philosophers who realize supreme *eudaimonia* in and as the pinnacle of contemplative wisdom. Nonetheless, he ascertains it is the persistent actualization of excellence by a larger group of citizens of superior merit that brings the most overall happiness to the *polis*, its peoples, and the whole of human activity and life.

However, one may again ask: but why does Aristotle in Book X.7 outrightly proclaim that the life of contemplative wisdom is superior to *phrōnesis*, it is the happiest? Admittedly, it would be a significant omission and an error in matters of truth if Aristotle did not point the way to realize the so-called highest and most perfect *eudaimonia*. After all, the attainment of the supreme order of the contemplative life of blessedness and *Sophia* to a significant degree points to the realization of that something divine which ultimately, reconciles, clears and resolves the tensions between moral virtue and intellectual virtue—*praxis* and *theoria*—as well as nullifies the corollary tensions between ethics, psychology, art, science, politics, metaphysics, and theology. 46

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45 Of course, it must be noted, supreme *eudaimonia* from the vantage point of the so-called pinnacle of contemplative wisdom is irrelevant. For as previously stated, there is no supreme happiness or happiness to a lesser degree from the vantage point of supreme eudaimonia, nor is there a pinnacle of contemplative wisdom. Happiness is happiness, and wisdom is happiness. 46 Aristotle’s moral and political philosophy bears a more practical and comprehensive spin. In saying this, we by no means imply that Aristotle’s ethics is the best in the ancient world. However, his ethical vision is perhaps the most comprehensive because it best clarifies the intrinsic relationship that holds between ‘Ethics and Psychology,’ ‘Ethics and Politics,’ ‘Ethics and Science,’ ‘Ethics and Metaphysics,’ as well as ‘Ethics and Theology.’ Irwin contends that Aristotle bases his ethical and political vision on the first principles of psychology and metaphysics. Cf. T. Irwin, Aristotle’s First Principles (Oxford University Press, 1988). Indeed, it is so. However, it appears that Aristotle found his moral and political philosophy beyond first principles, including the first principle of theology; he establishes the ‘uppermost end’ of *Philosophia* on something divine—*theion ti*—that reconciles and unites all *Principia* within-and as-it. In this respect, god is the dynamic reality—totality itself—and not a *principium*. 46
Hence, *EN* ultimately pertains to the inner cultivation of philosophical intelligence, constitutes the way through which inquiry into the moral and spiritual self-coalesces with external reality; cohering with the establishment of a proper relation between theoretic wisdom and the self-cultivated *ethos* of moral and intellectual virtue, so foundational to the study of political science.

It is neither coincidence nor extemporaneous writing that drives Aristotle in Book X.7 to only briefly examine and not illumine the most profound philosophical study of contemplative *theoria*. Indeed, he is so frugal in his exposition of the pinnacle of contemplative wisdom leading to the chief eudemonic good because, it suffices only to point the way, allude, and merely show the possibility of attaining the so-called superior theoretic life of *Sophia*. Why? One probable reason is that he reckoned that those citizens of superior virtue who excel in the life of *arête* and the intellectual study of *politike episteme*, and who evince an unequaled passion for the philosophical inquiry would in one way or other—sooner or later—discerningly, discover the path to contemplative wisdom.

However, over and above this reason, perhaps it is because not much can be said concerning the nature of contemplative wisdom as it surpasses the ministrations of reason and discursive rationality. For as previously indicated, experiential insight into the nature of divine *theoria* seems to be realized ultimately, not through noetic means but directly in contemplative existence, wherein; the movements of desire and perception, as well as those of reason and *nous*, are wholly silenced, arrested by divinity as such. Then, ere for a while, the philosopher perhaps glimpses the perfect contemplation of the gods.

Something divine—*theion ti*—seems to be the so-called pinnacle of practical and contemplative wisdom and also constitutes the furthermost and highest aim of political science. In effect, the contemplative realization of the divine-within is the single and “highest virtue […] perfect happiness,” “proper virtue” (cf. 1177a11-18); it constitutes the apex of human spirituality including, yet crowning all moral virtues and intellectual activities, therefore; seems to resolve and clear the tension between the life of divine reason and the divinity-within that transcends it.

