

## PHILOSOPHY AS ART IN ARISTOTLE'S *PROTREPTICUS*

REFIK GÜREMEN

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**Abstract:** Observing certain affinities with Plato's *Alcibiades*, this paper argues that a distinction between *care* (*epimeleia*) of the soul and philosophy as its art (*technê*) is reflected in Aristotle's *Protrepticus*. On the basis of this distinction, it claims that two notions of philosophy can be distinguished in the *Protrepticus*: philosophy as *epistêmê* and philosophy as *technê*. The former has the function of contemplating the truth of nature, and Aristotle praises it as the natural telos of human beings; whereas philosophy as *technê* helps nature to accomplish the end it designed for human beings. It emerges that according to Aristotle in the *Protrepticus* philosophy is the art of making oneself coincide with one's nature as a human being.

Keywords: Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, philosophy, *technê*, human nature, *Alcibiades*.

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### 1. Introduction

The structure of happiness in Aristotle has been the subject of an endless, well-known scholarly debate. The question is basically about whether Aristotle endorses an "inclusive" or an "exclusive" account of happiness. According to those who think that Aristotle favors an inclusive view of happiness, *eudaimonia* would consist in the practical life of an active citizenship, which incorporates a multiplicity of virtuous activities and other goods; whereas in the exclusivist alternative, Aristotle's final word on the nature of happiness is to be found in the *Nicomachean Ethics* X, where he represents the activity of contemplation as the ultimate highest end of human life and its corresponding virtue as the most complete of all. According to this view, as these last pages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* praise *theoria* in its complete detachment from practical concerns of human life, Aristotle would envision happiness as essentially and primarily consisting in a *single* kind of activity, to the *exclusion* of others.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The debate is now almost impossible to follow. Some, like A. A. Long (2011), think that it has started to lose its philosophical interest. Nevertheless, it has been one of the most vivid and prolific debates around Aristotle's *NE*. At the origin of the debate is an article by W. F. R. Hardie (1965) (Hardie's term for the exclusivist view is "the dominant end view"). In 1979, J. L. Ackrill published an influential paper defending the inclusivist view; and in a later paper Hardie (1979) replied to Ackrill. Much of the subsequent debate originated from these papers. A useful survey of the development and the significance of the debate can be found in F. Lisi (2004).

The tension between these two views is, in fact, beyond the question of knowing what structure eudaimonia has for Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 7–8, characterizes contemplation as the most divine activity, not only with respect to its content but also due to its absolute disinterestedness and uselessness in matters of action and production. This view hardly squares with the rest of the work, because starting from the first book already, Aristotle coherently conceives the pursuit of happiness as being fundamentally a matter of politics and virtuous action.

This tension arising from the uselessness of theoretical activity and its absolute detachment from all other practical and productive concerns pertaining to human flourishing has an early duplicate in the *Protrepticus*. Here, however, in this text from the early years of Aristotle's career, rather than issuing from an opposition between *theoria* and other human activities, this tension divides Aristotle's considerations about *theoria* itself. In certain fragments of this work (especially chapters VII and IX in Iamblichus's *Protrepticus*), we see Aristotle praising *theoria* for its absolute uselessness, while in others (especially chapters VI and X in Iamblichus's *Protrepticus*), he exalts the benefits of its connection with practical and productive pursuits. According to some scholars, this is an inconsistency in Aristotle's account of *theoria* in the *Protrepticus*. Andrea Wilson Nightingale, for instance, is of this view. She thinks that Aristotle has these fluctuating views on *theoria* in the *Protrepticus*, "since he still retained some key Platonic positions" in this work (2004, 197).<sup>2</sup> This impression of inconsistency is aggravated by the fact that in order to claim some utility for philosophy as a theoretical pursuit, Aristotle appeals, in this work, to a conception of philosophy as *technê*. He seems to propound an "inclusive" notion of *theoria*, which is at odds not only with certain other passages of this work but also with his most considered views in the later treatises.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the reproach of inconsistency, I find it improbable if it is meant to be confusion on Aristotle's part due to some still ongoing uncontrolled effects of a Platonism. I find it improbable simply because the *Protrepticus* argument from the utility of philosophy seems to be too deliberately elaborated to be a neglected inconsistency. Working out an argument for its utility is quite appropriate for a work intended to defend philosophy against those critics despising it as useless when pursued only

<sup>2</sup> This developmentalist view about Aristotle's *Protrepticus* has a famous forerunner in W. Jaeger (1934, 2nd ed. 1948:54–101). Jaeger thinks that Aristotle's *Protrepticus* still shows still a close dependence on Plato's theory of forms.

<sup>3</sup> Hutchinson and Johnson (2014, 386, 390, and 392) also think that in the *Protrepticus* Aristotle holds an "inclusive" view of the philosophical life. But they use it in relation to the view formulated in Iamb., *Prot.* XII, where Aristotle attempts "to co-opt the other ways of life by showing that philosophy can make the best of any of them" (390). I rather use this term in relation to Iamb., *Prot.* VI and X, and I mean to express how philosophy as a *technê* is taken to articulate with the other sciences in an architectonical way.

for theoretical purposes.<sup>4</sup> This argument and its tension with the rest of the work is just too transparent to be an unintended consequence of Aristotle's exhortative intentions.

Nevertheless, Aristotle's position on the utility of philosophy and its expression by an appeal to a conception of philosophy as *technê* ask for some explanation. The *Protrepticus* conception of philosophy as *technê* has been analyzed with great erudition and acuity by Sophie Van der Meeren (2011). I have some remarks about her analyses, but I also have some suggestions as to the provenance of this notion as found in the *Protrepticus*.

