

Central Features of Aristotle's Fundamental Protreptic Argument in the *Protrepticus*

1. Introduction

A protreptic argument is an argument whose conclusion is that the intended audience should pursue philosophy. The central premise of such an argument is that philosophy is required to achieve something of significant, if not supreme value. The thing of value is a certain cognitive state, *sophia*. Consequently a protreptic argument is also likely to include premises concerning the nature of *sophia*.

"*Sophia*" is commonly rendered as "wisdom." Assuming this rendition,¹ it follows that a protreptic argument will centrally consist of premises concerning the value of wisdom, and that it is likely also to include premises concerning the nature of wisdom. Both topics, the value and the nature of wisdom, in fact feature in the arguments of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*.

According to Hutchinson and Johnson's reconstruction of the text, three historical characters – Isocrates, Heraclides, and Aristotle himself – each advocates a distinct view of the nature of wisdom and of its value for human life. I will proceed by assuming that this tripartite structure of their reconstruction is correct. Granted this, my aim here is to examine a protreptic argument advanced by the character Aristotle. I say "a" protreptic argument of Aristotle's because Aristotle advances several, at least three, distinct protreptic arguments in the text.

For reasons of space, I restrict my focus to Aristotle's most fundamental protreptic argument. As we will see, this argument is developed over numerous passages. As far as I can tell, it is in fact the most elaborate protreptic argument in the text. But, elaborate or succinct, my claim that the argument is Aristotle's most "fundamental" one owes to the thought that the argument depends on Aristotle's most basic value theoretic commitments, precisely on Aristotle's most basic commitments regarding the nature of goodness. Given the complexity of the interpretive issues relating to the argument and the limits of space and time here, I will restrict myself even further to central features of the argument – hence my title.

In explicating the central features of Aristotle's fundamental protreptic argument in the *Protrepticus* I will liberally appeal to views that Aristotle advances in his esoteric works, for example in *Posterior Analytics*, *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *On the Soul*. Of course, I will only appeal to evidence from the esoteric works that I take to be consistent with the contents of the *Protrepticus* and that I believe sheds light on these contents. But consistency and illumination are not equivalent to strict interpretive fidelity. So I acknowledge, in fact underscore the following exegetical danger in my liberal appeals to the esoteric works: even though the resulting interpretation may adhere to

Aristotelian philosophy generally, it risks not being strictly faithful to the content of the *Protrepticus*. In short, the danger is that I *over*-interpret the *Protrepticus*.

Finally, I will have a little, but only a little to say about how Aristotle's views of the nature and value of wisdom relate to and in particular differ from the views of Isocrates and Heraclides.

With these introductory points in mind, I turn now to Aristotle's conception of wisdom in his fundamental protreptic argument in the *Protrepticus*.

2. Aristotle's Conception of the Goal of Philosophy in the *Protrepticus*

On p.12 of Hutchinson and Johnson's booklet, Aristotle says:

- 1 "[the philosopher] seems to have a drive (*pathos*) for a certain knowledge (*epistêmês tinos*) that is honorable (*timias*) in itself and not on account of anything else resulting from it."

On p.14 Aristotle says:

- 2 "It is agreed that there are certain forms of knowledge that are choiceworthy (*hairetai*) for themselves and not only for what results from them. And this is possible either only or especially for the forms of knowledge that are contemplative (*theôrêtikais*), because their end (*telos*) is nothing else than the contemplation (*theôria*)."

So for Aristotle the *telos* of the philosopher is an *epistêmê* that is choiceworthy for its own sake. More precisely it is choiceworthy just for the *theôria* that it provides. So contemplative knowledge is choiceworthy for its own sake; and the *telos* of philosophy, as Aristotle sees it, is some such contemplative knowledge. I underscore that it is *some such* contemplative knowledge, not any and every form of contemplative knowledge. Again consider the phrase "some knowledge" in (1).

So what exactly is the kind of contemplative knowledge that the Aristotelian philosopher seeks? I do not see that in the extant *Protrepticus* fragments Aristotle clearly commits himself. Granting this, on p.14 he mentions two or three criteria for choiceworthiness of forms of knowledge:

- 5 "We choose (*hairoumetha*) one form of knowledge over another either because of its precision (*akribeia*) or because it is contemplative of what is better (*beltionôn*) and more honorable (*timiôterôn*)."

The fact that Aristotle introduces these criteria of choiceworthiness for forms of knowledge suggests that the form of contemplative knowledge that the philosopher seeks is the most choiceworthy, and that the most choiceworthy

form of contemplative knowledge is the most precise (*akribês*) or that its objects are the best and most honorable.

