Nicomachean Revision in the ‘Common Books’:
the Case of NE VI (≈EE V) 2

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Open the Oxford edition of the Nicomachean Ethics to book six, chapter two, and you will find that Bywater presents the text as fairly unproblematic.1 Though scholars have recently disagreed over the interpretation of this important chapter, which contains Aristotle’s alluring notion of practical truth (1139a26-7), they all appear to accept the text as it has been handed down to us in the manuscript tradition.2 However, this consensus

would seem to be at least partly explained by the fact that many scholars are reading the text in the edition of Bywater. In the first part of this paper, I question this consensus, and I argue in favor of the neglected proposal of Gauthier and Jolif according to which the text of *NE* VI. 2 should be rearranged such that lines 1139a31-b11 (πραξεως... πεπραγμένα) follow the word κοινωνεῖν at 1139a20. The rationale for this transposition is that Aristotle probably inserted these lines into the text by means of something like a marginal note, but the first editor of the *NE*, when preparing the text for posthumous publication, mistakenly added these lines in the wrong place. While arguing for this transposition, I observe that *NE* VI. 2 without the suggested note forms a unified text that contains striking parallels to undisputed passages in the *Eudemian Ethics*.

In the second part of this paper, I offer linguistic and philosophical reasons to believe that the suggested note (1139a31-b11) was added by Aristotle in the course of revising Eudemian material for inclusion in the *NE*. The note is thus Nicomachean, and the whole of *NE* VI. 2 is most plausibly regarded as a Nicomachean revision of an originally Eudemian text. The content of the suggested note also seems critical for understanding the relationship between the *NE* and the *EE*, and this is because it expresses a desire-based account of the practical intellect as teleologically oriented to action. This account seems to be mature because it is found in the *De Anima* (III. 9-10, 432b26-433a25), and the *NE* articulates two related consequences of this account: that practical philosophy is teleologically oriented to action, and that it therefore has a special methodology. By contrast, the *EE* articulates neither of these consequences, and instead seems to presuppose an object-based account of the practical intellect suggested by the latter half of *NE* VI. (≈*EE* V.) 1 (1138b35-9a17), which seems to be an originally
Eudemian text. The picture that emerges from these and other considerations is that, between the EE and the NE, Aristotle revised his conception of the practical intellect and consequently his conceptions of practical truth and practical philosophy.

1.1

We can begin by observing that Bywater’s presentation of NE VI. 2 is somewhat peculiar. This is because Ramsauer had earlier observed that lines 1139a31-b11 disrupt the reasoning leading from 1139a26-31 to the end of the passage at 1139b12-13, and he conjectures that the lines, though genuinely Aristotelian, were transposed from elsewhere, either by Aristotle or someone else.3 When Susemihl published his edition of the NE in 1880, he reported Ramsauer’s conjecture, and partially accepted it by bracketing 1139a31-35 and 1139b4-11.4 However, when Bywater published his edition in 1890 (and with minor corrections, in 1894), he bracketed no lines in NE VI. 2, and did not report the conjectures of Ramsauer or Susemihl. Here Bywater seems to have been carrying out his stated intention to ignore questions about the origins of the book, the reliability of its parts, or the arrangement of text as found in the manuscript tradition.5 Susemihl did not ignore questions of this sort, and neither did Apelt, who revised Susemihl’s text in 1903 and again in 1912.6

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3 G. Ramsauer (ed. and comm.), *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea [Ethica]* (Leipzig, 1878), 376.
4 F. Susemihl (ed.), *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea* (Leipzig, 1880), 126.
5 Bywater, *Ethica*, v.
6 F. Susemihl and O. Apelt (eds.), *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*, 3rd edn. [*Ethica*] (Leipzig, 1912). With regard to the passages of the Nicomachean Ethics [NE] quoted in this paper, the Greek text is nearly identical in editions of Bywater, *Ethica* and of Susemihl and Apelt, *Ethica*. Where there are differences, I indicate which edition I am following.
In light of this short history, one can reasonably predict that readers will sometimes perceive the text of the *NE* quite differently depending on which edition they happen to be using.

1.2

Besides Ramsauer and Susemihl, several other scholars have commented on the disorderliness of *NE* VI. 2. For example, Greenwood wrote in 1909 that the text needs to be rearranged, and he also made a proposal about how this should be done. However, it is interesting that Greenwood never asked how the text could have become so disorganized that it needed a rearrangement; instead, he sidestepped the issue by offering his proposal only as an attempt to clarify the text’s meaning. In fact, Gauthier and Jolif...
seem to be the only commentators who have proposed a rearrangement of *NE* VI. 2 with the purpose of restoring the intended order of the text: as reported above, they reasoned that Aristotle inserted lines 1139a31-b11 as a note, which the first editor mistakenly added in the wrong place.\(^9\) We will evaluate their proposed rearrangement in the next two sections, but here we discuss the rationale behind it.

The comments of Gauthier and Jolif on the relevant lines of *NE* VI. 2 are brief, but Gauthier’s new introduction to the second edition of the commentary provides the relevant background. There one finds a sophisticated account of the composition and editing of the *NE* in which Gauthier emphasizes the formative role of a first editor.\(^10\) Here I summarize the elements of that account that are relevant to our interpretation, and I expand on them by incorporating other relevant literature, as I proceed.

Gauthier begins by noting that the Aristotelian corpus is largely comprised of specialized treatises that were not published during Aristotle’s lifetime. These treatises contrast with the so-called ‘exoteric’ writings, such as the *Protrepticus* and *Eudemus*, which Aristotle refers to as ‘works in circulation’ (τὰ ἐγκύκλια; e.g. *NE* I. 5, 1096a3-4).\(^11\) The exoteric writings seem to have been polished works of popularization in literary form, while the specialized treatises were unpolished works-in-progress, more or less based on Aristotle’s lecture notes.\(^12\) Students would probably have heard these

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\(^10\) The new introduction of 1970 is attributed solely to Gauthier, though the entire work (introduction, translation and commentary) is still attributed to both Gauthier and Jolif.


\(^12\) Gauthier, *Introduction*, 67-70 quotes A. Mansion, ‘La genèse de l’œuvre d’Aristote d’après les travaux récents’ [*Genèse*], *Revue Néoscolastique de Philosophie*, 29.2 (1927), 307-41 and 423-466 at 308-10, and he also refers the reader to W. W. Jaeger, *Studien sur Entsehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles* [*Entsehungsgeschichte*] (Berlin, 1912), 131-63. There is a memorable piece of evidence that the *NE* is based Aristotle’s lectures: he at one point refers to a chart of the virtues that is not present in the text (*NE* II.
specialized treatises when Aristotle presented them in the classroom at which time he would have extemporaneously expanded upon them with examples and other clarifications.\textsuperscript{13} It is possible that students were able to read working drafts of the treatises in the school library,\textsuperscript{14} however, Aristotle never seems to have finalized them for publication, but continually revised them until his death.\textsuperscript{15} One major piece of evidence for such revision is the presence of doublets throughout the corpus—that is, passages in which Aristotle seems to cover the same material two times. Scholars surmise that one of these passages is often a later reconsideration, sometimes intended to replace the other.\textsuperscript{16}

Now if Aristotle died while still revising his treatises, then it would fall to one or more editors to publish these treatises posthumously.\textsuperscript{17} Consequently, this first editor of the \textit{NE}, whoever he was, could have easily made mistakes when preparing the treatise for

\textsuperscript{13} Gauthier, \textit{Introduction}, 67-68 quotes Mansion, ‘Genèse’, who mentions the possibility of private publication of the written treatises within the school. Burnyeat, \textit{Map}, 116 suggests that working drafts of chapters of the \textit{Metaphysics} may have been available in the school library, and J. P. Lynch, \textit{Aristotle’s School: A Study of a Greek Educational Institution} (Berkeley, 1972), 97 gives reasons to think that Aristotle was ‘the first to recognize the value of organizing a library for a philosophical school.’

\textsuperscript{14} Gauthier, \textit{Introduction}, 82-83. See also e.g. Jaeger, \textit{Entschungsgesichte}, 159-60 and Burnyeat, \textit{Map}, 113. On the nature of such revision, see Natali, \textit{Life}, 109-11.

\textsuperscript{15} For a discussion of doublets in the corpus, see Gauthier, \textit{Introduction}, 69, 74-75, and Barnes, ‘Work’, 12-14. Some of the cross-references within the Aristotelian corpus point to non-existent discussions, and M. F. Burnyeat, ‘Aristotelian Revisions: The Case of de Sensu’ [‘Case’], \textit{Apeiron} 37.2 (2004), 177-180 has argued that the best explanation for this would seem to be that these cross-references were added by Aristotle but rendered defunct due to his continual revision.

\textsuperscript{16} Gauthier, \textit{Introduction}, 83-84. For the purposes of this paper, it does not matter who the first editor of the \textit{NE} was, only that there was one and that this was not Aristotle.
publication. For example, he might have included passages that were meant to be superseded, and this would explain some of the ‘doublets’ just mentioned. The editor might have also misplaced certain passages that Aristotle had added in the course of revision, and this is in fact how Gauthier and Jolif explain the disorganization of NE VI.

2. This latter kind of editorial error was not unknown in the ancient world. Galen comments on a certain Hippocratic treatise: ‘I have often thought that this book was found in draft and published after the death of Hippocrates. For it does not seem likely that the disorder of the text came to be in any other way than this.’ Similarly problematic editorial work has even occurred recently.

Our interpretation of NE VI. 2 still requires a further clarification, though, and this is because NE VI is one of the three so-called ‘common books’ that seem to belong both

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18 As Gauthier, *Introduction*, 75 observes, these additions would have been written in the margin or on small slips of papyrus that were attached to the manuscript.


20 Galen, *In Hippocratis de acutorum morborum victu commentarius*, in C. G. Kühn, *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, vol. 15 (Leipzig, 1828), 418-919 at 624.3-5: Πολλάκες ἐνενόησα τοῦτο τὸ βιβλίον ἐν τοῖς εὑρεθέν ἐκδέδοσθαι μετὰ τῶν Ἱπποκράτους θάνατον. ἢ γὰρ ἀπαξία τῶν λόγων οὐκ ἄλλος ἔοικεν ἢ οὗτος γεγονέναι. L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 4th edn. (Oxford, 2013), 217 assimilate this Hippocratic text to the case of second editions, but it is perhaps more accurate to say that Galen is here considering the case of a posthumously published first edition that had been earlier revised by the author—that is, a case quite similar to the one that we seem to have in Aristotle.