Affinities of Aristotle's *Protrepticus* with Plato's *Euthydemus* have been well attested. But I think that the *Protrepticus* is no less connected to another one of Plato's exhortative dialogues, namely, *Alcibiades*. Below, I first try to show that in this dialogue Plato conceives philosophy, in a more or less explicit fashion, as a *technê*, and then I argue that in his *Protrepticus* Aristotle appropriates some key elements from Plato's reasoning here, so as to establish a particular view of his own on the articulation of philosophy as art to some other sciences.

## 2. Philosophy as *technê* in *Alcibiades*

In the first two-thirds of *Alcibiades* (103b–124b), Plato presents Socrates as trying, by different argumentative means, to get Alcibiades to recognize his need to “take care of himself” if he wants to achieve his ambitions of being the most influential political leader ever to have lived in Greece or abroad.<sup>5</sup> Socrates cannot manage to move Alcibiades until he engages him, as a last resort, in a long rhetorical argument designed to appeal to his pride by comparing his claims to nobility with the Persian and Spartan royal families (119d–124b). This strategy works, as Alcibiades begins to show concern over the exact meaning of Socrates' exhortations to “self-cultivation”: “Well, Socrates,” he says, “what kind of *epimeleia* do I need to practice? Can you show me the way?” (124b7–8).

Now, the crucial thing for my purposes here is that starting from this point in the dialogue up to 128e10, Socrates constantly reformulates the central question of their conversation as a quest for a *technê* by which one

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle's *Protrepticus* is universally believed to be written as a response to Isocrates' attack in *Antidosis* on the notion of philosophy as it was being practiced in the Academy. Isocrates believes that the proper use of the name “philosophy” must be reserved for the kind of study that is most likely to produce effective results in a citizen's life. See also Isocrates' *Against the Sophists* for similar views. On the relation of Aristotle's *Protrepticus* to Isocrates' *Antidosis*, see Hutchinson and Johnson (unpublished).

<sup>5</sup> Taking care of oneself is the theme that leads the rest of the dialogue from this point on, and is recurrent throughout: 119a9, 120c8–d4, 123d4–e1, 124b7, d2, 127e8–129a9, 132b5–c5. I borrow this list of passages from Nicholas Denyer (2001, 90). All translations from *Alcibiades* are by Doug H. Hutchinson (1997), unless otherwise stated.

can take care of oneself. My contention is that Socrates' ultimate answer to Alcibiades' question "What kind of *epimeleia* do I need to practice?" consists in singling out philosophy as this *technê* by which one takes care of oneself.

Socrates' reformulation of their question as a search for a *technê* of *epimeleia* becomes all the more evident when Socrates is finally able, from 127d6 on, to get Alcibiades to focus his attention on the fundamental question, a prerequisite if Alcibiades really wants to know how to take care of himself: "What is caring for oneself?" (τί ἐστὶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι;—127e8). This is the question that starts the most renowned argument leading to the conclusion that the self of an individual is nothing other than her soul. Let me call this "the soul-self argument." On the way, however, leading to this conclusion we learn how Socrates defines *epimeleia tout court*: "When someone makes something better," he says, "then you call this a proper *epimeleia*" (ὅταν τις τι βέλτιον ποιῆ, τότε ὀρθῆν λέγεις ἐπιμέλειαν—128b8–9).<sup>6</sup> For this definition to be of any help to Alcibiades in taking care of himself, Socrates supplies it with a general principle (I call it "the *technê* principle") that guides all the examples he gives for "taking care of something." The *technê* principle states that different things are being taken care of by different arts: "There is," says Socrates, "a different art with which we care for each thing itself" (ἄλλη τέχνη αὐτοῦ ἐκάστου ἐπιμελούμεθα—128d3).<sup>7</sup> In other words, different things are the object of different *technai* for their "betterment" (or cultivation). Shoemaking, for instance, is the *technê* that makes shoes better, therefore shoemaking is that art by which we take care of shoes (128b11–13). And it is athletics that makes our feet and the rest of our body better; therefore athletics is the *technê* that takes care of our bodies. But a body and that which belongs to a body are not taken care of by the same art, because they are different things (128c15).

Now, the *technê* principle enlarges Socrates' definition of *epimeleia*, and doing so it also enlarges the frame within which the rest of the soul-self argument is developed until its conclusion at 133c6.

The *technê* principle enlarges Socrates' definition of *epimeleia* because according to this principle *epimeleia* is the work or the function of its corresponding *technê*: *epimeleia* is what a *technê* does to its proper object.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This definition of *epimeleia* parallels the one given in *Euthyphro* for *therapeuein* (13b8–10). This word is not frequent in *Alcibiades*, but at 132b2 and 10–11 it is used as a substitute for *epimeleisthai*. Some of Aristotle's uses of this term show, however, interesting parallelism with *epimeleia/epimeleisthai* (see Verdenius 1971, 294). The most obvious parallel is at *NE* X, 8, 1179a23. For Aristotle's uses of the word "therapeia" in *Ethics*, see Jost 2009. Verdenius 1971 is brought to my attention by Jost's article.

<sup>7</sup> See also Denyer (2001, 208 and 210) on this point.

<sup>8</sup> Socrates uses the verb *ποιεῖν* to express the "betterment" of something as the work of a corresponding *technê*. It is, however, worth underlining at this point that the idea of *epimeleia* as the work of a *technê* supposes a "making" that is different from the "making" of an object in craftsmanship. This point is going to become more clear.

This is, I think, the fundamental assumption beneath Socrates' insistence on formulating the central question of the conversation with Alcibiades as a quest for a *technê*. If Alcibiades wants to take care of himself, then he needs to figure out the proper *technê* to do it. This point finds its most explicit expression when Socrates reiterates their question in terms of the *technê* principle they have just agreed upon: if different things are being taken care of by different arts, then "what art makes a human being better?" (τίς τέχνη βελτίω ποιεῖ ἄνθρωπον;—128e10).<sup>9</sup>

The *technê* principle also enlarges the frame within which the soul-self argument is carried to its ultimate conclusion because the assumption of a correspondence between a *technê* and its work as *epimeleia* doubles the question that is being pursued. Now we have not only:

1. What is the art which makes a human being better?

but also

2. In what exactly does a human being's "betterment" consist?<sup>10</sup>

Obviously, the second of these questions has priority over the first one. And I think that the eye analogy (132c9–133c6) has just the function of answering this question. A brief look into the eye analogy is therefore in order.