In view of such choiceworthiness criteria, Aristotle, on p.14, mentions both mathematical knowledge in general and astronomy, as a particular form of mathematical knowledge, as candidates:

- 6 "Of these forms of knowledge [namely, the contemplative ones] everyone would agree that precision belongs especially to the forms of knowledge that are mathematical. And there are several who assign the aforementioned seat (*proedria*) to the principles that are first (*tais archais tais prôtais*), but they maintain that the nature of the principle is proper to numbers and lines and their properties, because of the simplicity of its substance."
- 7 "Again the objects that are observed in heaven have the most honorable and most divine place of the things that are perceptible to us and are naturally cognized by astronomy, which is in fact one of the forms of mathematical knowledge."

What exactly does Aristotle mean by "precision" (*akribeia*)? In the *Protrepticus* he does not explain his use of the term. However we can determine what Aristotle means on the basis of his explicit conception of *epistêmê* in *Posterior Analytics*, including related remarks in the inquiries that constitute the *Metaphysics*. For Aristotle, as for Plato before him and for the Stoics after them, *epistêmê* is explanatory knowledge, in a word, understanding. This means that one who has *epistêmê* has a cognitive grasp of certain contents and that this cognitive grasp consists in an understanding of those contents. By "understanding" here I do not mean that the possessor understands what the relevant terms mean. Of course he has that sort of semantic understanding. Rather, the understanding in question is conceived as aetiological, that is, as consisting in a grasp of the *aitia*, which is to say a grasp of the explanation of the thing known. Compare Aristotle's succinct statement in *Posterior Analytics*:

"We think we know (*epistasthai*) each thing in an unqualified way when we think we cognize, of the *aitia* (explanatory factor) of the thing [known], that it is the *aitia* of that thing. (71b9-12)

Conceived as such, understanding is a form of internalist justification. One grasps the reasons for such-and-such being true, but these reasons fundamentally consist of explanatory principles; and from these explanatory principles the truth of the contents are derived, indeed deductively inferred or at least inferable.

Accordingly, by "most precise form of knowledge" I take Aristotle to mean the form of knowledge that has the greatest explanatory depth. And by

"explanatory depth" I mean that the explanatory principles of the form of knowledge in question are fundamental, that is, primary. Insofar as they are primary, the principles of the knowledge in question cannot themselves be explained by appeal to some other, more fundamental form of *epistêmê*. In short the most precise form of contemplative knowledge is knowledge of first principles.

Observe in (6) that this characterization of the most precise form of contemplative knowledge is explicit: "there are several who assign the aforementioned seat (*proedria*) to the principles that are first (*tais archais tais prôtais*)." Observe further that while mathematics is here considered as satisfying this description, it is clear – at least in the *Metaphysics* – that Aristotle does not think that mathematics or some particular mathematical form of knowledge is the most precise form of contemplative knowledge. Observe also that in (7) Aristotle says that "the objects that are observed in heaven have the most honorable and most divine place of the things *that are perceptible to us*." (my italics) This does not entail that these objects have the most honorable and divine place *tout court*. Indeed in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle expressly claims that they do not. Instead, the primary unmoved mover, which is the supreme divinity and which is not a perceptible entity, does. For other reasons relating to the explication of Aristotle's protreptic argument I will return to this point about the honorability and value of the primary unmoved mover below.

Presently, let me summarize the preceding results. According to Aristotle's conception of the wisdom that the philosopher seeks, this cognitive achievement must satisfy the following conditions:

1. it must be choiceworthy for its own sake.
- 2a. it must be of first principles or
- 2b. its objects must be best and most honorable.

Apparently only contemplative knowledge satisfies the first condition. Moreover, in the surviving fragments of the *Protrepticus*, it is unclear what satisfies conditions 2a or 2b. Aristotle entertains as candidates both mathematics generally and astronomy specifically. But I believe that Aristotle's own view – as examined in the *Metaphysics* – is that neither mathematics nor astronomy satisfies conditions 2a and 2b.

Observe now that Aristotle's commitment to condition 1 entails a rejection of Isocrates' conception of philosophy; for the character and historical individual. Isocrates holds that the wisdom that philosophy pursues must be instrumental rather than choiceworthy for its own sake.

With respect to conditions 2a and 2b, Aristotle's consideration of mathematics and astronomy are, I think, intended to engage the philosophical commitments of the character and, I presume, historical philosopher Heraclides. In offering this suggestion, I also want to register a fundamental point of disagreement between myself, on the one hand, and Hutchinson and Johnson, on

the other. Hutchinson and Johnson's broad view of the *Protrepticus* is that the conception of wisdom that Aristotle advances in the text consists of a kind of synthesis of the relatively extreme positions of Isocrates and Heraclides. On Hutchinson and Johnson's view Isocrates advocates the pursuit of wisdom conceived as a form of instrumental practical knowledge, whereby wisdom is applied to the pursuit of things like honor and pleasure, things which are viewed as goods or ends in themselves. In contrast Heraclides advocates the pursuit of wisdom conceived as purely contemplative knowledge. And, so Hutchinson and Johnson maintain, Aristotle advocates the pursuit of wisdom conceived as knowledge that is both contemplative and practical.