21 When preparing the *Philosophical Investigations* for posthumous publication, G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees had to make a difficult decision: Wittgenstein had inserted notes on slips of paper into the manuscript with no ‘further indication about where they were to come in,’ and Anscombe and Rhees chose to print these notes beneath a line at the bottom of the page, on which see the ‘Editors’ Note’ in L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*; edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, 1st edn. (Oxford, 1953), vi. However, in their 4th edition of *Philosophical Investigations*, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte questioned this decision, and made an ‘important change’ to the text by printing the notes ‘in boxes in their designated places wherever that is now known, rather than at the foot of the page,’ on which see L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*; edited by P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte, 4th edn. (Oxford, 2009), ix. Scholars have similarly questioned the editorial work involved in the posthumous publication of Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics*, on which see B. Stawarska, ‘Recent Developments in Saussurean Linguistics’ in B. Stawarska (ed.) *Saussure’s Linguistics, Structuralism, and Phenomenology* (Cham, 2020), 9-14.
to the *NE* and to the *EE.*\(^{22}\) Gauthier believes that Aristotle originally composed the common books (*EE* VI-VI ≈ *NE* V-VII) as part of the *EE*—a thesis which Anthony Kenny later controversially defended by stylometric methods, and which now seems to be the consensus view.\(^{23}\) However, Gauthier also believes that Aristotle revised the common books for their inclusion in the *NE:*\(^{24}\) thus, books V-VII of the *NE* have a Eudemon ‘base,’ which accounts for the similarities to undisputed books of the *EE*, but they also have Nicomachean additions and revisions, which were not in their Eudemon originals.\(^{25}\) Moreover, the disarray that one sometimes finds in *NE* V-VII may also be due

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\(^{22}\) D. Harlfinger, ‘Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Eudemischen Ethik’ in P. Moraux and D. Harlfinger (eds.), *Untersuchungen zur Eudemischen Ethik* (Berlin, 1971), 1-50 at 43-45 shows that the text of the common books as preserved by certain manuscripts of the *EE* was in fact derived from a manuscript of the *NE*, but he does not think this proves that the *NE* is the original location of the common books.


\(^{24}\) Gauthier, *Introduction*, 72-73 is sympathetic with the hypothesis of Mansion, ‘Genèse’, 445n.2 according to which Aristotle himself inserted the common books into the *NE*, but Gauthier is hesitant to agree with this hypothesis completely because he finds it improbable that Aristotle would have inserted the Eudemon treatment of pleasure (i.e. *EE* VI. 11-14) into the *NE*. C. J. Rowe, *The Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics: A Study in the Development of Aristotle’s Thought* (Cambridge, 1971) maintained that *NE* V and VII are Nicomachean revisions of Eudemon originals but that *NE* VI was written afresh for the *NE*, though this latter thesis seems to have been retracted by C. J. Rowe, ‘De Aristotelis in tribus libris Ethicorum dicend ratione: Participles, Connectives, and Style in Three Books from the Aristotelian Ethical Treatises,’ *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 8 (1983), 4-11, 37-40, 54-57, and 70-74 at 74. In response to the arguments of Kenny, *AE*, T. Irwin, Reviews of A. Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics* and of A. Kenny, *Aristotle’s Theory of the Will* [*‘Reviews’*], *The Journal of Philosophy* 77.6 (1980), 338-354 and J. Cooper, Review of Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics* [*‘Review of AE’*], *Noûs* 15.3 (1981), 381-392 mentioned the possibility that the common books were Nicomachean revisions of Eudemon originals, but they did not develop the hypothesis. D. Frede, ‘On the So-Called Common Books of the Eudemian and the Nicomachean Ethics’ [*‘Common’*], *Phronesis* 64 (2019), 84-116 has recently defended such a view, but she did not discuss the work of Gauthier and Jolif because she mistakenly supposed both that they ‘regarded the *EE* as the work of Eudemus’ and thus ‘did not take the possibility into consideration that the *EN* might be a revision of the *EE*’ (87). Both H. Lorenz, ‘Virtue of Character in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* [*‘Character’*], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 37 (2009), 177-212 at 180n.5 and Frede, ‘Common’, 93n.30 highlight an observation of O. Primavesi, ‘Ein Blick in den Stollen von Skepsis: Vier Kapitel zur frühen Überlieferung des Corpus Aristotelicum’ *Philologus* 151.1 (2007), 51-77 at 70-73 that suggests that the ten-book *NE* was considered the authoritative version of the ethics at Aristotle’s death: the ten books of the *NE* follow the same book numbering scheme as the majority of the Aristotelian corpus whereas the *EE* follows a different and later book-numbering scheme. Kenny, ‘Reconsiderations’ does not discuss Primavesi’s observation or the relevance placed upon it by Lorenz, ‘Character’, 180n.5.

to the fact that these books received a less complete revision than other books in the *NE*. Consequently, when the first editor was preparing the *NE* for posthumous publication, he might have especially made mistakes in editing the common books, given the problematic nature of the text. The editor might have included doublets where a Nicomachean addition was intended to replace a Eudemian original. The first editor might have also misplaced Nicomachean notes within originally Eudemian texts, and this is how we should interpret the proposal of Gauthier and Jolif concerning *NE VI. 2*: it is a revision of *EE V. 2* with a Nicomachean note that was misplaced by the first editor.

1.3

When we interpret Gauthier and Jolif’s proposal concerning *NE VI. 2* in this way, the proposal implies that the original text of *EE V. 2* would have been the text of *NE VI. 2* without the suggested Nicomachean note. Gauthier and Jolif do not themselves draw this conclusion, but it is a conjecture worth taking seriously. Moreover, by discussing the hypothesis, we will also be in a better position to evaluate Gauthier and Jolif’s proposed rearrangement, which we discuss in the next two sections.

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26 Frede, ‘Common’, 87.
I present the reconstructed text of EE V. 2 below, but we should first observe the context. This is because the concluding lines of EE V.2 discusses the *ergon* ‘of both thinking parts’ (ἀμφοτέρων [...] τῶν νοητικῶν μορίων, 1139b12) as well as their proper virtues (1139b12-13), and this would seem to be a reference to the account of the intellect given in the latter half of the previous chapter (1138b35-9a17). There Aristotle distinguished one part of the intellect that considers things whose ‘principles cannot be otherwise’ (αἱ ἀρχαὶ μὴ ἐνδέχονται ἄλλως ἔχειν, 1139a7-8) and another part that considers ‘things that can be otherwise’ (τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα, 1139a8). The former seems to correspond to the theoretical intellect, while the latter seems to correspond to the practical intellect. Aristotle concludes the chapter by saying: ‘And so we should grasp what is the best state of each of these two parts; for this is the virtue of each, and the virtue of each thing is relative to its proper *ergon*’ (1139a15-17). Aristotle in EE V. 2 appears to take up this task by describing both the *ergon* and the virtue of each thinking part.

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29 Here I assume that Aristotle’s discussion of these two intellectual parts is genuinely Eudemian, on which see Section 2.2 below. This is of course compatible with the prevalent view of Kenny, *AE* that all of NE VI is originally Eudemian, but it is also compatible with the proposal of Gauthier and Jolif, *Livres VI-X*, 440-2 that only lines 1138b35-39a15 constituted the original Eudemian introduction to EE V.

30 ληπτέον ἄρ’ ἐκατέρου τούτων τίς ἡ βελτίστη ἔξις· αὕτη γὰρ ἀρετή ἑκατέρου, ἢ δ’ ἀρετὴ πρὸς τὸ ἔργον τὸ οἰκεῖον
The factors in the soul that are in control of action and truth are three: perception, intellect, and desire. Of these, perception is not the principle of any action, and this is clear because beasts have perception but do not take action. [1139a17-20]

Now what affirmation and denial are in thought, pursuit and avoidance are in desire. And so, given that ethical virtue is a state that issues in decision, and that decision is a deliberative desire, it is necessary (on account of these things) that the reason be true and the desire correct, if decision is excellent, and the former must affirm and the latter must pursue the same things. This thought and truth is of a practical sort. In the case of theoretical thought but not practical and productive thought, the true and false is the excellent or bad achievement—since this is the *ergon* of everything that thinks. But in the case of practical thought *<the ergon>* is truth in agreement with correct desire. [1139a21-31]

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31 The Greek of this reconstruction comes from Susemihl and Apelt, *Ethica*, even though it differs from Bywater, *Ethica* only with regard to punctuation and one Greek word. In line 1139a17, Susemihl and Apelt give δέ (with the manuscripts) instead of Bywater’s conjecture δή.
Of both intellectual parts, then, the *ergon* is truth. And so the virtues of each will be the states on the basis of which each will achieve truth most of all. [1139b12-13]

In support of the hypothesis that the above text is Eudemian, we should begin by observing that the text contains striking verbal and philosophical similarities to undisputed passages in the *EE*. Most notably, Aristotle’s claim that the *ergon* of each thinking part is truth (Ἀλήθεια τὸ ἔργον, 1139b12) is clearly echoed in *EE* II. 4: ‘in the case of the intellectual virtues of the part having reason, the *ergon* is truth [ἔργον ἀλήθεια], whether about how something is or about coming-to-be’ (1221b29-30). By contrast, the undisputed books of the *NE* nowhere clearly state that the *ergon* of the intellectual parts, or their virtues, is truth (Ἀλήθεια). Aristotle’s denial of action to beasts (τὰ θηρία) (1139a19-20) also seems Eudemian. This is partly because of the word θηρίον, which is used eleven times in the *EE* but only once in the *NE*, but more especially because of a similar statement in *EE* II. 8, which has no parallel in the *NE*: ‘We do not say that a small child acts nor a beast [θηρίον], but only one acting on account of reasoning’ (1224a28-

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32. Αἱ ἄρεται […] αἱ μὲν τὸν λόγον ἔχοντος διανοητικά, ὅν ἔργον ἀλήθεια, ἢ περὶ τοῦ πάντος ἔχει ἢ περὶ γενέσεως. For the Greek text of the *EE*, I use R. R. Walzer and J. M. Mingay (eds.) (1991), Aristotelis *Ethica Eudemia* (Oxford, 1991). It is also worth noting that the similarity between the two passages is not exact: *NE* VI. 2 identifies truth as the *ergon* of each thinking part, while *EE* II. 4 identifies it as the *ergon* of each virtue of the thinking part. However, one might reconcile the dissimilarity by observing that the *ergon* of each thing is determined by reference to the good case (*Pol* I. 5, 1254a36-b1).

33. Similarly, Kenny, *AE*, 165. However, Kenny, ‘Reconsiderations’, 291 goes too far when he claims, ‘In *NE*, outside the originally Eudemian books, *alētheia* is the name of the virtue of candour, not of the good grasped by reason.’ Aristotle clearly speaks of *alētheia* as the good of the intellect at *NE* I. 6, 1096a14-17. See also *NE* I. 7, 1098a26-32 and *NE* II. 7, 1107a28-32, both of which are discussed in Section 2.4.
Commentators have also observed a similar parallel at EE II. 6: ‘Man alone among animals [μόνον... τῶν ζώων] is the principle of certain actions [πράξεων τινῶν... ἀρχή] for we would not say that any of the other animals acts, and those principles from which motions first arise are called ‘controlling’ [κύριαι]’ (1222b19-22; cf. 1223a4-6, 15-16).35

There are also verbal peculiarities to this passage that distinguish it from the suggested note (1139a31-b11), which is here removed but which may be found in the following section. In the fifteen lines of the text above, the word ‘virtue’ (ἀρετή) occurs twice, the word ergon occurs twice, and the word ‘truth’ (ἀλήθεια) and its cognates occur seven times.36 These three words are also integral to the concluding lines of the passage (1139b12-13). By contrast, these three words occur nowhere in the eighteen lines of the suggested note, even though that note occurs in the midst of the lines above. This strongly suggests that the suggested note had a different origin than the rest of the passage, which appears to be Eudemian.