For Aristotle, the presence of the divine is evermore disclosed in every expression of genuine wisdom issuing forth eudemonic being. No matter what, *eudaimonia* in the real sense of the term (‘eu’—the goodness – ‘daimôn’—of spirit), is the ground of divinity; and manifesting within and as *psychê*, it settles differences, harmonizes and unites. The manifestation of divinity *qua* eudemonic being is what harmonizes and unifies the many virtues with sublime *theoria*. Most importantly, eudemonic being manifesting as something divine (*theion ti*), is ever-present in *ethos* and the life of *arête*. Therefore, human flourishing becomes increasingly present in every new philosophical search concerning the nature of *arête*, enhancing the life-divine of virtue at all stages of the development of *psychê*. It is *theion ti* that potentiates, opening the way to the study of *politike episteme* and the attainment of *anthōpīnen eudaimonia*. Moreover, it is the heightened divine activity within *psychê* that ultimately moves and drives the human in and through theoretical investigations to progressively seek the profound realization of contemplative wisdom and the supreme activity of flourishing existence.

As such, the intensification of divinity within the human brings forth the co-emergent realization of practical wisdom intellectual virtue and ultimately exalted *theoria*. Effectually, the divine-within already rippling-outwardly reconciles and unites, accentuates and amplifies, intensifying at every stage of individual development the fathomless search of *Homo sapiens* for the philosophical truth of politics, science, and life. Thenceforward, it is *theion ti* that activates the human soul to work for the betterment of political life and society unceasingly. Put otherwise, something divine activates the individual student of ethics, heightening the way to contemplative wisdom only for one divine reason, so that the ennobled human devotes all meritorious activity to the welfare of the whole, wherein humanity belongs, conjoining totality.

Unequivocally, the philosopher from Stagira marshals that human flourishing is realized as the best life when students of political science do not care solely for the elevation of their welfare rather best cares for the flourishing of the collective. Thus, he states, “it is finer and more godlike to attain it [*eudaimonia*] for a nation or city-states (1094b10-11).” Most importantly, the Stagirite finds that the discovery at the
very core of psychē mirrors the most excellent order of flourishing existence, which very much like the divine-itself is intrinsically mysterious and impossible to define or decipher in toto. The uncovering of the divine element within the human psychē above disclosing the radical mystery of divine eudaimonia best unveils the wisdom of human flourishing. The marvel of the enigmatic divine something—thes or theion ti—makes the human being all the more humane; and, Homo sapiens are all the more humane when happy, serving humanity in service to the god.

The following quote from Ethica Eudemia speaks for itself:

[...] so it is with the theoretic faculty; for god is not an imperative ruler, but is the end with a view to which prudence issues its commands (the word ‘end’ is ambiguous, and has been distinguished elsewhere), for god at least needs nothing. What choice, then, or possession of the natural goods—whether bodily goods, wealth, friends, or other things—will most produce the contemplation of god, that choice or possession is best; this is the noblest standard, but any that through deficiency or excess hinders one from the contemplation and service of god is bad; this man possesses in his soul, and this is the best standard for the soul—to perceive the irrational part of the soul, as such, as little as possible. So much, then, for the standard of perfection and the object of the absolute goods (1249b12-25).

With similar reasoning, the real application of philosophical and epistemic knowledge in Ethica Nikomachea bears the unfolding of human-divine activity in both the private and public spheres. Philosophical wisdom, the contemplative excellence of theoria, bearing its roots in theos and theion ti, ultimately ushers the prakteon—anthrōpinen eudaimonia—thereby, assures the well-being of kosmos and politeia. As for theos and theion ti, it is that “something else,” which brings to the whole of life a blessed and godlike, flourishing existence. The human being discovers its paramount humanity when it best serves the divine.

In the Place of Conclusion

Aristotle concurs that all sagacious persons comprehend the pinnacle of eudaimonia in likeness to the divine to the highest possible degree. He ascertains that the wise agree that human flourishing is the chief good achievable by action and that arête the life of excellence, is a prerequisite for achieving political eudemonic existence. The Stagirite further recognizes that the wise differ in their vision of how moral existence may best spread out to ethicize and transform the whole of the social and political order.

However, he thinks that even if a few select individuals achieve supreme eudaimonia, the apex of philosophic wisdom, it would be extraordinarily tricky perhaps an impossible task for them to transform the social and political order of the city-state; mainly since the politicians had grown accustomed to all sorts of illegality and corruption. Further, it would be infeasible for a few wise adepts to convince the majority of citizens—the polloi—those habituated to all sorts of vice, bogged down, encumbered, and unwilling to question their erroneous beliefs regarding pleasure and happiness.