In contrast, I see both Heraclides and Aristotle advocating for contemplative knowledge as the *telos* of philosophy. However, I think that they have different views of the contemplative knowledge in question. Heraclides is committed to this knowledge being mathematical and astronomical, whereas Aristotle views it otherwise.

3. Aristotle's Conception of the Value of the Wisdom that is the Goal of Philosophy

3.1. The Superiority of the Soul to the Body

Assuming that we have Aristotle's conception of wisdom— however indeterminate— correctly in view, I now want to turn to Aristotle's conception of the special value of this wisdom. In other words, I want to examine why Aristotle thinks that wisdom, as he conceives it, has special value for human life and should therefore be a keen object of human pursuit.

I begin with Aristotle's claim that soul is better, in other words, of greater value, than body.

On page 20 of the booklet Aristotle claims that:

- 1 "... soul is better than body, being more ruling (*archikôteron*) in its nature ..."

Compare Aristotle's similar remark on p.34 of the booklet:

- 2 "That which is by nature more ruling (*archikôteron*) and more commanding (*mallon hêgemonikon*) is better, as a human is in relation to the other animals. Therefore soul is better than body, for it is more ruling."

So in these passages Aristotle both states that the value of soul is greater than that of body and provides an explanation of this superiority: the soul in its nature (*physis*) is more ruling. Consequently, we may consider two questions: In what sense is soul in its nature more ruling than body? And why does this make soul better than body?²

With regard to the first question, I can find little interpretive assistance in the *Protrepticus* itself. For assistance I turn several esoteric sources. One is Aristotle's account of soul in *On the Soul*, in particular his account of the broad range of vital capacities for which the soul is responsible. By "vital" capacities I mean the capacities of living things. These capacities include what we call "psychological" capacities, such as capacities for motivation, perception, and thought; but they also include capacities for nutrition, growth, reproduction, and locomotion. The other source of assistance is Aristotle claims that soul rules body in several passages of his esoteric works. In particular, consider the following one from the beginning of the *Politics*:

"It is in a living being (*zôôî*), as we say, that it is first possible to observe both despotic (*despotikên*) and political rule (*politikên archên*). The soul rules (*archei*) the body with a despotic rule; the mind rules desire with a political or royal (*basilikên*) rule." (1254b3-7)

The distinction that Aristotle invokes here between so-called despotic and political or royal rule appears to turn on distinctions among the capacities of the entities said to be ruled. The body per se completely lacks vital capacities. In contrast, desire is a vital capacity, indeed a psychological capacity. As such, the soul's rule over the body differs from the mind's rule over desire.

If we apply the content of the *Politics* passage to (1) and (2) of the *Protrepticus*, we derive the view that soul rules over body despotically. According to this conception, in conjunction with the discussion of vital functions in *On the Soul*, we can say that almost all vital functions are realized through the collaboration of soul and body. I say "almost all" because certain forms of thought involve only soul. But— ignoring this exceptional case for now— although vital functions involve the collaboration of both body and soul, the roles played by each differ. Soul literally determines the vital functions, the manner and means of realizing them. More fundamentally, soul literally shapes and structures body in order to create functional organs that capacitate the living being to then realize vital functions. As such, soul clearly governs the vital activity that soul and body collaboratively perform.

Granting then that soul is more governing than body, why think that because of this soul is better than body? I underscore that it is no satisfactory answer to this question to claim that a ruler is superior to a subordinate. If by "superior" we mean something like "rules over," then we have a trivial truth. But if by "superior" we mean "better," then we are begging the question. So why is a ruler better than that which is ruled?

In a first attempt to answer this question, I propose to turn to Aristotle's fundamental view of goodness. I underscore that I draw the following general points from Aristotle's esoteric ethical works. However there are some passages from the *Protrepticus* that expressly state aspects of them.

3.2. Aristotle's Functional Conception of Goodness

Let me start here with a semantic observation of my own. I will then connect this observation to Aristotle's theory. I proceed in this way because I believe that Aristotle's conception of goodness is in some respect true, and I want to suggest an intuitive way of appreciating that it is so.

Consider the following sentences: "That atom is good"; "That shadow is good." Although they are syntactically simple and consist of familiar words, these sentences are odd and difficult to interpret. But consider now the use of the first sentence in the following context. A physicist and her assistant have access to a microscope powerful enough to render images of individual atoms. Some atoms appear more clearly than others. Given a relatively clear image of an atom the physicist turns the microscope over to the assistant and says: "Have a look, that atom is good." With regard to the second sentence, imagine two sisters using their hands to make shadows on their bedroom wall; one girl is entertained by a certain shadow and says to the other: "That shadow is good." These considerations encourage the thought that the meaning of "good" is associated with purposes, for as soon as we recognize a contextually supplied purpose for atoms and shadows, the intelligibility of the sentences clicks into place.