As we mentioned earlier, Ramsauer flagged the suggested note as interpolated because he thought that it interrupted the reasoning of NE VI. 2; now that we have removed the note from our reconstruction of EE V. 2, the reader can clearly see how the last part of the passage (1139b12-13) serves as a conclusion to what came before (esp. 1139a21-31). The central argument, which is intelligible without the note, seems to proceed as follows. Aristotle begins by identifying perception, thought, and desire as

34 οὖ γάρ φαμεν τὸ παιδίον πράττειν, οὐδὲ τὸ θηρίον, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἡδή διὰ λογισμὸν πράττοντα. The similarity between these passages is observed by A. Grant (1885), The Ethics of Aristotle, 4th edn., revised, vol. 2 [Ethics] (London, 1885), 151.
36 If we combine these fifteen lines with the previous three lines (1139a15-17), which also seem to be Eudemian, then the word ‘virtue’ occurs four times and the word ergon three times.
factors that ‘control’ action and truth (αληθεια). (At the end of the passage, Aristotle glosses the noun αληθεια by means of the related verb αληθευω, and so he seems to understand by αληθεια a certain activity of achieving the truth. After ruling out perception as a principle of action (1139a19-20), he explains how the two remaining factors work in concert as the principle of action (1139a21-26). In light of this explanation, Aristotle then identifies the erga of both intellectual parts: the ergon of the theoretical intellect is truth (1139a27-29), while the ergon of the practical intellect is practical truth (1139a26-27), i.e. ‘truth in agreement with correct desire’ (αληθεια ομολογως εχουσα την ορθην ορθην, 1139a30-31). He then infers that the ergon of both parts is, in a way, truth (1139b12-13), and further concludes that the virtue of each part is the state by which it will achieve the optimal version of its ergon, i.e., ‘will achieve truth most of all’ [μαλιστα… αληθευσει] (1139b13). In this final line, the superlative μαλιστα (‘most of all,’ 1139b13) recalls the superlative βελτιστη (‘best,’ 1139a16): we have now found the virtue, i.e. the best state, of each intellectual part.

But what does it mean ‘to think truly most of all’? Scholars have rarely commented on this puzzling phrase, and this is perhaps partly due to the fact that scholars

37 See Broadie, ‘Practical’, 283-4 for reasons to think that truth properly applies to ‘judgments or assertions rather than to the propositional contents of assertions.’ Alternatively, one might think that truth properly applies to the content of thought. Or perhaps truth applies simultaneously to both: I take the translation ‘achieving the truth’ to be neutral on this issue. Perhaps someone might wonder whether ‘truth’ (in NE VI. 2) could here designate a product, not an activity, and one might be lead to such a view because, as I have argued in S. Baker, ‘The Concept of Ergon: Towards an Achievement Interpretation of Aristotle’s “Function Argument”’ ['Concept'], Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 48 (2015), 227-266, the ergon of an X may in some cases be a product, not an activity—thus, e.g. the ergon of a sculptor is a sculpture, not sculpting. I believe that my argument can go through even if one assumes that ‘truth’ does designate a product, but I do not consider this to be a plausible interpretive possibility for the following reason. ‘Truth’ in NE VI. 2 is identified as the ergon of the intellect, and we know that the proper activity of the intellect is an activity of thinking, which is a complete activity, having no internal reason to stop (Meta Θ 6, 1148b23-24, 33-34), whereas, as Baker, ‘Concept’, 247 argues, an ergon is a product only when the activity that produces the product is an incomplete activity, which has an internal reason to stop.

38 This phrase admits of different interpretations on which see Broadie, ‘Practical’ and our argument below will suggest that the phrase would be understood differently in the EE than in the NE.
are reading the received text of *NE VI*. 2, which separates the concluding lines from the premises on which it is based. Once we reconstruct the text of *EE V*.2, we see that the text now strongly resembles two other arguments in Aristotle—one from the *Protrepticus* and one from *Metaphysics α 1*. Here we will confine our attention to the former.

Aristotle’s early, exoteric work *Protrepticus*, preserved in fragments by Iamblichus, contains at least three fragments in which we find clear resemblances to our reconstructed *EE V*. 2.

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<th><em>Protrepticus</em>39</th>
<th><em>Eudeman Ethics V [≈NE VI] 2</em></th>
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<tr>
<td>… wisdom is more choiceworthy than sight,</td>
<td>The factors in the soul that are in control of</td>
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<td>all the other senses, and life—being more in</td>
<td>action and truth [τὰ κύρια πρᾶξεως καὶ</td>
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<td>control of truth [κυριωτέρα τὴς ἀληθείας].</td>
<td>ἀληθείας] are three: perception, intellect and</td>
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<td>(VII, 75.6-7; B77)40</td>
<td>desire. (1139a17-19)41</td>
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<tr>
<td>… the supreme ergon [Ἀλήθεια… ἔργον] of</td>
<td>Of both intellectual parts, then, the ergon is</td>
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<td>the thinking part of the soul is truth. (VII,</td>
<td>truth [Ἀλήθεια τὸ ἔργον]… (1139b12)43</td>
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<td>73.6-7; B65) 42</td>
<td>And so, the virtues of each will be the states</td>
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<td>… Now the ergon of the soul is… thinking</td>
<td>on the basis of which each will achieve truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and reasoning… [H]e lives more who thinks</td>
<td>correctly, and he lives most of all who</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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39 I cite Iamblichus’s *Protrepticus* in the edition of E. Des Places (ed. and trans.), *Jamblique: Protreptique*, 2nd edn. (Paris: 2003), and for convenience, I also include the numbering in the reconstruction of I. Düring (ed. and trans.), *Protrepticus: an attempt at reconstruction [Attempt]* (Göteborg, 1961). In the chart, I place VII, 75.6-7 before VII, 73.6-7 only in order to emphasize the verbal similarities with *EE V*.2. For purposes of economy, I focus on those lines from the *Protrepticus* that contain clear verbal resemblances to *EE V*.2, but I believe that the surrounding context of these lines also supports my interpretation.

40 ταύτης δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπασῶν αἱρετωτέρα καὶ τοῦ ζῆν ἐστιν ἡ φρόνησις κυριωτέρα τῆς ἀληθείας

41 ἢ ἀληθεία ἄρα τὸ κυριώτατον ἔργον ἐστι τοῦ μορίου τούτου τῆς ψυχῆς.

42 ἄμφοτέρων δὴ τῶν νοητικῶν μορίων ἀλήθεια τὸ ἔργον.

43 οὐδὲν δὴ τῶν νοητικῶν μορίων ἀλήθεια τὸ ἔργον.
achieves truth most of all \([\text{ὁ μάλιστα ἀληθεύων}],\) and this is the person who is wise and contemplates on the basis of the most exact understanding. (XI, 87.23-28; B85)\(^{44}\)

In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle identifies the *ergon* of the thinking part of the soul as truth (VII, 73.6-7; B65), and he goes on to explain that truth can be achieved to greater or lesser degrees (VII, 74.15-19; B71).\(^{46}\) He claims that wisdom is more choiceworthy than all perceptual powers because it is ‘more in control of truth’ (κυριωτέρα τῆς ἀληθείας, VII, 75.6-7; B77). He furthermore makes it clear that ‘truth’ is achieved in an activity of ‘thinking and reasoning’ (τὸ διανοεῖσθαι τε καὶ λογίζεσθαι), and he explains that the person who achieves truth most of all (ὁ μάλιστα ἀληθεύων) will do so on the basis of the most exact understanding (ἐπιστήμην) (XI, 87.23-28; B85). In *EE V.* (≈*NE VI.*) 2, Aristotle begins by identifying three powers that are ‘in control of truth’ (κύριος ἀληθείας 1139a18), and he similarly claims that the *ergon* of the thinking parts is truth (1139b12). His language also similarly indicates that by ‘truth’ (ἀλήθεια) he means some activity of thinking when he finally states that each thinking part of the soul ‘will achieve truth most of all’ (μάλιστα… ἀληθεύσει) on the basis of its proper virtue (1139b13).

Each of the key verbal phrases that are shared between *EE V.*2 and the *Protrepticus* (κύριος ἀληθείας; ἀλήθεια… ἔργον; μάλιστα ἀληθεύω) do not seem to be

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\(^{44}\) Ἐστι δὴ καὶ ψυχής […] ἔργον τὸ διανοεῖσθαι τε καὶ λογίζεσθαι. […] ζῇ μάλλον ὁ διανοούμενος ὁρθὸς καὶ μάλιστα πάντων ὁ μάλιστα ἀληθεύων, οὕτως δ' ἐστὶν ὁ φρόνον καὶ θεωρῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην ἐπιστήμην.

\(^{45}\) Καθ' ἂς οὖν μάλιστα ἔξεσθε ἀληθεύεις ἑκάτερον, αὕται ἄρεται ἀμφότεροι.

\(^{46}\) See Baker, ‘Concept’ for a discussion of the concept of *ergon* that Aristotle employs in *Protrep VII*, 72.23-73.7 (B65) and elsewhere.
found anywhere else in the Aristotelian with the sole notable exception of EE II. 4, 1221b29-31 (ἐργον ἀλήθεια), quoted above. Moreover, it is possible that Aristotle expected some of his audience to pick up on these parallels and to interpret EE V. 2 in light of the Protrepticus. In any case, when we do interpret the last line of EE V. 2 in this way, Aristotle here would seem to saying that the virtue of each thinking part will enable it to achieve truth to the highest degree.

These resemblances to the Protrepticus also support the thesis that our reconstructed text is Eudemian. This is because the first two books of the EE—much more than the parallel passages of the NE—exhibit strong similarities to the Protrepticus both in language and content, as Jaeger argued. (Kenny never disputed this.) Jaeger particularly commented on the similarities between the ergon argument of EE II. 1 and related ergon argumentation in Protrepticus. However, these same passages in the Protrepticus also resemble the argument of EE V. (≈NE VI.) 2, as we have just seen, and this in turn suggests that when Aristotle wrote the EE, he broke up the ‘ergon argument’ of the Protrepticus into the two related ergon arguments of EE II. 1 and V. 2. Jaeger did

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48 See Jaeger, Development, 228-58. Düring, Attempt, esp. 162-5, 242-4 discusses these similarities in further detail.

49 Instead, Kenny, AE, 3 chose to ignore the evidence from the Protrepticus, claiming: ‘the reliability of our reconstructed texts of the Protrepticus has been seriously called into question (Rabinowitz, 1957). Until the criticisms of the reconstruction have been met, it seems unwise to rely on them for the dating of the Eudemian Ethics.’ W. G. Rabinowitz, Aristotle’s Protrepticus and the Sources of its Reconstruction (Berkeley, 1957) had argued that scholars have no good basis for offering reconstructions of the Protrepticus. However, as D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson, ‘Authenticating Aristotle’s Protrepticus’ ['Authenticating'], Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 29 (2005), 193-294 at 200 observe, ‘Rabinowitz’s negative thesis [concerning the alleged fragments of the Protrepticus] was ruinously criticized by many eminent reviewers.’ Moreover, Hutchinson and Johnson, ‘Authenticating’ have themselves offered new arguments for the authenticity of various fragments of Aristotle’s Protrepticus, as preserved in Iamblicus. Kenny, ‘Reconsiderations’ does not address these scholarly developments, even though they seem to undermine the reasons given by Kenny, AE for neglecting evidence from the Protrepticus.
not notice the similarities between the *Protrepticus* and our *EE* V. 2, and that was because he was laboring under the uncritical assumption that the common books belonged exclusively to the *NE*.\(^{50}\)

We should still note a relevant difference between the *Protrepticus* and *EE* V. 2: the *Protrepticus* identifies truth as the *ergon* ‘of thought or the thinking part’ (τῆς διανοίας ἤ τοῦ διανοομένου; VII, 73.4-5; B65), while *EE* V. 2 draws a distinction: the *ergon* of the theoretical intellect is truth (*simpliciter*), and the *ergon* of the practical intellect is a truth that is ‘practical’ (πρακτική, 1139a26-27).\(^{51}\) Nevertheless, despite this difference, Aristotle closes *EE* V. 2 by saying that the *erga* of both thinking parts is (in some sense) truth, and in this way he seems to emphasize the continuity with his view in the *Protrepticus*.\(^{52}\)

And so overall, the arguments in *EE* V. 2 and the *Protrepticus* strongly resemble one another in language and content. There is even a striking structural resemblance insofar as each argument first identifies truth as an *ergon*, and then proceeds to identify the optimal achievement of this *ergon* as ‘thinking most truly.’ By contrast, the suggested note (1139a31-b11) does not contain any such strong resemblances, and this fact further indicates that what we have identified as *EE* V. 2 was indeed an originally unified and continuous text.