Upon agreeing on the identity of one's self with one's soul (129b5–130e6), Socrates realizes that the Delphic command "Know yourself!" might be understood in another sense as well.<sup>11</sup> If the self of an individual is her soul, then to know oneself one has to have a clear knowledge of the soul itself. Such knowledge can be attained by looking into another soul, especially into the best part of it; just as an eye can only see itself by looking at

<sup>9</sup> I follow Denyer (2001) in conjecturing ἄνθρωπον instead of αὐτόν. The same question is asked differently on the previous page, at 128d11: ποία ποτ' ἂν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμεληθῆμεν;

<sup>10</sup> This question is the equivalent of Alcibiades' very first question, at 124b7–8, starting the whole soul-self argument: "What kind of *epimeleia* do I need to practice?" The asymmetry between these questions is that although the first is asked explicitly, it is never answered explicitly, while the second is given an explicit answer although it is never asked explicitly. I explain below that Socrates' answer to the second question is: the acquisition of wisdom. But this very answer points out the answer to the first question as well: the art of acquiring wisdom is nothing other than philosophy.

<sup>11</sup> Throughout the dialogue, four senses of the Delphic command are being distinguished: (a) know what your true self is (128e–132b); (b) know the nature of your true self (132c–133c); (c) know the current state of your true self (*passim*); and (d) being *sophrôn* (131b, 133c). The eye analogy introduces an investigation into the second of these senses. Daniel Werner (2013, 8) also acknowledges that self-knowledge in the dialogue has this sense.

its own reflection in the pupil of another eye. I take this argument to be about a single soul looking into *itself as another*,<sup>12</sup> rather than being about two distinct souls, *one* looking at the *other*.<sup>13</sup> Let me quote the core section of the analogy, which is also the ultimate conclusion of the soul-self argument:

SOCRATES: So if an eye is to see itself, it must look at an eye, and that region of it in which the virtue of an eye occurs, and this, I presume, is seeing.

ALCIBIADES: That's right.

SOCRATES: Then if the soul, Alcibiades, is to know itself, it must look at a soul, and especially at that region in which the virtue of the soul, wisdom, occurs, and anything else which is similar to it.

ALCIBIADES: I agree with you, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Can we say that there is anything about the soul which is more divine than that where knowing and understanding take place?

ALCIBIADES: No, we can't.

SOCRATES: Then that region in it resembles the divine and someone who looked at that and grasped everything divine—vision and understanding—would have the best grasp of himself as well.<sup>14</sup>

ALCIBIADES: So it seems. (133b2–c6)

The analogy is between the region of the eye where its identifying activity—namely, seeing—occurs and the region of the soul where its identifying activity—namely, “knowing and understanding”—occurs. The supposition is that as an eye is defined by its faculty of seeing, a soul too is to be

<sup>12</sup> The idea of introspection is not alien to Socrates; see, for instance, *Hippias Major*, 304d. But even more famous than this is Socrates' description of “thinking” as an internal discussion at *Theaetetus* 189e–190a and as a silent speech of the soul with itself at *Sophist* 263e. I give these passages as examples to indicate that the idea of introspection is not alien to Socrates. Introspection is not necessarily a dialogue, but internal dialogue is a form of introspection.

<sup>13</sup> I do not endorse the interpretations reading the eye analogy as suggesting an internal or an intersubjective dialogue, either. I suppose the analogy only suggests some kind of an introspection. The eye analogy is not about talking to oneself but about looking at one's self. This is how Socrates concludes the analogy at 133b7–8. Werner, although critical about the “internal dialogue” interpretation (2013, 16), nevertheless thinks that “Socrates' eye analogy ultimately points toward dialogue as the best method of gaining self-knowledge” (13).

<sup>14</sup> “Divine” is Hutchinson's (1997) translation, and I follow Hutchinson in reading *theiōi* at 133c4, instead of *theōi*. Denyer (2001, 235–36) thinks that reading *theiōi* here brings some redundancy to the argument. See, however, Werner's response to this criticism (2013, 9, n. 18). Among others who prefer reading *theōi* here are David M. Johnson (1999). He claims that by “looking to the God one realizes the true nature of man” (16). With “vision” I again join Hutchinson in reading *thean* instead of *theon* at 133c5.

defined by its faculty of “knowing and understanding.” This is also where the proper virtue of the soul occurs, since it is the region where a human soul is what it is. One immediate conclusion to follow is that with the eye analogy Socrates identifies a human being and her soul with the intellect.<sup>15</sup>

We should also note that this passage characterizes the intellect as the divine aspect in the soul. In the logic of the analogy, this amounts to identifying the soul with this divine aspect in it.

Another thing to conclude from this passage is that this is a manifest exhortation to philosophy. To the question of knowing in what exactly a human being's “betterment” consists, Socrates seems to have in mind the answer that insofar as a human being and her soul are identical to that region of the soul where “knowing and understanding occurs,” taking care of a human being would consist in the “betterment” of this divine aspect of the soul. But the betterment of this aspect of the soul consists in the attainment of its proper virtue, which is *sophia*. This answer would also allow us to see Socrates' answer to question 1 above: if this is the human *epimeleia*, then how to achieve it? By what art? If taking care of a human being consists in developing *sophia* in her soul, then the art that makes a human being better would be the art that makes her acquire wisdom in her soul. This is pretty much a straightforward description of philosophy. According to Socrates, therefore, philosophy is the *technê* by which we *take care of* the intellect in such a way as to attain *sophia*. Socrates' message to Alcibiades is unambiguous: if you want to take care of yourself, you have to philosophize! This is what makes this dialogue a protreptic one.