Aristotle seems to have appreciated a similar point with respect to "*agathon*," the Greek term that we translate as "good." Rather than explaining goodness in terms of purposes, however, Aristotle explains it in terms of ends and functions. For example, at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6 Aristotle poses the question: What is the good (*tagathon*) in each action and skill? And he answers:

"Isn't it that for the sake of which (*hou charin*) all else (*ta loipa*) is done?" (1097a18-19)³

For example, he says, in medicine that for the sake of which all medical actions are performed is health; and in building that for the sake of which all actions of building are performed is a house or a building. Aristotle explicitly calls each of these things for the sake of which the skills are exercised and the actions performed an "end" (*telos*):

"In every action and choice, [that for the sake of the action or choice] is the end (*to telos*)." (1097a21-22)

So Aristotle expresses a conception of goodness in terms of that for the sake of which an action is performed or a skill is exercised; and he claims that that for the sake of which an action is performed or a skill is exercised is an end. Simplifying, let us say that Aristotle here expresses a conception of goodness in terms of ends.

Shortly after the preceding passages, Aristotle characterizes goodness in terms of functions:

"For a flute player or sculptor or a skilled individual of any kind, and universally (*holôs*) of a thing that has some function (*ergon*) and activity (*praxis*), the good (*tagathon*) and the [doing] well (*to eu*) [for that thing] seems to lie in its function (*ergôî*)." (1097a26-28)

Flute playing and sculpting are skills, and the functions associated with these skills consist in the exercise of the skills. But Aristotle also recognizes functions that are not the exercise of skill and indeed are not actions. Immediately after the sculpting and flute playing passage, he states that "the eye, hand, foot, and each of the parts of the body" also has a function (1097a31-32). For example, the function of the eye is to see; but seeing is not an action. In short, Aristotle recognizes goodness in natural as well as in artificial functions.

Aristotle's conceptions of goodness in terms of ends and in terms of natural and artificial functions are unifiable insofar as functions are ends. Taking a line from Allan Gotthelf, I suggest that for Aristotle, an end is the actualization or realization of a potential for form;⁴ more precisely an end is the actualization of a potential for form that occurs through a natural biological process or through a deliberate artificial process.

Functions are one such actualization. In *On the Soul* Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of actualization, which he calls "primary" and "secondary." This distinction relates to the fact that for an entity that has a function, to exercise that function it must have the capacity to do so. The capacity that enables the function is the primary actualization. The function itself, that is, the exercise of the capacity, is the secondary actualization.

Capacities and functions are both ends. But primary actualizations exist for the sake of secondary actualizations. So functions are, if we may put it this way, ultimate ends. Observe that this conclusion commits Aristotle to the view that there are two related, but still distinct conceptions of goodness. Consider the related fact that in the sentences "x's capacity to ϕ is good" and "x's ϕ -ing itself is good" the term "good" is being used in two distinct, albeit related ways. Aristotle does indeed recognize that "good" is ambiguous in this way. Again at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6 he distinguishes between things that are, as he calls them, good in themselves (*kath' hauta*) and things that are good because of the former (*dia tauta*). The latter include things productive (*poiêtika*) of things good in themselves.⁵ A capacity is an example of a kind of thing that is productive of something that is good in itself, namely a function. The fact that there are these two kinds of goodness complicates, but it does not jeopardize Aristotle's conception of goodness in terms of functions; for again the goodness of the capacity is goodness precisely to produce or engender functioning, whereas the goodness of the functioning just is the functioning itself.

With these remarks regarding Aristotle's functional conception of goodness in mind, I return now to the curious sentences with which I began this section: "That atom is good" and "That shadow is good." I employed these

sentences to suggest that "good" is associated with purposes. In the cases I considered the purposes in question were psychological. The physicist and her assistant have the goal of seeing an atom under a microscope; the sisters have the goal of entertaining themselves. So by "psychological purposes" I mean to refer to goal-oriented psychological states. Compare and recall Aristotle's claim that in action and choice that for the sake of which the action is performed or the choice is made is the end.