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\(^{50}\) See Jaeger, *Development*, 258n.1 where he nevertheless observes that the common books do not seem to be completely ‘of a piece’ with the rest of the *NE*.

\(^{51}\) See Gauthier and Jolif, *Livres VI-X*, 449.

\(^{52}\) Cf. Jaeger, *Development*, 234.
1.4

We can now turn to Gauthier and Jolif’s proposed rearrangement of \(NE\) VI. 2 in which the suggested note (1139a31-b11) now follows the word \(κοινωνείν\) in 1139a20.

**Nicomachean Ethics VI. 2 (rearranged)**

The factors in the soul that are in control of action and truth are three: perception, intellect, and desire. Of these, perception is not the principle of any action, and this is clear because beasts have perception but do not partake of action [1139a17-20]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{The fators in the soul that are in control of}\ &
\text{action and truth are three: perception,} \\
\text{intellect, and desire. Of these, perception is}\ &
\text{not the principle of any action, and this is} \\
\text{clear because beasts have perception but do}\ &
\text{not partake of action [1139a17-20].}
\end{align*}\]

Decision is in fact the principle of action—the origin of motion, not the goal—and the principle of decision is desire and reason for the sake of something. Thus, there is no decision without intellect and thought or without an ethical state of character: for acting-well and its opposite in action do not occur without thought and character.

And thought itself moves nothing, but <what moves is rather> thought for the sake of something, that is, practical thought. For this is the principle of productive thought since everyone engaging in production does so for the sake of something, and that which is
What affirmation and denial is in thought so pursuit and avoidance is in desire. And so, given that ethical virtue is a state that issues in decision, and that decision is a deliberative desire, it is necessary (on account of these achieved in production is not the unqualified end but rather the end in reference to something and of a certain sort of agent.

Instead that which is achieved in action is the unqualified end since acting-well is the end and one’s desire is for this. Thus, decision is either desiderative intellect or reasoned desire, and this sort of principle is the human being.

And what one decides upon is not something that has already come-to-be—for example, no one decides to have sacked Troy. This is because no one deliberates about what has already come-to-be but about what will be and admits of coming-to-be, and what has already come-to-be does not admit of coming-to-be. Thus, Agathon correctly wrote:

‘God is deprived of this alone: to make undone what has already been done.’

Now what affirmation and denial is in thought is not the unqualified end but rather in reference to something and of a certain sort of agent. Instead that which is achieved in action is the unqualified end since acting-well is the end and one’s desire is for this. Thus, decision is either desiderative intellect or reasoned desire, and this sort of principle is the human being.

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As we explained above, Gauthier and Jolif proposed to rearrange the received text of NE VI. 2 because they agreed with Ramsauer that lines 1139a21-31 and 1139b12-13 contain a continuous argument and so belong together. This is the most powerful reason for the rearrangement, and we found confirmation of it by observing that the continuous argument of 1139a17-31 and 1139b12-13 resembles a similar argument in the

\[\text{things})\text{ that the reason be true and the desire correct, if decision is excellent, and the former must affirm and the latter must pursue the same things. This thought and truth is of a practical sort. In the case of theoretical thought but not practical and productive thought, the true and false is the excellent or bad achievement—since this is the ergon of everything that thinks. But in the case of practical thought <the ergon> is truth in agreement with correct desire.}\ [1139a21-31]

\[\text{Of both intellectual parts, then, the ergon is truth. And so, the virtues of each will be the states on the basis of which each will think truly most of all.}\ [1139b12-13] \]
Protrepticus. The rearranged text preserves this continuous argument, and now inclines the reader to treat lines 1139b12-13 as a conclusion drawn on the basis of 1139a21-31.\footnote{As noted above, commentators on NE VI. 2 have rarely discussed lines 1139b12-13, and none has discussed them as a conclusion drawn on the basis of 1139a21-31. I also do not know of any scholar who has clearly engaged with the proposal of Gauthier and Jolif. R. Bodéüs (trans. and comm.), Aristote: Éthique à Nicomaque (Paris, 2004), 293 perhaps has them in mind when he writes: ‘Certains commentateurs veulent transposer ici [at line 1139a20] les lignes 1139a31-b11, sous prétexte que les lignes 1139a21-32 (?) interrompent le raisonnement. Mais ce n’est pas le cas. Ayant éliminé l’hypothèse que le sens puisse être au départ de l’action, Aristote a d’emblée à débrouiller le rôle de l’intelligence et du désir. Ce qu’il fait.’ However, if Bodéüs is considering the proposal of Gauthier and Jolif, he does not correctly report their primary reason for the transposition, which is in fact to preserve the reasoning from 1139a21-31 to 1139b12-13.}

Once the text is rearranged in this way, the beginning of the suggested note also naturally links up to its new context. Aristotle begins by listing three controlling factors of action and truth: ‘perception, intellect and desire’ (αἴσθησις νοῦς ὑπάρξεις, 1139a18). He then rules out perception as a ‘principle of action’ (ὑπάρξεις, 1139a19). On our proposed rearrangement, Aristotle then immediately identifies decision as the ‘principle of action’ (ὑπάρξεις [...] ὑπάρξεις, 1139a31), and he explains that decision is a compound of the two remaining controlling factors: ‘desire’ (ὑπάρξεις, 1139a32) and a certain sort of intellect, namely, ‘reason for the sake of something’ (λόγος ὑπάρξεις ναος ὑπάρξεις, 1139a32-3). In this way, the logic of the passage is clear, and the repetition of the phrase ‘principle of action’ (ὑπάρξεις) which does not occur anywhere else in NE VI. 2, appears to be a verbal signal that Aristotle wished the passages to be linked in this way.\footnote{One might object to this rearrangement for the following reason. In the first line of the suggested note, which begins ὑπάρξεις μὲν ὄνω ὑπάρξεις προαράξεις (1139a31), Aristotle uses the particle μὲν ὄνω, which ‘often… sums up and rounds off the old topic, while the ὅτι clause introduces the new one,’ according to J. D. Denniston, The Greek Particles, 2nd edn., revised by K. J. Dover [Particles] (Oxford: 1950), 472. This may suggest that Aristotle had already introduced the topic of προαράξεις before line 1139a31, but on my rearrangement, he has not done this; consequently, it may seem that we should retain the received order of the text in which Aristotle already introduces the topic at 1139a23. My response is twofold. First, when we look closely at the remarks of Denniston concerning the ‘retrospective and transitional ὄνω with prospective μὲν,’ we see that he does not say that the μὲν ὄνω clause always ‘sums up and rounds off the old topic’ but only that it ‘often’ does; moreover, this specific use of μὲν ὄνω is normally correlated with a δε clause that introduces a new topic, but the δε clause at 1139a32 does not do this. Second, I translate μὲν ὄνω as ‘in fact’ because I understand Aristotle to be using μὲν ὄνω in the second way recognized by Denniston, Particles, 473, according to which ‘ὄνω is emphasizing a prospective μὲν.’ Denniston further comments: ‘This usage
We now turn to the question of the suggested note’s origin. Given our previous argument, there seem to be two principal options: either the note is the result of a Eudemian revision of a Eudemian text or it is the result of a Nicomachean revision of a Eudemian text. On the first option, Aristotle would have added the note in the course of updating and revising the EE itself, presumably as a whole. On the second option, Aristotle would have added the note in the course of integrating originally Eudemian material into the NE. In favor of (some form of) the second option, I shall offer six reasons, the last of which we will discuss at greater length.

First, the Nicomachean revision hypothesis is prima facie more likely than the Eudemian revision hypothesis because the undisputed books of NE contain far more signs of revision than the undisputed books of the EE. For example, the NE contains ‘numerous doublets’\(^{55}\) while the EE contains either few or none at all. In fact, I am aware of no scholar who claims to see clear evidence of revision in the undisputed books of the EE—though we would certainly expect to find such evidence if there had been a Eudemian revision of the EE. (Moreover, this lack of evidence of revision and the EE’s different chapter numbering scheme, as discussed above in footnote 24, give us reason to believe that the EE was not among the treatises continually revised by Aristotle.)

Second, the suggested note twice uses the distinctively Nicomachean word εὐπραξία (‘acting-well’) (1139a34; 1139b3). Εὐπραξία is found three times in the undisputed books of the NE (I. 8, 1098b22; I. 10, 1100a21; I. 11, 1101b6), but never in

\(^{55}\) Kenny, ‘Reconsiderations’, 305.
those of the EE. By contrast, εὐπραγία is found four times in the undisputed books of the EE (II. 3, 1221a38-9; III. 7, 1233b25; VIII. 2, 1246b37, 1247a1) but never in those of the NE. If we agree with Natali that these terms of Aristotle do not differ appreciably in meaning,\(^{56}\) then we would seem to be dealing with a change in linguistic preference: when Aristotle wrote the EE, he preferred to spell the word εὐπραγία (just as Plato had always spelled the word), but when he wrote the NE, he preferred to spell the word εὐπραξία. The suggested note is thus using the Nicomachean—and not the Eudeman—spelling of the word.\(^{57}\)

Third, interpreters have naturally heard the suggested note’s claim that ‘eupraxia is the end’ (ἡ γὰρ εὐπραξία τέλος, 1139b3) as an echo of a similar claim in NE I. 8: ‘<happiness> was pretty much said to be a kind of living well or eupraxia’ (1098b21-22).\(^{58}\) Aristotle makes no comparable claim with the term eupragia in the EE.

Fourth, the suggested note claims that ‘eupraxia [εὐπραξία] and its opposite do not occur without thought and character’ (1139a34-35),\(^{59}\) and this harmonizes much more easily with the undisputed books of the NE than with those of the EE. The NE defines character-virtue by reference to the judgment of the prudent person (ὁ φρόνιμος) (II. 6, 1106b36-7a2), and it never suggests that eupraxia can be achieved without thought and prudence. By contrast, the EE does not define character-virtue by reference to the judgment of the prudent person (II. 5, 1222a6-12), and it even claims that there are certain fortunate people who achieve eupragia (VIII. 2, 1247a1) even though they are

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57 The word εὐπραξία is used once more in the common books at NE VI 5, 1140b7 (a line that closely resembles NE VI. 2, 1139b3), and our reasoning here would suggest that this line too is Nicomachean.

58 σχεδὸν γὰρ εὐξοία τι εἴρηται καὶ εὐπραξία

59 εὐπραξία γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐν πράξει ἄνευ διανοίας καὶ ἰθοὺς οὐκ ἔστιν.
imprudent (ἄφρονες; 1147a4, a16, a21) and so do not achieve their success on the basis of thought (1247a30).  