There still remains a question to ponder. If philosophy is the *technê* by which we take proper care of our true selves, the next thing we would want to know is the exact content of this art. What exactly does philosophy do to allow us to take care of ourselves? By making what exactly does it allow us to develop wisdom? These questions are all the more pertinent when we see that there is a limit where certain examples that Socrates gives from other arts no longer apply. Shoemaking, for instance, takes care of the shoes, but it also produces shoes. Whereas philosophy, although a *technê*, does not produce the intellect. In being an art, philosophy seems more akin to athletics or medicine. One way or another, it is evident that philosophy is not the art of artisans. It is not craftsmanship. The question is still there, however: what is it that makes philosophy a *technê*? I address this question in the last part of my paper.

The following points, therefore, emerge as the central doctrines articulated by Plato in *Alcibiades*:

<sup>15</sup> Although for slightly different reasons, Denyer (2001, 234) also thinks that the eye analogy identifies a human being and her soul with the intellect.

1. the identification of the true self of a human being with the intellect, as the “region” of the soul where wisdom occurs;
2. a conception of the intellect as the most divine aspect of the human soul;
3. explicitly by the eye analogy, but also as the natural conclusion from 1 and 2: the identification of the true self with “the divine” in the soul;
4. a conception of philosophy as the *technê* that takes care of the intellect and of its virtue.

I retain these points in my analysis of the *Protrepticus* in the next sections and argue that in the *Protrepticus* Aristotle also commits to these doctrines in a more or less explicit fashion.

### 3. Affinities Between *Alcibiades* and the *Protrepticus*<sup>16</sup>

I start with the first three points above as my evidence for a strong affinity between the Platonic *Alcibiades* and Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*; but I will mostly dwell on the fourth.

#### 3.1. *The Identification of the Self with the Intellect*

Nicholas Denyer (2001, 234) has already recognized the affinity of the *Protrepticus* with *Alcibiades* regarding the identification of a human being with her intellect. The following passage from the *Protrepticus* applies this principle: “That which is by nature more of a ruler and more commanding is better, as a human is than the other animals; thus soul is better than body (for it is more of a ruler), as is the part of the soul which has reason and thought, for this kind of thing is what prescribes and proscribes and says how we ought or ought not to act . . . ; in fact, I think one might actually set it down that we are this portion, either alone or especially.”<sup>17</sup> The affinity that this passage displays with *Alcibiades* is not limited to the self-intellect identity doctrine.<sup>18</sup> This passage also shares with *Alcibiades* one of the major premises of this doctrine, namely, the idea that the soul

<sup>16</sup> In 2017 D. S. Hutchinson and Monte R. Johnson published their new reconstruction of Aristotle’s *Protrepticus* by collecting new material from Iamblichus’s *De communi mathematica scientia*, and they conceive it as a dialogue between three characters: Isocrates, Heraclides, and Aristotle. I mostly follow their text and their translation.

<sup>17</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* VII, 41.27–42.4. Hutchinson and Johnson translation (2017).

<sup>18</sup> The idea that a human being is identical to her intellect as the dominant part of her soul actually extends beyond the *Protrepticus* to Aristotle’s later ethical treatises. See, for instance, *NE* IX, 4, 1166a16–17 and 1166a22–23; IX, 8, 1168b35 and 1169a2–4; and X, 7, 1178a2–3.



and the intellect as its part are the most authoritative parts of us.<sup>19</sup> They are especially so over our bodies.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2. *Intellect as the Divine Aspect*

In the same way as in *Alcibiades*, in the *Protrepticus* the idea of the identification of the self with the intellect comes in combination with the conception of the intellect as the divine, godlike part in us. The following passage is identified by Hutchinson and Johnson as belonging, not to the character Aristotle, but to the character Heraclides, as part of the latter's concluding speech in the dialogue.<sup>21</sup>

So nothing divine or happy belongs to humans apart from just that one thing worth taking seriously, as much *noûs* and *phronêsis* as is in us for, of what's ours, this alone seems to be immortal, and this alone divine. And by being able to share in such a capacity, our way of life, although by nature unfortunate and difficult, is yet so gracefully managed that, in comparison with the other animals, a human seems to be a god. For "the intellect is the god in us"—whether it was Hermotimus or Anaxagoras who said so—and "the mortal phase has a part of some god." So one must either do philosophy or say goodbye to living and go away from here, since everything else at least seems in a way to be lots of trash and nonsense.<sup>22</sup>

Now, it is certain that the pessimism of this passage does not sound Aristotelian. Aristotle has a more positive view of the value of earthly life. It makes sense, therefore, to attribute this passage to Heraclides, a Platonist figure, who is of a Pythagorean inspiration. Nevertheless, some of the ideas this passage involves are also endorsed by Aristotle himself. The

<sup>19</sup> The idea of the soul as the ruler can also be found at Iamb., *Prot.* VII, 41.15–18: "Furthermore, part of us is soul, part body; and the former rules, the latter is ruled; the former uses the latter, which supports the former as a tool" (trans. Hutchinson and Johnson 2017). Note, however, that this expression of the idea is at variance with *Alcibiades* in an important respect: in *Alcibiades*, Socrates refuses straight away that body is any part of us. But note also that Hutchinson and Johnson believe this passage to be a paraphrase by Iamblichus from a speech by the character Aristotle in Aristotle's *Protrepticus*.

<sup>20</sup> Note, however, that Aristotle states this idea in comparative terms. The principle of self-intellect identity is also expressed with reserve: he says we are identical to our intellects, "either alone or especially" (*monon e malista*—42.4). Denyer (2001, 235) thinks that here Aristotle falls into absurdity by saying that an entire thing is identical to what is just one of its parts but only to some high degree. I, however, find more plausible the explanation first propounded by Suzanne Mansion (1973, esp. 428–31) and supported by Van der Meeren (2011, 172, n. 21). According to Van der Meeren, the expression "monon e malista" denotes "a process by which something is 'reduced' to its 'essential nature.' The author thus identifies the perfection of a human being with that of his intellect only" (2011, 172–73, n. 21).