I suggest that goal-oriented psychological states endow things with functions. In our examples, the things in question are atoms and shadows. The functions with which these entities are here endowed are ad hoc and transient. Compare the way artifacts, such as hammers and toasters, derive their functions from the psychological goals and interests of their designers or their users. In these cases the functions are conventional and relatively stable. In addition, I suggest that the psychological purposes that motivate intentional action generally have the remarkable property of endowing those very actions and ourselves, the agents, with functions. For example, when I intentionally go to the fridge to get a carton of orange juice, I endow myself with the function of acquiring a carton of orange juice. This is another example of an ad hoc and transient function. However one can endow oneself with a relatively stable function, for example when one commits oneself to a way of life, for instance when one chooses a profession, gets married, becomes a parent, and so on.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that all functions derive from psychological purposes. Assuming with Aristotle that there are natural functions, for example, the function of the eye or the heart, these functions derive from non-psychological nature. We would say that they derive from evolutionary processes – although of course Aristotle does not appeal to, let alone recognize that kind of explanation for the existence of natural functions.

Granted this, I draw attention to psychological purposes and what I am characterizing as their function-endowing capacities because a satisfactory account of goodness needs to recognize and incorporate them. However, I suggest, doing so will jeopardize Aristotle's conception of goodness in a fundamental way. The basic reason for this is that Aristotle is committed to the view that goodness is rooted precisely in natural functions. That is to say, Aristotle would claim that any psychological purpose that itself does not derive from or serve a natural function cannot be good. Yet we obviously have all sorts of psychological purposes that endow us and other things with non-natural and contra-natural functions. Aristotle in effect characterizes such purposes and functions as involving the merely apparently good rather than the truly good. But I think he is mistaken on this point. Goodness, I maintain, is simply a purpose relative concept; it does not require that the purpose derive from or serve a natural function. That is to say, any realization of a purpose, be it natural, non-natural, or contra-natural, constitutes a kind of goodness. For example the following sentences are perfectly well formed: "This instrument is good for torturing captives" and "This bomb is good for blowing up that building."

Consequently it is important to appreciate that Aristotle's conception of goodness in terms of functions in effect targets and explicates a narrower concept, namely natural or, as I put it in the previous section, vital function.^{6,7}

Let me now take a moment to summarize the results of this relatively complicated subsection. Aristotle conceives of goodness in terms of ends. Ends are actualizations of the potential for form, whether by a natural biological process or by an artificial process, precisely an intentional action or more precisely such action deriving from a skill, for example, medicine. But ends are of two kinds, and these two kinds correspond to primary and secondary actualizations. Primary actualizations are capacities; secondary actualizations are functions. Because there are two types of ends, Aristotle in fact is committed to two distinct conceptions of goodness, one in terms of capacities; the other in terms of functions. Indeed, Aristotle explicitly recognizes this duality and correlative ambiguity in the term "*agathon*." However, the two types of ends and so the two conceptions of goodness are related. Capacities are capacities for functions. As such, I have said that functions are, so to speak, ultimate ends. And so Aristotle's conception of goodness in terms of capacities depends on his conception of goodness in terms of functions. Aristotle's conception of goodness in terms of functions is more precisely in terms of natural functions. This holds for those functions that are realized artificially, again, for example, through a cultivated skill. And Aristotle admits this insofar as such artificial means and ends serve natural functions. Lastly, I have noted that I think Aristotle's restriction of goodness to natural functionality is an error.

3.3. How is Comparative Evaluation Possible?

Having clarified Aristotle's conception of goodness in terms of functions and more precisely in terms of natural or vital functions, I turn now to the question of how comparative evaluation is possible. My question, in other words, is what possibilities for explaining one's things being better than another does Aristotle's natural functional conception of goodness provide? I suggest that Aristotle's conception of goodness provides various possible explanations. For example, one capacity may be better than another because it enables the exercise of a function more fully than another. Analogously, one activity or event may be better than another insofar as it realizes a function more fully than another. This itself is possible in various ways. For example, an activity or event that is a means to the realization of a function has less value than an activity or event that simply is the realization of the function. And, arguably, in case two entities collaborate in realizing a function, if one entity contributes more than the other, the entity that contributes more has more value than the entity that contributes less.

This last point, finally, brings us back to the question that originally motivated the discussion of Aristotle's conception of goodness, namely why the distinct roles of soul and body in the realization of vital functions, one as ruler,

the other as ruled, entails that soul is better than body. Arguably, the reason is that the soul contributes *more* to the realization of vital functions than the body does. What more? As we have suggested, the soul determines what the function is and how it is to be realized. It also shapes and structures the body so as to enable it to perform its collaborative role in the realization of the function.

Assuming this is ultimately why Aristotle thinks or must think that soul is better than body – and I confess I find the idea of one entity making a *greater* contribution than another to the realization of a function rather vague – I turn now to another problem pertaining to comparative evaluation. My question is how comparative evaluation among *distinct* functions is possible? For example, how can we evaluate whether locomotion is better or worse than thought or whether reproduction is better or worse than perception? The question is significant precisely because Aristotle's protreptic argument requires it. Assume that soul is better than body because it is more ruling and as such contributes more to the realization of a given vital function. Even so, there are many vital functions that soul contributes to the realization of. In that case, what grounds are there for thinking that one vital function is better than another?