Fifth, the account of productive thought articulated in the suggested note seems to conflict with the account of productive thought presupposed in the EE. According to the suggested note, practical thought (ἡ πρακτική) aims at the ‘end without qualification’ (τέλος ἀπλῶς), i.e. the highest end, which is identified as eupraxia (1139b2-4); productive thought (ἡ ποιητική) aims only at an end that is ‘in reference to something and of a certain sort of <agent>,’ i.e. a subordinate end; consequently, practical thought ‘rules’ (ἄρχει) productive thought (1139b1). By contrast, Aristotle in the EE seems to presuppose that every form of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) must be either theoretical or productive (EE I. 5, 1216b10-18; II. 3, 1221b5-6; 11, 1227b28-30), in which case practical thought would not ‘rule’ productive thought but would instead be a species of productive thought.  

In fact, Aristotle in the EE explicitly identifies politikē as a form of productive knowledge (ποιητική ἐπιστήμη; EE I. 5, 1216b16-18) while at the same time affirming that politikē aims at ‘the end of things achievable by humans in action’ (τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρακτῶν, EE I. 8, 1218b12)—claims which together create a sharp contrast with the suggested note. When we turn to the undisputed books of the NE, however, we find a conspicuous absence of these problematic Eudemian claims.  

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60 Two comments are in order. First, though the full text of EE VIII. 2 raises various interpretive issues that fall outside the scope of this paper, the conflict with the suggested note is evident so long as we agree with the majority of scholars that eupraxia (at 1139a34 in the note) and eurpragia (at EE VIII. 2, 1246b37 and 1247a1) signify actions performed on the basis of virtue, on which Eudemian lines see e.g. Johnson (1997, 93-4). Second, Gauthier and Jolif, Livres VI-X, 469 have suggested that the three chapters of EE VIII are fragments from the original Eudemian treatise on wisdom, and this hypothesis naturally dovetails with our observation that there seems to be conflict between suggested note and EE VIII. 2.  

61 See M. Woods, Aristotle: Eudemian Ethics: Books I, II, and VIII, 2nd edn. [Eudemian] (Oxford, 1992), 57. Aristotle seems to have made this same assumption in the Protrepticus (73.17-74.3 [B68-69]), on which see Gauthier and Jolif, Livres VI-X, 457, who also argue that this characterization of productive knowledge is Platonic in origin (cf. Charmides 163b-e).
concerning productive thought. Aristotle in the *NE* never suggests that all knowledge must be either theoretical or productive, and he never identifies *politikē* as a form of productive knowledge. Consequently, the suggested note’s account of productive thought fits more easily into the undisputed books of the *NE* than into those of the *EE*.63

Sixth, and relatedly, the suggested note seems to articulate a distinctively Nicomachean account of the practical intellect. The account is found principally in lines 1139a35-36 and 1139a31-33, which I here present alongside parallel passages from *De Anima* III. 9-10. Given that the *De Anima* is generally regarded as a ‘mature production,’64 these similarities give us reason to think the suggested note contains Aristotle’s mature account of the practical intellect.

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62 The *NE*, unlike the *EE*, also places a special and apparently new emphasis on *politikē* as the ‘highest ruling’ science (ἡ μὲν ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ ἡ μάλιστα ἀρχή), as B. Inwood and R. Woolf (eds. and trans.), *Aristotle: Eudemian Ethics* [*Eudemian*] (Cambridge, 2013), xviii observe, and this could be related to the suggested note’s claim that practical thought ‘rules’ (ἀρχεῖ) productive thought (1139b1-4). Moreover, as R. Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 2002), 19 notes, the *EE*, unlike the *NE*, ‘is not framed in a way that highlights the political implications of its theories.’

63 Interestingly, our interpretation can explain a problematic line in the common books, namely, *NE* VII. (=*EE* VI.) 3, 1147a28, where Aristotle uses the word ἀρχηγός in the ‘broad way’ characteristic of the *EE*, as Woods, *Eudemian*, 57 has observed. Commentators on the *NE* such as Irwin, *Nicomachean*, 299 have reasonably found it ‘puzzling’ that Aristotle should use the word in this way, presumably given the *NE*’s lack of any similar usage elsewhere. However, on our working hypothesis, and in light of the evidence presented above, the line would seem to be an originally Eudemian text that was imperfectly revised for its inclusion in the *NE*.


65 For the Greek text of the *De Anima*, I use Ross, W. D. (ed.), *Aristotelis De Anima* [*DA*] (Oxford, 1956). Here it is worth observing that while the *DA* does use the term τὸ λογιστικὸν (432b26; cf. 432b5), it does not use it in the restricted way of *NE* VI. (*EE* V.) 1, 1138b35-a17.
thought [ἀλλ’ ἡ ἕνεκά του καὶ πρακτική].’

(1139a35-6)\textsuperscript{66}

cause local movement, intellect and desire—intellect that reasons for the sake of something, i.e., practical intellect [νοῦς δὲ ὁ ἕνεκά του λογιζόμενος καὶ ὁ πρακτικός]. It differs from the theoretical intellect with respect to its end.’ (9, 432b26-27; 10, 433a13-15)\textsuperscript{67}

‘Decision is in fact the principle of action [πράξεως ἀρχή] [...] and the principle of decision is desire and reason for the sake of the something [δρέξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἕνεκα τινος].’ (1139a31-33)\textsuperscript{68}

The object of desire is the principle of practical thought and the terminus of practical thinking is the principle of action [ἀρχή τῆς πράξεως]. Thus, it is reasonable that these two seem to cause motion: desire and practical thought [δρέξις καὶ διάνοια πρακτική]. (10, 433a15-18)\textsuperscript{69}

The suggested note characterizes the practical intellect as λόγος ὁ ἕνεκα τινος (‘reason for the sake of something,’ 1139a32-33) and διάνοια ἡ ἕνεκά του καὶ πρακτική (‘thought for the sake of something, i.e. practical thought,’ 1139a36), and these teleological descriptions of the practical intellect find their only clear linguistic parallel at DA III. 10, 433a14: νοῦς ὁ ἕνεκά του λογιζόμενος καὶ ὁ πρακτικός (‘the intellect that reasons for the

\textsuperscript{66} Διάνοια δ’ αὐτή οὐθὲν κινεῖ, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἕνεκά του καὶ πρακτική. This is the text printed by modern editions, but it is perhaps worth noting that the codex Laurentianus (Kb) has αὐτή instead of αὐτή. However, this difference seems insignificant if P. Probert, Ancient Greek Accentuation (Oxford, 2006) at 16-19 is right that signs for accents and breathings were not used in writing in Aristotle’s day, except in certain special contexts. In any case, scholars have not adopted the reading of Laurentianus presumably because it is difficult to make sense of it: the nearest antecedent for διάνοια αὐτή (1139a35-6) would be διάνοιας (1139a35), which is clearly a reference to the practical intellect.

\textsuperscript{67} ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ τὸ λογιστικὸν καὶ ὁ καλούμενος νοῦς ἔστιν ὁ κινῶν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεωρητικὸς οὐθὲν θεωρεῖ πρακτικὸν [...] ἀμφοῖ ἀρα ταῦτα κινητικά κατὰ τόπον, νοῦς καὶ δρέξις, νοῦς δὲ ὁ ἕνεκά του λογιζόμενος καὶ ὁ πρακτικός· διαφέρει δὲ τοῦ θεωρητικοῦ τὸ τέλει.

\textsuperscript{68} πράξεως μὲν οὐν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις, δὲν ἢ κίνησις ἀλλ’ οὐχ οὗ ἔνεκα, προαίρεσις δὲ δρέξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἕνεκά τινος·

\textsuperscript{69} οὗ γὰρ ἡ δρέξις, αὐτὴ ἀρχή του πρακτικοῦ νοῦ, τὸ δ’ ἔσχατον ἀρχή τῆς πράξεως, ὅστε εὐλόγως δύο ταῦτα φαίνεται τὰ κινοῦντα, δρέξις καὶ διάνοια πρακτική·
sake of something, i.e. the practical intellect’). Both passages also articulate a similar doctrine: thought on its own, i.e. without desire, does not cause motion (NE VI. 2, 1139a35-6; DA III. 9, 432b26-29), yet practical thought does cause motion (NE VI. 2, 1139a36; DA III. 10, 433a13-14) in virtue of being joined to desire (NE VI. 2, 1139a31-33; DA III. 10, 433a15-20)—for the practical intellect’s origin is the object of desire (DA III. 10, 433a15-16), namely, eupraxia (NE VI. 2, 1139b3-4). On this account, the practical intellect—unlike the theoretical intellect—cannot be specified without reference to desire.

In what follows, I offer three inter-related reasons why this ‘desire-based’ account of the practical intellect is a better fit for NE than for the EE. The first reason concerns an alternative object-based account of the practical intellect that seems to be presupposed in the EE (Section 2.2). The second and third reasons concern two apparent consequences of the desire-based account that the NE articulates but the EE does not: namely, that the end of practical philosophy is action (Section 2.3), and that practical philosophy has a different methodology from theoretical philosophy (Section 2.4). In order to give us a point of reference by which to appreciate these latter two reasons, we will also discuss how Aristotle approached these same topics in the Protrepticus. Our discussion will further deepen our interpretation of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 2 because it will suggest that one would naturally give a different interpretation to the concluding lines of the chapter (1139b12-13) when those lines are read in the context of the NE as opposed to the EE.

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70 See e.g. Ramsauer, Ethica, 377 and Gauthier and Jolif, Livres VI-X, 444.
2.2

Commentators have puzzled over the latter half of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 (1138b35-9a17) because it seems to articulate a philosophically problematic, object-based account of the practical intellect. In this section, after briefly reviewing this passage, I explain why its object-based account seems to be in tension with the ‘desire-based’ account of the suggested note and the DA, and I then offer several reasons to think that the latter half of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 is an originally Eudemian text. In light of these considerations, it seems that Aristotle added the suggested note in order to revise his earlier Eudemian account of the practical intellect.72

Roughly half way through NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1, Aristotle reminds the reader that he had earlier divided the soul into ‘the part having reason and the irrational part’ (τὸ τε λόγον ἔχον καὶ τὸ ἄλογον, 1139a4-5), which could be a reference either to EE II. 1, 1219b27-20a12 or to NE I. 13, 1102a26-3a10, and he then proposes to divide the part having reason, i.e. the intellect. The most important lines are as follows:

καὶ ὑποκείσθω δύο τὰ λόγον ἔχοντα, ἐν μὲν ὁ θεωροῦμεν τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ὅσον αἱ ἀρχαὶ μὴ ἐνδεχόνται ἄλλως ἐχεῖν, ἐν δὲ ὁ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα· πρὸς γὰρ τὰ τῶν γένει ἑτερα καὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς μορίων ἑτερον τῷ γένει τὸ πρὸς ἑκάτερον περικός, εὖ περ καθ’ ὄμοιότητα τινα καὶ ὀικείοτητα ἡ γνώσις ὑπάρχει αὐτοῖς. λεγέσθω δὲ τούτων τὸ μὲν ἐπιστημονικόν τὸ δὲ λογιστικόν […] (1139a6-12)

72 A full discussion of lines 1138b35-9a17 falls outside the scope of this paper, and so I here emphasize that my other arguments do not strictly depend on the claims that I defend in this section.
Let there be two parts that have reason, one by which we contemplate those sorts of beings whose principles do not admit of being otherwise, and one part by which <we contemplate/consider> those beings that admit of being otherwise. This is because parts of the soul differ in kind when they are naturally related to things that differ in kind, if knowledge belongs to these parts according to a certain similarity and affinity. Let one of these <parts> be called the epistēmonikon and the other the logistikon.