<sup>21</sup> Hutchinson and Johnson (2017, viii and 43).

<sup>22</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* VIII, 48.9–21 (trans. Hutchinson and Johnson 2017). I left the words "noûs" and "phronêsis" untranslated.

characterization of the intellect as the divine part in us; its being a divine capacity in which we have a share; and its being the main source of our share in happiness are familiar to us from Aristotle's other treatises. So, perhaps, this passage belongs to the character Heraclides; but we'd still better distinguish the ideas commonly endorsed by Aristotle from the conclusions that Heraclides derives from them and from his general pessimism.<sup>23</sup> It can be demonstrably shown, especially by appeal to *Nicomachean Ethics*, that Aristotle is not only sympathetic with the idea that "the intellect in us is the god."<sup>24</sup> He also actively subscribes to this idea as his own considerate view.<sup>25</sup> If this is true, then it seems permissible to suppose that his later remarks on the identity of the *noûs* and the divine simply recycle his position in the *Protrepticus*, which, in turn, displays strong affinities with the central doctrines of *Alcibiades*.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.3. *The Identification of the Self with the Divine*

If, in the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle both recognizes the intellect as the divine aspect in the soul and identifies the human self with the intellect, then he would naturally endorse, as the conclusion of this reasoning, the identification of the self with the intellect as "the divine."<sup>27</sup> This, however, is exactly how Socrates' reasoning unfolds in the soul-self argument and the eye analogy in *Alcibiades*, as explained above. It is interesting to see that *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 7, is also built on the same reasoning, only in a reversed order.<sup>28</sup> It starts, at 1177a14f, by characterizing the *noûs* as divine

<sup>23</sup> It seems that in his later treatises Aristotle recycles, as his own considered view, some arguments he formerly put into the mouth of the character Heraclides in the *Protrepticus*. Another example, singled out by Hutchinson and Johnson (2014, 398), is an argument about the life of pleasure in *NE* X, 3. Aristotle claims that nobody would choose a life completely deprived of intelligence even if she could live her whole life in the utmost pleasure (1174a1–3). This argument has a parallel in a speech by the character Heraclides at *Prot.* VIII, 45.9–25.

<sup>24</sup> As, for instance, his remarks about Hermotimus and Anaxagoras at *Metaphysics* A, 984b8–22, would suggest. In an article of great interest, Marcel Detienne (1964) suggests that *De anima* I, 404a25, can also be read as alluding to Hermotimus. Detienne claims that from Hermotimus to Anaxagoras the concept of *noûs* as divine undergoes a transposition so as to be a key concept in the rational analyses of nature.

<sup>25</sup> For the idea of becoming godlike by identifying with the intellect, see also *Metaphysics* I, 2, 982b28f, and *NE* X, 8, 1177b26f. It has not escaped the attention of commentators that "god and *noûs*" are hendiadys for Aristotle: see J. E. Hare (2007, esp. 7–51) and A. A. Long (2011). On the divine character of the intellect, see also *NE* VII, 13, 1153b32; X, 7, 1177a15–16; X, 7, 1178a26–36; X, 7, 1178a1–8; X, 8, 1178b24; *Pol.* III, 16, 1287a28–29; *PA* II, 10, 656a8, and IV, 10, 686a26–29; *De anim.* II, 2, 413b24–27; and *GA* II, 3, 736b28.

<sup>26</sup> For a possible more direct link between the *Protrepticus* and *NE* X, 7, see note 27 below.

<sup>27</sup> Hare (2007) and Long (2011) also take Aristotle to endorse the identification of a human being with the intellect as the most divine part of her soul.

<sup>28</sup> The connections between *Protrepticus* and *NE* X, 7, have already been worked out by Hutchinson and Johnson (2014, 401–8).

and as the most authoritative aspect of the human soul; and it ends by suggesting the identification of a human being with the intellect.

Let me, however, note an ambiguity about the identification of the self with the divine. Unlike the first two doctrines, neither in *Alcibiades* nor in the *Protrepticus* or *Nicomachean Ethics* is this to be found as the statement of a fact about the self. Rather, it appears as a normative task to achieve, as our telos in engaging in philosophy. So, it is less about the identification of one's self with "the god in us" than about *identifying* oneself with it. I'll come back to this point.

The upshot is that it seems possible to weave a thread out of these first three doctrines and stretch it from *Alcibiades* to *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 7, passing via the *Protrepticus*.<sup>29</sup> Yet a major difference still remains between the *Protrepticus* and the last chapters of *Nicomachean Ethics* X. In the latter, Aristotle seems to use these doctrines for a mostly exclusivist understanding of *theoria*, whereas in the former he seems to make them part of his "inclusive" conception of philosophy as a *technê* articulating with some other sciences in an architectonic way.