The solution to the general problem – again, how comparative evaluation of distinct functions is possible – appears to require that the distinct functions be coordinated, for example, in some relation to one another, or in relation to some third function that they both serve. In either case, the contribution of the one may then be better than the contribution of the other, for example, insofar as the one contributes more.

In the following penultimate section of this presentation, I want to consider the basic kind of functional coordination on which Aristotle relies in his comparative evaluative of vital functions. Broadly speaking I will subsume this topic under the rubric of natural teleology. Given constraints on time and space and your patience, I will here merely gesture at Aristotle's position. But this should suffice to put you in mind of how Aristotle's fundamental protreptic argument concludes; and, as you will see, the conclusion will also bring us back to the nature of wisdom, with which we began the discussion.

3.4. Natural Teleology and the Comparative Evaluation of Vital Functions

On page 24 of the booklet Aristotle claims that:

- 1 "What is later in generation (*genesei*) takes the lead in substance (*ousiai*) and perfection (*teleiôtêti*)."

This claim encapsulates a conception of natural teleology, on which Aristotle relies at least twice in the surviving fragments of the *Protrepticus*. The first time Aristotle appeals to the natural teleological principle occurs in the context of an account of the development of human culture, more precisely the development of human skills. The second time occurs in the context of an account of human

development, that is, the natural development of individual members of the human species. We may wonder whether, as factual matters of historical anthropology and biology – that is, independently of Aristotle's thought – there are deep differences between the two types of development and therefore to what extent a common developmental, let alone natural teleological principle, is applicable to them. Even so, let us attempt to follow Aristotle's line of thinking.

The first case, the account of the development of human skills, is where T8 is expressly stated. So I'll introduce this account first. Precisely, T8 occurs at the conclusion of the description of the development of human skills. In order to appreciate Aristotle's view here, we must note that he holds that the basic features of our cosmos including the existence and spatial position of the stars and planets as well as the earth and all of its living species are eternal and unchanging. In other words, Aristotle completely rejects both the idea of cosmogenesis and of the evolution of natural kinds. (Contrast these views, for example, with those of Hesiod or Empedocles.) On the other hand, Aristotle also believes that human culture undergoes relatively linear development. This conjunction of commitments entails that human culture should presently have achieved a state that is infinitesimally close to perfection. Evidently that is not the case. So Aristotle must accept some additional consideration to explain the imperfect state of human culture – and he does. Aristotle explains the present imperfect condition of humanity by proposing the existence of periodic earthly catastrophes that almost completely wipe out the human race and with it the state of cultural development at the time. Consequently, periodically humanity must begin its cultural development anew. Here now is what Aristotle says on page 24 of the booklet:

- 2 "Now admittedly minute precision (*akribologia*) about the truth is the most recent of the pursuits [in which humans engage]. For their [i.e. humans'] first necessity, after the destruction and the inundation [the catastrophe here is a flood], was to think about their food and staying alive; but when they became more prosperous they worked out the skills that are for pleasure, such as music and so on; and it was when they had more than the necessities [they needed for survival] that they undertook to do philosophy ... for what is later in coming to be takes the lead in substance and perfection.

In short, Aristotle here proposes an account of the development of the various skills that humanity has successively devised or discovered and practiced.

I'll now introduce Aristotle's account of the development of individual members of the human species, which occurs on page 48 of the booklet. I note that this is rather late in the text:

- 3 "If in everything the end (*telos*) is always better – for everything that comes to be comes to be for the sake of the end, and what is for the sake of

something is better, indeed best of all — and the natural end (*telos kata physin*) is the thing that is last to be achieved in accordance with generation (*kata genesin*) that has naturally grown when the development is completed continuously, therefore (*oukoun*) the first human parts to acquire their end are the bodily ones, and later on the parts of the soul, and somehow the end of the better part always comes later than its coming to be. Therefore (*oukoun*) the soul is posterior to the body, and intelligence (*phronêsis*) is the final stage (*teleutaion*) of the soul, for we see that it is the last thing to come to be by nature in humans, and that is why old age lays claim to this alone of good things. And so (*ara*) some form of intelligence (*phronêsis tis*) is by nature our end, and ultimately we have come to be for the sake of being intelligent (*to phronein*)."

Aristotle is here describing human ontogenesis and doing so in evaluative terms. I note that he appears to use the soul-body dichotomy to distinguish mental and non-mental human parts, capacities, and functions, rather than the absolute soul-body dichotomy that we considered earlier in the context of discussing the thesis that soul is better than body because it is more governing.