Aristotle here distinguishes two parts of the intellect, and he does so by distinguishing their respective objects: the epistēmonikon contemplates things ‘whose principles do not admit of being otherwise’ (1139a7-8), and the logistikon considers/contemplates ‘things that admit of being otherwise’ (1139a8). Given evidence from the surrounding context (e.g. 1139a12-14, 16-17, 27-31, b12), scholars have reasonably assumed that the epistēmonikon and the logistikon correspond respectively to the theoretical and practical intellects.

However, there is a clear tension between this object-based account of the practical intellect and the one that we find in the suggested note and DA III. 10; two contrasts should make this tension evident. First, according to the desire-based account, the practical intellect is not for the sake of cognizing a certain class of objects but rather for the sake of action; consequently, the ‘proper objects’ of the practical intellect cannot be identified without reference to this goal.73 However, the latter half of NE VI. 1

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73 On this account, identifying the proper object of the practical intellect becomes a matter of secondary importance. Here it is worth noting that Aristotle in DA III. 9-10 seems to indicate that the proper object of the practical intellect is τὸ πρακτόν (432b27 and 433a29), and this way of specifying the proper object of practical intellect does of course make implicit reference to action (πρᾶξις).
identifies its objects as ‘things that admit of being otherwise’ (tà ἐνδεχόμενα, 1139a8), and this specification, which makes no reference to action as a goal, seems to include many things that are neither achievable in action nor relevantly related to things achievable in action (cf. EE II. 10, 1226a20-26). Second, the two accounts seem to give opposing answers to the question whether the practical intellect is a distinct power of the soul. NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 employs a rationale (1139a8-11) that resembles a principle in DA II. 4 according to which powers (δυνάμεις) of the soul are distinguished by proper objects (415a18-22); consequently, NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 seems to distinguish the practical intellect as a distinct power of the soul. However, the DA itself gives nothing like the argument of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1, 1139a8-11, never invoking the principle of DA II. 4 in order to distinguish the practical intellect; instead, the DA explicitly says that the practical intellect is distinguished from the theoretical intellect by its end (DA III. 10, 433a14-15; cf. NE VI. 2, 1139a35-6); consequently, the view here seems to be that there is one intellectual power used for two different ends. These two ends occur because the

74 Thus, the object-based account of NE VI. 1 does not seem to succeed in specifying the practical intellect as such, on which see also e.g. D. Bostock, Aristotle’s Ethics (Oxford, 2000), 77, Richardson Lear, Lives, 96-8 and Olfert, Truth, ch.2.
75 See e.g. T. K. Johansen, The Powers of Aristotle’s Soul (Oxford, 2012), 225: ‘He is here [in NE VI. 1, 1139a3-15] not so much giving a reason for saying that the kinds of reason count as parts of the soul, as he is giving grounds for why, given that they are parts, they must be different parts. The explanation is that they have objects of quite different kinds. They will then, on the object criterion [of DA II. 4], differ fundamentally as capacities […].’ Similar thoughts may be found in W. F. R. Hardie, Aristotle’s Ethical Theory, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1980), 221-224, Broadie and Rowe, Ethics, 361, and H. Lorenz and B. Morison, ‘Aristotle’s Empiricist Theory of Doxastic Knowledge,’ Phronesis 64 (2009), 431-464 at 431-432.
76 See e.g. Gauthier and Jolif, Livres VI-X, 442: ‘la division aristotélicienne voit dans l’intellect spéculatif et dans l’intellect pratique des fonctions d’une seule et même faculté, fonctions qui se distinguent d’abord par leur fins (De l’àme, III, 10, 432b27), là savoir et ici l’action […], et par voie de consequence seulement par leurs objects […].’ Similar thoughts may be found in Eustratius, In Ethica Nicomachea VI in Heylbut, G. (ed.), Eustratii et Michaelis et Anonyma in Ethica Nicomachea Commentaria, CAG 20 (Berlin, 1892), 256-406 at 284.36-38, Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I, q.79, a.11, and R. Brito, ‘Questiones super librum Ethicorum Aristotelis’ in L. Costa, Le questiones di Radulfo Brito sull’ ‘Etica Nicomachea’: Introduzione e testo critico (Turnhout, 2008) 171-563 at 475-8. A discussion of DA III. 10, 433b1-4 falls outside the scope of this paper, but see A. Torstrik (ed. and comm.), Aristotelis De Anima: Libri III (Berlin, 1862), 216.
practical intellect—unlike the theoretical intellect—receives its end from a distinct power of the soul, namely, desire: ‘the object of desire is the principle of the practical intellect’ (οὗ γὰρ ἡ ὑγεία, αὕτη ἀρχὴ τοῦ πρακτικοῦ νου, DA III. 10, 433a15-16; cf. 19-20), and thus ‘the end without qualification’ (τέλος ἀπλῶς) is the aim of practical thought ‘because eupraxis is the end and one’s desire is for this’ (ἡ γὰρ εὐπραξία τέλος, ἡ δ’ ὑγεία τοῦτο, NE VI. 2, 1139b2-4). By contrast, the object-based account of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 makes no reference to desire, and presents both intellects as being ‘by nature’ oriented to the cognition of certain classes of objects.

If there is a tension between these passages, as there seems to be, we should want to account for this, and Gauthier and Jolif have plausibly suggested that the latter half of NE VI. 1 is an originally Eudemian text that does not contain Aristotle’s mature account of the practical intellect.77 In favor of the hypothesis that the text is originally Eudemian, I here present six reasons, the last of which will be most important. First, given the arguments of Kenny, AE and others, we have prima facie reason to think that any passage in the ‘common books’ is originally Eudemian. Second, Gauthier and Jolif, Livres VI-X, 442 believe the latter half of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 seems early, and thus probably Eudemian, because it does not display awareness of the account of the practical intellect in DA III. 10. Third, the latter half of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 prominently employs the Platonic term to logistikon (1139a12 and 14), which is never used in the NE but is used in a passage of the EE where Aristotle seems to be speaking of the practical intellect (VIII. 1, 1246b19 and 23).78 Fourth, the latter half of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 immediately precedes, 77 See Gauthier and Jolif, Livres VI-X, 439-40 and 442.
78 It is also worth noting that in this same passage, i.e. EE VIII. 1, Aristotle refers to the obedient part of the soul as to alogon (1246b13, 20, 21, 24) just as he does at EE V. (≈NE VI.) 1, 1139a4-5. Indeed, the EE refers to the obedient part of the soul as to alogon more frequently than does the NE.
and connects up with the Eudemian portion of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 2, as we observed in Section 1.3; thus, the two passages together seem to constitute a continuous Eudemian text.\(^79\) Fifth, EE II. 6 closely resembles the latter half of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 because it distinguishes principles that ‘do not admit of being otherwise’ (μὴ ἐνδέχεται ἄλλως; 1222b22) and identifies humans as principles of certain things that ‘admit of both coming-to-be and not coming-to-be’ (ἐνδέχεται καὶ γίνεσθαι καὶ μή; 1223a5-6),\(^80\) while no parallel discussion seems present in the NE.\(^81\)

Finally, sixth, Aristotle in EE II. 4 speaks of ‘the intellectual virtues, whose ergon is truth, whether about how things are or about coming-to-be’ (1221b29-30, discussed above in Section 1.3).\(^82\) This important line seems to explicate the distinction between truth and practical truth from the Eudemian portion of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 2 in terms of the object-based account of the intellect in the latter half of NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1 (and not in terms of the desire-based account in the suggested note). The truth ‘about how things are’ (EE II. 4, 1221b30) seems to be the truth about ‘things whose principles do not admit of being otherwise’ (NE VI. [≈EE V.] 1, 1139a7-8), and the truth ‘about coming-to-be’ (EE

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\(^79\) Here it is worth observing that there are the two chapter-divisions in the NE (one indicated by Roman numerals, and one indicated by Arabic numerals in Bywater’s text), but neither of these chapter divisions should be considered authoritative because both derive from late medieval traditions, on which see Gauthier, R. A. and J. Y. Jolif (trans. and comm.), L’Éthique à Nicomaque: Tome I: Introduction et Traduction. (Paris/Louvain, 1958), 82*n.248. I have been using the chapter divisions indicated my roman numerals, as this is more common in anglophone scholarship. However, if one uses the chapter divisions indicated by Arabic numerals, then NE VI. 2 would include 1138b35-1139b13 (and so would include both texts that I am suggesting are originally Eudemian).

\(^80\) Broadie and Rowe, Ethics, 361. EE II. 6 also contains resemblances to the Eudemian portion of NE VI (≈EE V) 2, as we noted in Section 1.3.


\(^82\) αἱ μὲν τοῦ λόγου ἐχοντος διανοητικά, ὅν ἐγρον ἀλήθεια, ἡ περὶ τοῦ πῶς ἔχει ἡ περὶ γενέσεως
II. 4, 1221b30) seem to be the truth about ‘things that admit of being otherwise’ (NE VI. \[\approx EE V.\] 1, 1139a8).\(^8\) No comparable passage occurs in the NE.

In light of these reasons, we should suppose that the latter half of NE VI. (\[\approx EE V.\]) 1 is an originally Eudemian text, and that its object-based account of the practical intellect is likewise Eudemian. Given that this account seems to be in tension with the desire-based account in the suggested note, we then have some reason to suppose that Aristotle added the note in order to revise (or at the very least, to recontextualize) his earlier Eudemian view. Moreover, there do not seem to be any passages in the EE where Aristotle presents the distinction between truth and practical truth in light of the desire-based account of the practical intellect found in the suggested note. However, there do seem to be such passages in the NE, most notably I. 7, 1098a29-32 and II. 7, 1107a28-32, which we will discuss in the following sections.

Before moving on, though, we should observe a consequence of our working hypothesis: the audiences for the EE and the NE would naturally have understood the same lines from NE VI. (\[\approx EE V.\]) 1, i.e. 1138b35-9a17, differently. This is because the lines in the EE do seem to indicate an object-based account of the practical intellect, while the lines in the NE must be understood in light of the desire-based account in the suggested note. The resulting Nicomachean view would thus seem to be that the practical intellect is fundamentally distinguished by its end, which is given by desire, and only secondarily or heuristically distinguished by ‘objects.’ Aristotle presumably smoothed over any difficulties when presenting the material in lecture, but lines 1138b35-9a17

\(^{8}\) Kenny, AE, 168 also plausibly suggests that account of the logistikos of EE V. (\[\approx NE VI.\]) 1 is being referred to at EE II. 10, 1226b25-26, where Aristotle appears to characterize the practical intellect as an intellect concerned with a certain sort of object.
seem to have been imperfectly revised for their inclusion in the *NE*. Aristotle died without having ‘time to put his Nachlass in order.’