#### 4. Philosophy as *Technê* in the *Protrepticus*

Representation of philosophy as *technê* in the Aristotelian chapters of Iamblichus's *Protrepticus* has been thoroughly and perspicaciously studied by Sophie Van der Meeren.<sup>30</sup> Van der Meeren shows that Iamblichus's book, especially these Aristotelian chapters of it, are marked by a tension between two approaches to philosophy. On the one hand, particularly in chapters VI and X, philosophy is represented as a *technê* together with and in articulation with the other sciences; on the other hand, particularly in chapters VII, IX, XI, and XII, it is represented as the natural telos of man. So according to Van der Meeren, philosophy, in the *Protrepticus*, has

<sup>29</sup> Actually, I have a stronger claim about the connection of *NE* VII, 7, to both *Alcibiades* and the *Protrepticus*. The last lines of *NE* VII, 7, contain two arguments, the first at 1178a2–4 and the second at 1178a4–8. I observe that the first of these passages is highly reminiscent of *Alcib.* 132b6–9, where Socrates summarizes what progress they have made, having identified the soul as the self, in figuring how to take care of ourselves. The second of these passages, on the other hand, is in explicit parallelism, as Hutchinson and Johnson (2014, 403) have already recognized, with *Prot.* XI, 58.17–59.13, and with the beginnings of *Prot.* VII, 41.22–42.4. If it is true, as Hutchinson and Johnson suggest, that "the beginning and the end of this chapter [*NE* X, 7] are new exploitations of familiar *Protrepticus* material, it stands to reason that everything else in the chapter would also be recycled [from *Protrepticus*], absent contrary considerations" (2014, 403–4), then I take this as corroborating my claim about the connection between the *Protrepticus* and *Alcibiades*; because it seems clear to me that *NE* X, 7, which is recycling material from the *Protrepticus*, is also recycling material from *Alcibiades*. It probably does the latter by doing the former.

<sup>30</sup> Van der Meeren 2011, 1–43. Van der Meeren does not commit herself to any position regarding the authorship of the *Protrepticus* chapters that have traditionally been attributed to Aristotle (2011, 19, n. 66).

an ambiguous identity that can be mapped onto the *technê/physis* opposition in Greek philosophical culture.<sup>31</sup> One of the merits of her interpretation is the suggestions she makes as to how these two approaches are theoretically connected to each other in the text. She suggests that these two representations of philosophy coincide as part and parcel of a naturalist approach. Invoking the analogy that Philo of Larissa established between medicine and philosophy in his analysis of the *protreptic genre* in philosophy, Van der Meeren claims that *the assimilation of philosophy to medicine* in this analogy “is the factor of an essential link between the representation of philosophy as art and its representation as man’s nature.”<sup>32</sup> In this perspective, philosophy, as the active exercise of wisdom, would be like the process of healing in medicine, which is nothing other than the natural process of recovering one’s nature. In the case of philosophy, however, unlike medicine, the *art* and *nature* would be indistinguishable, since in philosophy the process of recovery would consist in nothing other than practicing philosophy itself (2011, 29). Besides, engaging in philosophy is not only the process leading to happiness but is already happiness: “Through philosophy,” says Van der Meeren, “we arrive at philosophy” (2011, 29–30). She concludes that in the case of philosophy there is “homogeneity” between art and nature.

Now, I find this interpretation ingenious as a reading of chapters VII and IX of the *Protrepticus*, because on the face of it these chapters seem to claim that philosophy is not an art. But Van der Meeren shows that they nevertheless propound some understanding of philosophy as art. This, however, is also where I start to find her analysis confusing, because her description of philosophy as art makes it the art of contemplative life or art of contemplation. In other words, the art that philosophy is, in her analysis, is the same thing as the activity of contemplation. The problem is that in these chapters (VII and IX) the active life of contemplation is portrayed in its radical detachment from any further practical concern whatsoever. The idea is that active contemplation, being the achievement of man’s ultimate goal according to nature, is good in itself without being good for anything further beyond itself. Now if this is also *the art* that philosophy is, as claimed by Van der Meeren, then this art is not the same art with which philosophy is identified in chapters VI and X. In these chapters, philosophy is represented as art in its articulation with and in its use for some other sciences. Therefore, despite its ingenuity, I think that Van der Meeren’s analysis thickens the ambiguity surrounding the identity

<sup>31</sup> Van der Meeren 2011, 23–26.

<sup>32</sup> Van der Meeren 2011, 21. The excerpt from Philo’s discourse is to be found in Stobaeus’s *Anthology* (*Stob. Ecl.* II, 7, 2, 39–41; Wachsmuth 1909). For an extensive and illuminating analysis of Philo’s discourse on philosophical protreptic, see Van der Meeren 2002, which also includes a translation of the text.

of philosophy by adding to it another ambiguity about the identity of the technê that philosophy is.<sup>33</sup>

I suggest that this ambiguity can be dissipated if we reconsider the *Protrepticus* notion of philosophy as art in connection with *Alcibiades*. The following passage from the *Protrepticus* is my evidence for the claim that in this work Aristotle subscribes to the fourth of the central *Alcibiades* doctrines I listed above, namely, the conception of philosophy as the technê by which we take care of (*epimeleisthai*) the soul/intellect and of its virtue: "Hence if soul is better than body (being more apt to rule in its nature), and if, for the body, there are arts and wisdoms, namely, medicine and athletics (for we take these as sciences and say that some people acquire them), it is evident that for the soul too and the virtues of soul also, there is an *epimeleia* and *technê* and we are able to acquire it."<sup>34</sup>

To the best of my knowledge, this is the only passage in the Aristotelian corpus where the word "epimeleia" is used in such a conjunction with "technê." The point that I want especially to underline about this passage is that the object of this technê, and the care it provides, is nothing other than the soul itself and its virtue. That is, this technê and care are concerned with the soul and its quality only, and not with the particular content of its operations. The object here is not, for instance, the truth, nature, or the universe, and so on. This point gets all the more accentuated when the very next thing Aristotle does in the text is to define a science of nature: "Similarly for the natural sciences as well, for it is necessary much earlier to be intelligent about causes and the elements than about the posterior things. . . . For whether it is fire or air or number or any other natures that are causes of and primary to other things, it would be impossible to be mistaken about these things and understand any of the other things."<sup>35</sup>

It is clear that the difference between an art taking care of the soul as its object and a science having truth and nature as an object is deliberately intended by the author. Iamblichus also just sees it this way. As his concluding remark for this section, Iamblichus underlines this difference as the lesson to derive from it: "Now then, that there is a kind of knowledge

<sup>33</sup> This ambiguity surfaces in her interpretation when Van der Meeren writes, as the culmination of her analysis, that sometimes philosophy takes the form of a body of doctrines that "experts," like the politician, for example, are endowed with, and sometimes it corresponds to the process by which each individual approaches her physis (2011, 31). My criticism is that if philosophy as the process by which each individual approaches her physis is also a technê distinct from philosophy as "a body of doctrines," then we have not one but two technai here. I find this confusing.