Observe that Aristotle speaks of intelligence as the final psychological capacity to be developed and precisely to reach its mature stage in old age. In view of this claim it will be helpful to advert to a passage from the *Rhetoric* (2.14, 1390b9-10) where Aristotle gives a precise age range for maturity (*akmê*) in men. He states that maturity of a man's body occurs at 30-35, while maturity of his soul occurs at 49. In short the scope of human development that Aristotle has in mind in (3) covers the life cycle relatively broadly.

Granted this, I underscore that the developmental accounts in both (2) and (3) rest at least in part, if not wholly on empirical grounds. Minimally, there are empirical facts of the matter regarding the history of the development of human skills and regarding human ontogenesis. So Aristotle's historical anthropology or biology might be factually mistaken here. At any rate I draw your special attention to the principle that Aristotle evokes in (3):

The natural end is the thing that is last to be achieved in accordance with generation that has naturally grown when the development is completed continuously.

Accordingly we can say that Aristotle is committed to the view that the function of a human seed (sperm) is to generate a mature human being, that — at least according to a natural progression that is, as Aristotle might say, unimpeded — achieves complete maturity at around 49, and that the maturity of intelligence (*phronêsis*) is the culminating stage of ontogenesis.

In light of Aristotle's commitments in his ethical and political treatises, it is also worthy adding here that, generally, the development of intelligence, whether practical or theoretical, in individuals requires a context of high

functioning social structures and political institutions. This is an important point insofar as it entails the interdependence of human ontogenesis and human culture.⁸

Granted this, if the function of a human seed is to generate a mature human being, if such genesis naturally occurs in a sequence of capacities and functions, if the culminating capacity is intelligence, and if the development of antecedent capacities is for the sake of consequent capacities, then human development as a whole will be for the sake of intelligence and its exercise. The question is what grounds Aristotle has for thinking that the genetic order, as he conceives it, is also a teleological order. The basic answer to this question is that Aristotle believes that in nature, the genesis of temporally sequential vital capacities and functions in a given natural kind, say, a human being, ontologically depends on the development of antecedent vital capacities and functions. For example, as a fact of biology, the capacity and function of perception could not successfully develop prior to the development of the capacity and function of nutrition. For convenience let's highlight the key principle, which we may call "the principle of natural ontogenesis":

In the case of a given natural kind, say, a human being, the genesis of temporally sequential vital capacities and functions, ontologically depends on the development of antecedent vital capacities and functions.

I presume that Aristotle is committed to an analogous principle of cultural ontogenesis. But I will not consider that principle here or any more general principle that might subsume both the principle of natural and cultural ontogenesis. It suffices for our purposes to note that the principle of natural ontogenesis justifies Aristotle's view that, as he says, "some form of intelligence (*phronêsis tis*) is by nature our end, and ultimately we have come to be for the sake of being intelligent (*to phronein*)."

The question now is what form of intelligence that is. And this brings us back to the point of departure of our discussion, the nature of wisdom. As we've seen, Aristotle maintains that the form of intelligence in question is a form of contemplative knowledge. Moreover, I've suggested that this form of contemplative knowledge is of first principles and concerns the best and most honorable objects. What might that be? Well, in the various metaphysical inquiries Aristotle pursues a range of possibilities. Theology is one among them. Aristotelian theology is not limited to contemplation of the primary unmoved mover, but among divine entities and unmoved movers, the primary unmoved mover is the entity that Aristotle expressly regards as being the best and most honorable. So if, for Aristotle, wisdom is theology, then contemplation of the primary unmoved mover will be the culminating component of wisdom.

I conclude on this point because I want to leave you with a final evaluative question. What grounds does Aristotle have for thinking that the primary unmoved mover is the best and most honorable of all beings in his

ontology? I suggest that nothing we have so far said about Aristotle's conception of goodness provides a satisfactory answer to this question. Observe that the appeal to natural teleology can explain how for the developing entity (whether human or human culture) the end is better than that for the sake of it. So, in short, various functions and functional capacities admit comparative evaluation because they are coordinated according to the ultimate function of the individual/thing. Natural teleology does not enable comparative evaluation between individuals of different kinds. For example, it cannot explain a commitment to the view that humans are better than, say, dogs and cats. And it cannot explain the view that divinities are better than humans.⁹

4. Conclusion

To conclude I'll summarize the main results. A protreptic argument concludes that you ought to pursue philosophy. The principal reason is that *sophia*, i.e. wisdom, which is the objective of philosophy, has significant if not supreme value. A protreptic argument may also clarify the nature of wisdom. Aristotle maintains that wisdom is a certain sort of contemplative knowledge, which is choiceworthy for its own sake and is of first principles or of the best and most honorable objects. What we call "metaphysics" might satisfy these conditions, as might a certain conception of theology.