In this respect, Aristotle’s vision in Ethica Nikomachea best clarifies his differing method, constitutes a novel proposition on how to confront and resolve the ills and tribulations that plague the polis. He calls on competent householders, worthy politicians, and all citizens of superior refinement to take their moral and intellectual development to heart, essentially calling them to embrace the study of political science. The Stagirite is confident that the comprehensive science of politics will enable the knowledge that, when unimpeded, eudaimonia bids together nomos, dikaios, arête, psychē, episteme, and politeia. Once this intrinsic interrelation is understood and cleared, it is a matter of time for the exemplary virtuous existence of meritorious citizens to remodel in concurrence to eudemonic being the city-state’s culture, traditions, beliefs, government institutions, and peoples.
Most importantly, Aristotle does not expect citizens of higher merit to become contemplative philosophers of the so-called highest wisdom. Nevertheless, admittedly, he leaves this possibility open. Thus, aside from citizens of quality, his ethical treatise addresses aspiring philosophers.

The superiority that Aristotle allots to contemplative or divine theoria in the latter part of his ethical treatise (Book X.7-8), where, he establishes a hierarchy between phrònēsis (practical wisdom) and theoria (contemplative wisdom), ascertaining the higher standing of the latter, is a claim that inevitably leads him into paradox. Nevertheless, in the opening paragraph of chapter 7 (Book X), he also considers that perhaps contemplative wisdom surpasses divine reason, therefore, any form of duality between ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ between praxis and theoria. As such, eudaimonia qua contemplation is the constitutive non-dual ground of the human soul that unimpededly manifests itself in the eudaimôn for the sake of happiness.

Further, sublime theoria—its root enduring in theos or theion ti—bears the ontological power of totality, therefore, may irretrievably potentiate complete conversion in the moral and spiritual life of the individual and so doing; appears to unite practical and theoretical wisdom in service to the divine in humans. The moral conversion qua divine theoria is precisely the magnificance that effectually transforms the human psychē to an ennobled and integrated person of subtle self-refinement, in whom both practical excellence and contemplative wisdom cohere and benevolently reconcile, coalescing: into a single virtuous activity (Sophia) that benefits humanity and the whole of the social and political order.

This way, Aristotle seems to contend that the divine activity of contemplative wisdom spreading-out for the sake of the whole of human welfare annuls, perhaps, withdraws the appearance of hierarchy. However, his primary purpose in most of the text (from Book I to Book X.6-8) is to disclose ways that moral excellence and the intellectual study of political science may potentially elevate both individual and politeia to a more humane and constitutionally virtuous way of life. He appropriately reminds us that the uncovering of the divine element within us discloses not divine but human happiness and wisdom, which given the direction of EN, essentially translates to individual and collective political eudaimonia qua the divine (theion ti).

Henceforth, Ethica Nikomachea opens the meaningful possibility of cultivating genuine political happiness by advancing flourishing existence in psychē and politeia. Above all, Aristotle’s ethical treatise highpoints a blessed life in fulfilling service to homo politicus et homo scientificus (the political and scientific human); the kind of human that vigilantly and wholeheartedly embraces the life of ethical self-cultivation thereby, accentuates evermore the creative involvement with art (techne) and knowledge (episteme). For the Stagirite, homo politicus et homo scientificus integrates assimilates, compliments the interior spiritual sphere of homo humanus qua homo philosophicus et homo divinus: qua totalitas (through the philosophical and divine-human: through totality).

Thus, Aristotle’s ethical inquiry in EN evinces ways that moral and political philosophy may best potentiate today’s interdisciplinary understanding and dynamics. The way forward for future interdisciplinary studies seems to lie in the ethical and philosophical apprehension of eudaimonia. Eudemonic being encircles, reconciles, and unites all spheres of knowledge and human activity, self-perfecting paideia for the sake of the collective. It bestows the beneficence of friendship (philotis), cooperation in politics and life, and, most importantly, eleutheriotis as such: the philosophic wisdom of ultimate freedom. Hence, the practice of eudemonic ethics in all spheres of epistemic truth potentiates evermore ethos and megalopsychia (greatness of soul). Eudaimonia qua megalopsychia grants the vast openness of soul that unendingly works for self-ushering excellence in education, and the blossoming of humanity and culture.