<sup>34</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* VI, 38.14–20. Forms of expression chosen by Van der Meeren to translate this passage seem to be more useful than the ones chosen by Hutchinson and Johnson (2017). This translation is closer to hers.

<sup>35</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* VI, 38.22–39.6 (trans. Hutchinson and Johnson 2017).

of the truth and of the virtue of the soul, and how it is possible for us to acquire them, let this be our statement about these topics.”<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, according to my reading, this passage (*Prot.* VI, 38.14–39.6) distinguishes two conceptions of philosophy. For convenience, I call one “philosophy-technê” and the other “philosophy-epistêmê” My claim is that, in the same vein as in *Alcibiades*, philosophy is a technê in the *Protrepticus*, in that it takes care of the soul (or the intellect, more specifically) in its engagement in philosophy-epistêmê, that is, in its search, discovery, and contemplation of the truth of nature.<sup>37</sup> Or to put it more concisely, the philosophy-technê is technê because it takes care of the philosophy-epistêmê: it is the art that attends to the “betterment” of the soul through the attainment of knowledge.

Before I explain how this perspective applies to the *Protrepticus* let me dwell a little longer on this point. From *Alcibiades*, we have obtained a distinction between epimeleia of the soul and its corresponding technê, the former being the attainment of wisdom, that is, the acquisition and possession of a state of knowledge; and the latter being philosophy-technê, that is, know-how for this epimeleia. Now, according to the distinction I observe in the last passage quoted above from *Protrepticus*, the epimeleia of the soul is also philosophy, namely, philosophy-epistêmê. As I try to explain below, this perspective allows us to improve Van der Meeren’s insight into chapters VII and XI of the *Protrepticus*; but it also allows us to explain the source of her confusion: she does not distinguish between epimeleia and its technê. This is completely understandable, since both are philosophy, after all.

To explain how this distinction might actually function, I will take an example from Plato’s *Statesman*. The mistake that Young Socrates makes in the division they have been pursuing in search for the definition of the statesman brings a halt to the progress of their discussion, and the Visitor takes his time to explain what went wrong. The point reached in the division shows the statesman to be a *person possessing theoretical knowledge, issuing directives in relation to the rearing of living things that live in herds*.<sup>38</sup> When asked to divide the rearing of herd-living creatures according to the method they have been following, Young Socrates divides them into two, as the rearing of human beings, on the one hand, and the ordinary herding of other animals, on the other. The Visitor objects that this is a bad

<sup>36</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* VI, 39.9–11 (trans. Hutchinson and Johnson 2017). Note that Iamblichus refers to these two kinds of knowledge in the plural: “It is possible for us to acquire *them*” (δοῦναι τοὶ λαβεῖν ἀντάς). This, I think, shows that he considers the preceding development in Aristotle’s text as distinguishing two *distinct* kinds of knowledge.

<sup>37</sup> I suppose therefore that Aristotelian *theoria* comprises not only the *contemplation* of the truths discovered by supreme sciences but also the process of their *search* and *discovery*. For this broader interpretation of Aristotelian *theoria*, see David Roochnik (2009). An alternative view can be found in Nightingale (2004, 187–252).

<sup>38</sup> This is the conjunctive expression of all the divisions made up to 261e in the text.

division because it does not divide nature at its joints. Just because a common appellation like “animal” is available to refer to other animals as against “human being” does not mean that it refers to a real natural kind. The point of the method of division is to discover and encounter real natural kinds. Young Socrates makes the mistake of picking a small part of nature on its own and not paying attention to the other real differences relevant to their subject: “It is not safe (οὐκ ἀσφαλές), says the Visitor, to make thin cuts; it is safer to go along cutting through the middle of things, and that way one will be more likely to encounter real classes. This makes all the difference in relation to philosophical investigations” (262b5–c1, trans. C. J. Rowe).

Three layers of intellectual activity transpire in this passage from the *Statesman*. First of all, there is the layer of an investigation into nature in order to find out the natural class of knowledge that belongs to statesmanship. This requires figuring out the truth about its relation to other natural classes of things, which in turn requires an investigation into the differences and similarities belonging to the structure of nature itself. This first layer of intellectual activity consists of an investigation into the nature of nature. This is what I call “philosophy-epistēmê.” After that, there is the second layer of intellectual activity, which consists in doing the first layer of investigation in a way most likely to yield the truth about nature. It is about pursuing the philosophy-epistēmê in accordance with a method that is most likely to allow us to encounter the real “cuts” in nature. This is nothing other than the method of division, here. This second layer is what I call “philosophy-technê”: it attends the epimeleia undertaken by the philosophy-epistēmê by providing the latter with a method to discover the truth of nature. Yet, there is still a third layer, which consists of superintending reason in *its* application of the method that *it* is pursuing in *its* investigation of the truth. This is the service that the Visitor gives to Young Socrates when the latter makes a mistake in applying the method of division. This third layer is also philosophy-technê. It is the intellectual activity regarding how to conduct a philosophical investigation in “safety.” It concerns the “safety” of philosophy-epistēmê.

Philosophy is responsible for the safety of philosophy.<sup>39</sup> It is important, I believe, to notice that part of what makes philosophy-technê a technê in both its versions is that it is *for the sake of* philosophy-epistēmê. It provides the latter its intellectual “tools,” so to speak, in order to improve the intellect and make it attain wisdom.