Given this conception of the wisdom that the philosophy seeks, what of its value? We began by considering the claim that soul is better than body because it is more ruling. Why begin with this claim? Beyond the fact that Aristotle makes it, wisdom is condition of the soul. Now, the claim that soul is better than body is a comparative evaluative claim: one thing is claimed to be better than another. So in order to understand the claim, we needed to understand Aristotle's conception of value and of how comparative evaluation is possible.

We explained Aristotle's conception of value in terms of natural functions. And we explained how comparative evaluation is possible in terms of the contributions that two things make to a given function. So we saw how soul is better than body in this way. But we observed that natural kinds, such as human beings, have many vital functions. So we then wondered how comparative evaluation of distinct vital functions is possible? In answering this question, we appealed to Aristotle's natural teleology and ultimately to his principle of ontogenesis. According to that principle the genetic order of vital functions of a natural kind correlate with their teleological order. As Aristotle says, "the natural end is the thing that is last to be achieved in accordance with generation that has naturally grown when the development is completed continuously." Thus, for humans, wisdom and the contemplation it enables, is our natural end.

¹ In fact, I think that in Aristotle's case this rendition is problematic. I think that "wisdom" is essentially a practical excellence, whereas for Aristotle it is a theoretical excellence.

² Regarding the first question, we perhaps also need to consider whether Aristotle specifically has the human soul and body in mind, or whether he intends "soul" and "body" universally. The fact that "soul" and "body" are here used without modification encourages the thought that Aristotle intends the terms universally.

³ Literally "the remaining things." By "the remaining things" Aristotle means to refer, in the case of a skill, to all else that one does that does not constitute that for the sake of which the skill exists. In the case of an action, "the remaining things" refers to any other actions that serve the realization of, i.e. that for the sake of which, a particular action is performed.

⁴ I am here indebted to two papers by Allan Gotthelf: ...

⁵ 1096b?

⁶ Once again, some of our psychological purposes serve vital functions, for example, we are frequently motivated to eat and drink. But, as we well know, these motivations may also take forms that do not well serve our vital functioning.

⁷ Two further points relating to the preceding accounts are worth adding here. First, often, in fact typically, instead of speaking of the "goodness" of a capacity, Aristotle speaks of the capacity's "excellence," that is, its "*aretê*." Accordingly, *aretê* is, for Aristotle, the goodness of a primary actualization. Observe further that "*aretê*" like "excellence" is a nominalization of the superlative degree of the adjective, whereas "goodness" is of course a nominalization of the positive degree. Being good does not entail being excellent. So Aristotle's (and other Greeks') use of "*aretê*" for "goodness" is, strictly speaking, mistaken.) I note this problematic fact, but will not hereafter dwell on it. Second, we felicitously talk of things functioning well or poorly; and such talk appears to threaten a conception of goodness in terms of mere functioning. But I think we may allay this problem by considering the idea of fully or entirely functioning, and by suggesting that if something is functioning poorly, it is not fully functioning. In other words, we can assume that the concept of a function has a standard of success built into it such that if something is functioning poorly, it is not entirely functioning. (Cp. A. Gotthelf, "Of course the good for S is to perform S's function *well*, and we will need to see if this adverb imports a distinct standard not constructible from the notion of the function itself. But, *prima facie* one might think it does not, since the notion of function already carries a reference to an immediate end, and thus would seem to carry an internal standard of success or failure. To perform a function is to achieve the end. To perform it *well* would be to achieve that end *fully*; to perform it less than well, to fall short of the end in some way." ("The Place of the Good in Aristotle's Natural Teleology," *BACAP* 4 (1988) 113-39, at 119))

⁸ Here it is also interesting to note that Aristotle's developmental scheme in T9, as in *Metaphysics A*, elides the development of character and *phronêsis* conceived as practical wisdom.

⁹ To some extent Aristotle's central protreptic argument is immune to this problem, for all that the argument requires is that the function of theoretical knowledge be the ultimate human function. On the other hand, it may be questioned how Aristotle can defend the view that a "certain form" of theoretical knowledge is the highest or best form of theoretical and so the one that constitutes or deserves the name "wisdom." Now in supporting his position Aristotle appeals to the general point that the function of a cognitive capacity is to know. Thus, it would seem to hold that the greater the cognitive power of the cognitive capacity the better. And indeed Aristotle argues as such, on page 37 of the booklet: "Every sense is a capacity for understanding through a body. So if living is valuable because of sensation, and sensation is a kind of cognition ... Long ago we said that the more valuable of two things is always the one that provides more of the same thing. [...?] And of the senses sight is necessarily the most valuable and honorable. And intelligence is more valuable than it and all the others, and more valuable than living [?], intelligence is more valuable than truth. [!?] So the main pursuit of all human beings is to be intelligent."