2.3

As we noted above, the *Protrepticus* identifies the *ergon* of the soul as truth (VII, 73.6-7, B65), but it does not distinguish between two thinking parts of the soul, of which the *erga* are truth and practical truth, as we find in *EE* V. (≈*NE* VI.) 2. The *Protrepticus* nowhere clearly identifies a practical intellect, and nowhere identifies any philosophical knowledge that is essentially practical—that is, philosophical knowledge of which the end is action. Instead, when Aristotle recommends philosophical knowledge that is useful for living and ruling, he clarifies: ‘this knowledge is theoretical indeed, though it enables us to accomplish all practices on its basis…’ (X, 85.23-25; B51). Accordingly, this philosophical knowledge has a double value: ‘To be wise [τὸ φρονεῖν] and to know is choiceworthy in itself for humans […], and it is useful for life’ (VII, 71.14-16; B41).

84 Frede, ‘Common’, 113.
85 ἔστι μὲν οὖν θεωρητικὴ ἤδη ἡ ἐπιστήμη, παρέχει δ’ ἡμῖν τὸ δημιουργικὸν κατ’ αὕτην ἄπαντα.
86 τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ τὸ γνῶσις καὶ ἐστίν αἱρετικὸν καθ’ αὐτὸ τὸς ἀνθρώπου […], χρήσιμον τ’ εἰς τὸν βίον ὑπάρχει. See e.g. Düring, *Attempt*, 276-7. Because the term φρονεῖν is integral to this claim, I will make two comments on the contention of Jaeger, *Development*, 82 that ‘the *Protrepticus* understands phronesis in the full Platonic sense, as equivalent to philosophical knowledge as such.’ First, Jaeger’s claim concerning phronēsis in the *Protrepticus* is distinct from his similar claim concerning phronēsis in the *EE*—and it is only the latter claim that has been widely questioned, on which see Gauthier and Jolif, *Livres* VI-X, 467-9. Second, scholars tend to be sympathetic with Jaeger’s judgment concerning phronēsis in the *Protrepticus*: see e.g. Gauthier and Jolif, *Introduction*, 28-29, *Livres* VI-X, 466 and C. Bobonich, ‘Aristotle’s Ethical Treatises’ [‘Treatises’], in R. Kraut, *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Malden, MA, 2006), 12-36 at 18-23. My claims naturally dovetail with this judgment, but do not strictly require it. For example, even if φρονεῖν at IX, 83.4 (B41) indicates an activity of practical wisdom, Aristotle would still be saying that practical philosophical knowledge is valuable for its own sake—and this claim seems to be sufficient to provide a contrast with the *NE*. 
Yet such knowledge is properly choiceworthy in itself, and it seems to be useful only by way of ‘contributing cause’ (συναίτιον) (IX, 83.4; B42).

In the undisputed passages of the EE, Aristotle speaks of ‘intellectual virtues, whose ergon is truth, whether about how things are or about coming-to-be’ (II. 4, 1221b29-30), and this would seem to point forward to the distinction between truth and practical truth in EE V. (≈NE VI.) 2, as we observed above in Section 1.3. However, as we discussed in Section 2.2, Aristotle in this passage from EE II 4 does not distinguish practical intellectual virtue by its teleological orientation to action but rather by an orientation to cognize a certain general subject matter that includes action, namely, ‘coming-to-be’ (γένεσις). Moreover, the EE itself is not presented as an essentially practical treatise: Aristotle remarks that he will discuss some topics that pertain to ‘theoretical philosophy alone’ (φιλοσοφίαν μόνον θεωρητικήν; I. 1, 1214a13), and the word ‘alone’ (μόνον) suggests that he considers other discussions in the EE (and perhaps the entire EE) to be at least partly theoretical.

Moreover, Aristotle in EE I. 5 assumes that all knowledge divides into theoretical and productive kinds, as we noted in Section 2.1, and after asserting that theoretical knowledge may be useful ‘accidentally’ (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς, 1216b15; a claim that resembles Protrep. IX, 82.20-83.4; B42) he affirms the inherent value of certain forms of productive knowledge (1216b17), namely those concerned with ‘noble’ (καλός) things (1216b20; cf. EE I. 4, 1215b3):

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87 αἱ μὲν τοῦ λόγου ἔχοντος διανοητικά, ὄν ἔργον ἀλήθεια, ἢ περὶ τοῦ πῶς ἔχει ἢ περὶ γενέσεως
καλὸν μὲν οὖν καὶ τὸ γνωρίζειν ἐκαστὸν τῶν καλὸν· οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ γε περὶ ἁρετῆς
οὐ τὸ εἰδέναι τιμώτατον τι ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τὸ γινώσκειν ἐκ τίνων ἐστίν. οὐ γὰρ
εἰδέναι βουλόμεθα τι ἐστίν ἀνδρεία, ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἀνδρεῖοι, οὐδὲ τί ἐστι δικαιοσύνη,
ἀλλ’ εἶναι δίκαιοι [...] (I. 5, 1216b19-23)

It is certainly noble to know each noble thing; nevertheless, in the case of virtue,
the most valuable thing is not to know what it is but rather to know from what it
arises. For we do not wish to know what courage is but to be courageous, nor to
know what justice is but to be just [...] 

Though Aristotle says that knowing ‘what virtue is’ is not what is most valuable, he
implies that this knowledge is still valuable in itself (cf. I. 1, 1214a10-12), and what he
does identify as most valuable is still a kind of knowing—namely, knowing ‘from what
virtue arises’ (ἐκ τίνων ἐστίν, 1216b21). The final lines may suggest the doctrine that the
end of practical philosophy is action—at least to someone who has read the *NE*—but it is
a striking fact that the *EE* never clearly states this doctrine.

By contrast, Aristotle in the *NE* repeatedly emphasizes that there is a
philosophical knowledge the end of which is action, and he draws from this explicit
document several important consequences. Very early in the treatise, Aristotle observes
that youths, akratics and any others who follow their feelings will acquire practical
knowledge ‘in vain’ (ματαίως) and ‘unprofitably’ (ἀνωφελῶς) precisely because ‘the end
is not knowledge but action’ (τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν οὐ γνῶσις ἀλλὰ πρᾶξις; *NE* I. 3, 1095a5-6).
Aristotle also clarifies that the *NE* is not a theoretical treatise:
[...] ή παρόδσα πραγματεία ού θεωρίας ἕνεκα ἐστιν ὡσπερ αἱ ἄλλαι (οὐ γὰρ ἵνα εἰδόμεν τί ἐστιν ἡ ἄρετὴ σκεπτόμεθα, ἄλλ᾽ ἵν᾽ ἁγαθοὶ γενόμεθα, ἐπεὶ οὔδὲν ἂν ἦν ὀφελὸς αὐτῆς) (NE II. 2, 1103b26-29)

[...] the present treatise is not for the sake of contemplation, as are the others—for we are not engaging in this inquiry in order to know what virtue is but in order to become good since otherwise the inquiry would be of no advantage.

Here Aristotle seems to suppose that the value of practical knowledge properly derives from action, not from knowing itself, and he closes the NE with a similar observation (NE X. 9, 1179a33-b4). It is also not hard to see how the doctrine from the suggested note can account for this revised conception of practical philosophy—for if the practical intellect is teleologically oriented to action, and practical philosophy perfects the practical intellect, then practical philosophy too is teleologically oriented to action.88

88 An anonymous reader has proposed to me an alternative explanation for why Aristotle in the EE never says that the end of practical philosophy is action: viz., Aristotle takes this point to be obvious to his Eudeman audience. I believe we should reject this explanation for many reasons, but here are five. First, the explanation is the opposite of what we should expect given the popular hypothesis that the EE was written for a more ‘philosophical’ audience, while the NE was written for a more ‘political’ audience, as suggested by e.g. P. Simpson (trans. and comm.), The Eudemian Ethics of Aristotle (New Brunswick, 2013), xii), L. Jost, ‘The Eudemian Ethics and Its Controversial Relationship to the Nicomachean Ethics’ [‘Relationship’], in R. Polanksy (ed.), Cambridge Companion to the Nicomachean Ethics (Cambridge, 2014), 410-427 at 419-21, and Kenny, Perfect, 141. It is philosophers, not politicians, who need to be reminded that the end of practical philosophy is not contemplation. Second, Aristotle in the Protrepticus does not seem to recognize a philosophical knowledge the end of which is action, and that shows that the Nicomachian account of practical philosophy is not obvious. Third, as we noted above, the EE characterizes its investigation as at least partly theoretical, and this claim conflicts with the NE’s account of its own investigation (e.g. II. 2, 1103b26-29). Fourth, Aristotle in the NE repeatedly emphasizes that the end of practical philosophy is action, and even implies that the majority of people do not understand this (NE II. 4, 1105b12-18); consequently, it is implausible that Aristotle in the EE knew this truth but thought that it was so obvious that it was not even worth mentioning. Fifth, as we will see in the following section, practical philosophy’s end determines its proper methodology, and the differences between the EE and NE
2.4

Aristotle’s thoughts on practical philosophy’s end also have consequences for its proper methodology. We briefly touched on one of these consequences already—namely, that students of practical philosophy should not be prone to following their feelings—but here we focus on the degree to which exactness (ἀκριβεία) should be pursued.

In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle distinguishes only one philosophical methodology, and according to this methodology, one should pursue the greatest degree of exactness about the things that one is trying to contemplate or accomplish (X, 84.7-85.23; B46-50). Other craftsmen take their tools and notions ‘at a second or third remove’ (ἀπὸ τῶν δευτέρων καὶ τρίτων), reasoning ‘from experience’ (ἐξ ἐμπειρίας, X, 85.5-6; B48); the philosopher alone takes his standard ‘from truth and nature itself’ (ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας, X, 84.25-26; B47), and so can achieve ‘the imitation of exact things [τῶν ἀκριβῶν] themselves because he is a contemplator [θεατής] of exact things, not of imitations’ (X, 85.7-9; B48).\(^89\) Consequently, the philosopher alone can achieve actions that are ‘right and noble’ (ὀρθαὶ καὶ καλαί, X, 85.19-20; B49).\(^90\) The higher degree of exactness also correlates with a higher degree of truth: ‘He who achieves truth most of all [ὁ μάλιστα ἀληθεύων] lives most of all, and this is the person who is wise and contemplates on the basis of the most exact [ἀκριβεστάτην] understanding’ (XI, 87.26-28; B85).\(^91\)

\(^89\) Regarding the methodology of practical philosophy cannot be plausibly explained by a difference in intended audience, as even Kenny, ‘Reconsiderations’, 296 has observed.


\(^91\) ζῆ [...] μάλιστα πάντων ὁ μάλιστα ἀληθεύων, ὁπότε δ’ ἐστιν ὁ φρονόν καὶ θεωρῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην ἐπιστήμην. Düring, *Attempt*, 215 observes a similarity between the *Protrepticus* and the
Like the *Protrepticus*, the *EE* identifies only one philosophical methodology, which is explicitly said to apply to every branch of learning (I. 6, 1216b35-39), and the *EE* nowhere distinguishes a methodology special to practical philosophy.\(^{92}\) This is important to note because exactness is clearly presented as a philosophical desideratum in the *Protrepticus* and in Aristotle’s theoretical philosophy. Moreover, the *EE* nowhere restricts the exactness to be pursued in ethical discussions, but instead appears to recommend it\(^ {93}\) and to pursue it.\(^ {94}\) Consequently, it seems that the first audience of the *EE*, when encountering the concluding line of *EE* V. 2, would have very naturally assumed that each intellectual part ‘will achieve truth most of all’ (μάλιστα ἀληθεύσει, 1139b13) only when achieve the greatest possible philosophical exactness, and the audience would have almost certainly understood the words in this way if they had already read the *Protrepticus*.

By contrast, Aristotle in the *NE* clearly distinguishes philosophical methodologies—there is one suitable to theoretical philosophy and one to practical philosophy—and he emphasizes the importance of observing the methodology suitable to each discipline. He contrasts these methodologies in various ways but especially concerning the way exactness (ἀκριβεία) should be pursued:

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\(^{92}\) See e.g. Jaeger, *Development*, 232-4 and Inwood and Woolf, *Eudemian*, xxii-xxiii. However, this is not to say that the *EE* and the *Protrepticus* observe the very same philosophical methodology, as Jaeger, *Development*, 233 observes.

\(^{93}\) One might read *EE* I. 6, 1216b32-9 as a recommendation to pursue exactness, on which see Bobonich ‘Treatises’, 26.

\(^{94}\) Kenny, *Perfect*, 115: ‘the *EE* is more systematic and more technical [than the *NE*] and makes more use of the conceptual apparatus of Aristotelian logic and metaphysics. [...] [T]he arguments are often more formalized, but the quest for rigour often results in a very crabbed text.’
We should not seek exactness in the same way in all matters, but in each according to the underlying subject matter, and to the degree that is suited to the inquiry—for the carpenter and the geometer investigate the right angle differently. The carpenter investigates the right angle to the extent that this helps his work, and the geometer investigates what, or what sort of thing, the right angle is, since he is a contemplator [θεατής] of the truth.

Aristotle begins by mentioning two related reasons for restricting the pursuit of exactness in any discipline: the subject matter may not admit of exactness and the ultimate goal of the discipline may render attainment of exactness unnecessary. The NE discusses both reasons for limiting the pursuit of exactness in practical philosophy, while the EE does not even mention either. Aristotle focusses on the former reason for limitation in NE I. 3 and the latter primarily in the passage above.

Geometry is here used as an example of theoretical thought in general, and Aristotle assumes that the theoretical philosopher, because he is a ‘contemplator of the truth’ (θεατής... τάληθος, NE I. 7, 1098a31-32), will seek the greatest degree of exactness about the universal. By contrast, the carpenter, who is evidently not a ‘contemplator of the truth,’ seeks truth only for the sake of his product, which is particular, and so only seeks that level of exactness that will improve his product. In context, Aristotle is likening the practical philosopher to the carpenter—not the geometer—and so would seem to be repudiating his earlier view in the Protrepticus.96 Consequently, the original audience for the NE would have naturally interpreted the concluding claim of NE VI. 2 differently than the original audience for the EE would have naturally interpreted the same claim in EE V. 2. This is because only the NE makes it clear that the practical intellect, unlike the theoretical intellect, will not ‘achieve truth most all’ by attaining maximum exactness about the universal. In light of NE I. 7, 1098a29-32, a reader of the NE would naturally suspect that, if the practical intellect does ‘achieve truth most of all,’ it would do so by successfully aiming at particular action. In fact, Aristotle appears to signal this revised interpretation of 1139b12-13 in the following lines from NE II. 7, which have no parallel in the EE.

Δεῖ δὲ τοῦτο μὴ μόνον καθόλου λέγεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς καθ’ ἐκαστὰ ἐφαρμόττειν. ἐν γὰρ τοῖς περὶ τὰς πράξεις λόγοις οἱ μὲν καθόλου κοινότεροί εἰσιν,

We must not only state <our account> in a universal way but also adapt it to particular cases—for among accounts regarding actions, the universal ones are common to more cases, but the specific ones are truer. This is because actions concern particulars, and our account must accord with these.

Aristotle here explains that the ‘truer’ (ἀληθινώτεροι) accounts in practical philosophy, as opposed to theoretical philosophy, are the accounts that are closer to the particular.

If Aristotle implements this methodological principle in the NE, as one would expect he would, that could illuminate at least two other differences with the EE. First, the undisputed books of the NE emphasize that actions are ‘among particulars’ (ἐν τοῖς καθ’ ἐκαστά) (NE III. 1, 1110b6-7; cf. 1111a23-4), that particulars admit of variability (NE III. 1, 1110b8-9; cf. I. 3, 1094b11-22), and that it falls to perception, informed by experience, to judge these particulars well.98 By contrast, such remarks are absent from the undisputed books of the EE.99 Second, the Nicomachean discussions of the specific virtues and of friendship are not just longer than the parallel Eudemian discussions, but

97 With Bywater, *Ethica*, I read κοινότεροι in line 1107a30, which is found in the principal manuscripts, though the alternative reading κενώτεροί could also work for my purposes.
98 See A. J. London, ‘Moral Knowledge and the Acquisition of Virtue in Aristotle’s ‘Nicomachean’ and ‘Eudemian Ethics’’ [“Knowledge”], *The Review of Metaphysics* 54.3 (2001), 553-583 at 566-71. On the need for perception to judge particulars, see NE II. 9, 1109b20-23, and IV. 5, 1126b2-4. On the need for the student of ethics to have suitable experience of particulars, see NE I. 3, 1095a2-4; I. 4, 1095b3-9, and II. 1, 1103b23-5.
99 London, ‘Knowledge’, 570-1. On the basis of this and other related considerations, London, ‘Knowledge’, 581 cautiously speculates that the remarks in NE VI concerning the importance of knowing particulars ‘either did not appear in [the Eudemian version of] the common books […] or did appear there but in an attenuated form.’
describe more nuances in character and circumstance, contain more examples, and offer more specific pieces of advice than the Eudemian discussions, which, by contrast, can seem ‘austerely philosophical.’\textsuperscript{100} It seems that, when Aristotle wrote the \textit{NE}, he was especially intent on guiding his students closer to the particulars in which excellent actions occur.\textsuperscript{101}

Consequently, when one reads the concluding lines of \textit{NE} VI. 2 against the background of the \textit{NE}, but particularly II. 7, 1107a28-32 and I. 7, 1098a29-32, Aristotle would seem to be saying that the practical and theoretical intellects will ‘achieve truth most of all’ in different ways. When the theoretical intellect seeks what is most true, it seeks what is most universal, i.e. the principles, which admit of maximum exactness. By contrast, when the practical intellect seeks what is most true, it seeks what is more particular (\textit{NE} II. 7, 1107a29-31), which does not admit of maximum exactness (\textit{NE} I. 3, 1094b11-22; I. 7, 1098a26-28). And while the perfected practical intellect must consider the universal (\textit{NE} II. 7, 1107a28), the exactness of this consideration is still curtailed by the ultimate goal of action (\textit{NE} I. 7, 1098a29-32). The key explanation for this difference seems to be that Aristotle in the \textit{NE} clearly conceives of the practical intellect—and consequently of practical philosophy—as having an essential teleological orientation to

\textsuperscript{100} Kenny, \textit{Perfect}, 141: ‘The \textit{NE} is more fluent, less austerely philosophical, less telegrammatic in its arguments than the \textit{EE}.’ Jost, ‘Relationship’, 417: ‘[The \textit{NE} is] fuller in discussion of various points and more generous with examples than its more austere sibling [i.e. the \textit{EE}], on the whole.’

\textsuperscript{101} Jost, ‘Relationship’, 417-9 suggests that these different treatments of the specific virtues might be explained by a difference in intended audience. This might also be true. However, even if it is, the difference in methodology can at least partly explain the difference in intended audience, but not vice versa—for if Aristotle in the \textit{EE} follows a theoretical methodology, pursuing exactness and focusing on more universal accounts, he would naturally write his treatise for an audience with antecedent knowledge of philosophy, but if Aristotle in the \textit{NE} follows a practical methodology, eschewing exactness and focusing on more specific accounts, he would naturally write his treatise for a broader audience. See also footnote 88 above.
action. In this way, the account of the practical intellect from the suggested note seems to have consequences for our interpretation of the concluding lines of *NE* VI. 2.

3

This paper has presented an argument for two interrelated but distinct theses: (1) lines 1139a31-b11 of *NE* VI. 2 should be moved before the word κοινωνεῖν at 1139a20, and (2) *NE* VI. 2 as whole is a Nicomachean revision of an originally Eudemian text. The theses naturally combine with one another, but they do not require one another: one could accept the first without the second, and vice versa.

With regard to the first thesis, it is worth observing that, in the judgment of Gauthier, we do not have a truly critical edition of the *NE*.102 And so I here emphasize that when we finally do have such a critical edition, it should not, like the edition of Bywater, ignore questions about the origin and composition of the *NE*. Instead, the awaited edition should take seriously the hypothesis that the first editor of the *NE* made mistakes, and in particular, it should move lines 1139a31-b11 before the word κοινωνεῖν at 1139a20 or at least report this proposal in the apparatus. Translators, who need not exercise the same degree of caution concerning the text, should likewise rearrange the text in order to correct the errors of the first editor.103

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102 Gauthier, *Introduction*, 301. D. Frede, *Aristoteles: Nikomachische Ethik. Erster Halbband: Übersetzung und Einleitung* (Berlin/Boston, 2020), 217 observes that the situation has not changed since 1970 because no one has yet produced a classification (e.g. a stemma) by which to judge the value of all the relevant manuscripts.

With regard to the second thesis, our argument has fairly clear ramifications for our interpretation of EE V. 2, NE VI. 2, and the common books more generally. If lines 1139a31-b11 really are a Nicomachean note, then that fact is highly relevant to our evaluation of those interpretations and translations of the EE that present the ‘common books’ in toto as EE IV-VI. And if Aristotle revised his conception of the practical intellect—and consequently, his conceptions of practical philosophy and practical methodology—sometime after he wrote the EE, then that fact could help to explain why he was motivated to write the NE in the first place. Our discussion of the composition of the NE VI. 2 also suggests various ways in which our interpretation of the text could be improved: for example, lines 1139b12-13 should be treated as the conclusion of the argument present in lines 1139a21-31; the apparent commitment to degrees of truth in the concluding lines should be further investigated (cf. aPo II. 19, 100b5-17 and Meta a. 1 993b19-31); the desire-based account of the practical intellect in the suggested note should be given priority over the apparently object-based account in NE VI. (≈EE V.) 1, 1139a6-12; and the distinction between truth and practical truth should be interpreted along the lines of e.g. NE I. 7, 1098a26-32 and II. 7, 1107a28-32, passages which seem to be informed by the desire-based account from the suggested note.

Finally, developmental considerations have largely fallen out of fashion in Aristotle scholarship, and because I have introduced them, I here close by addressing what may be a lingering worry: am I proposing that we descend down the rabbit hole of developmental hypotheses never to return? I certainly am not. I have assumed throughout this paper that Aristotle continually revised the majority of treatises, and this has the
result that each treatise is, in a sense, ‘contemporaneous with every other.’\textsuperscript{104} Thus, those scholars who strive for a systematic interpretation of Aristotle’s philosophy have reason to do so. Nevertheless, these scholars should still seek to know which treatises were continually revised and which were not; they should recognize that Aristotle seems to have died before completing these revisions, which inevitably left tensions in the text; and they should likewise acknowledge that these tensions may sometimes be profitably resolved by prioritizing the doctrines expressed in what seem to be ‘later’ passages. Consequently, developmental considerations, far from impeding us from a unified view of the Aristotelian philosophical system, may very well be necessary in order to attain it.\textsuperscript{105}

**Bibliography**


\textsuperscript{104} Burnyeat, ‘Case’, 179.

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