<sup>39</sup> Another example for this “second-order” philosophical technê can be found in *Phaedo* 101d3–102a1, where Socrates explains to Cebes “the safety of the hypothesis” (τὸ ἀσφαλές τῆς ὑποθέσεως—101d2) that he used as his “second voyage” in philosophy. He illustrates for Cebes how to use this method to proceed in safety in the discovery of truth. Note that both at *Statesman* 262b5 and at *Phaedo* 101d2 Socrates uses the same word to express the “safety” of the reasoning being pursued, namely, τὸ ἀσφαλές.

A question that I asked previously about *Alcibiades* now finds an answer in this passage from the *Statesman*. The question was to know, if philosophy is the technê by which we take proper care of our true selves, what exactly it does to allow us to develop wisdom. The answer emerging from the above considerations is twofold: philosophy, as a technê, improves our capacity for understanding and knowledge (a) by guiding reason in its search for truth by means of philosophical methods of investigation and (b) by observing reason's application of these methods.<sup>40</sup> Philosophy-technê appears in Plato in the form of philosophical dialogue, elenchus, maieutic, dialectic, the method of hypothesis, geometric analysis, and in later works as the method of collection and division.<sup>41</sup>

In order to see how all this applies to Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, I will first look at the central idea that is developed in chapters VII and IX in Iamblichus; then I will focus on a passage from chapter X.

Aristotle's view on the naturalness of philosophy in chapters VII and IX reflects an ambiguity. On the one hand, in chapter IX, Aristotle speaks of wisdom (*phronesis*) as if it is the final natural stage that a human being would unflinchingly and effortlessly attain in the course of her natural development. He says, for instance, "Surely the soul is posterior to the body, and intelligence is the final stage of the soul, for we see that it is the last thing to come to be by nature in humans, and that is why old age lays claim to this alone among good things."<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps here Aristotle is saying more than he really wants to, because this part of the text is designed to underline the naturalness of philosophy for human beings as naturally produced creatures, by putting it into a certain contrast with things produced by art. The purpose of the entire text being to exhort its readers to take philosophy as worthy of effort (*spoudê*), the main thread of the argument in these chapters consists actually in representing philosophy as a task to achieve.<sup>43</sup> In an earlier version of the *ergon* argument, as in *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*, it is argued, in chapter VII, that the natural function of the soul is the contemplation of the truth of nature and that philosophy is the accomplishment of this function. Because philosophy accomplishes our nature, it is worth taking seriously as a subject of study.

<sup>40</sup> As Van der Meeren (2011, 36–38) points out for the Aristotelian chapters of the *Protrepticus*, this "tension" between the two representations of philosophy, as "science" and as "art," makes the question of *paideia* a live issue at stake in protreptic discourses on philosophy. As she puts it: "If philosophy is a technê, then it can be learnt by the acquisitions of certain rules, etc." (37).

<sup>41</sup> Whether these are distinct methods or are all identical to dialectic is a matter of dispute. Hugh Benson (2006) provides a first insight into the subtleties of this question. "Geometric analysis" can be the least familiar of all; but see Stephen Menn (2002).

<sup>42</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* IX, 51.24–52.2 (trans. Hutchinson and Johnson 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Taking philosophy as worthy of effort is a recurrent theme in the text; see, for instance, *Prot.* IX, 54.3; VIII, 47.3 and 48.10.



The simultaneous presence of these two views about philosophy (namely, philosophy being a natural achievement for human beings but also a task to accomplish) determines the reasoning in these chapters by blurring the contrast between philosophy and the productive arts. If philosophical activity is not an effortlessly attained natural stage of existence for human beings but rather a natural task to accomplish as the attainment of their highest natural good, then the achievement of this natural task must actually be analogous to the rearing of a human being as a natural creature: “[Art] imitates nature, and it exists to help by filling in even what nature has omitted. For some things nature itself seems capable of accomplishing by itself without actually requiring any help, but it hardly accomplishes others or is absolutely unable. For example, to begin with, even with reproduction. . . . [S]ome animals also attain their full nature by themselves, but humans require many arts for their security, both at first in respect of birth, and again later, in respect of their nurturing.”<sup>44</sup>

In the same way as midwifery and parenting are required to help nature complete its work and turn an infant into a standard adult individual of the human species, we naturally expect Aristotle to identify an art for philosophy that would help nature complete its work and make us attain philosophy as the fulfillment of our nature. Aristotle's answer to this expectation is not to be found in these chapters, but it is arguably in this passage quoted above from chapter VI, where Aristotle defines philosophy as “*technê kai epimeleia*” of the soul.<sup>45</sup> Below I say more about another passage from the same chapter supporting the first one, but for the moment I want to highlight the expectation naturally arising in the reader of these chapters to hear about an art of philosophy. It is, I believe, in such an expectation that Van der Meeren takes the very activity of contemplation as this art completing nature: “Through philosophy, we arrive at philosophy.” Since, thinks Van der Meeren, the active life of contemplation *is* the achievement of our nature, contemplative activity itself must be that art helping nature to complete itself. To see why this cannot be Aristotle's view

<sup>44</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* IX, 49.28–50.12 (trans. Hutchinson and Johnson [2017]; they translate *technê* as “skill”; I changed it to “art”).

<sup>45</sup> My argument below supposes that in Aristotle's *Protrepticus* the Iamblicean chapters VI and X came *before* the Iamblicean chapters VII and IX. I suppose that the readers of chapters VII and IX were bringing along the representation of philosophy as an “*epimeleia kai technê*” from chapters VI and X. I share Van der Meeren's view on the order of the chapters. She reads Iamblichus's chapters in the following order: VI, X, IX, VII, XI, XII, and VII (see Van der Meeren 2011, 20 and 33). Hutchinson and Johnson (2005 and 2017), on the other hand, think that Iamblichus “did not scramble or rearrange the [original] order of passages” he cited (2017, vii). Therefore, according to them, the order of the Aristotelian chapters in Iamblichus's *Protrepticus* must be reflecting their original order in Aristotle's *Protrepticus*.

here, let us consider the following three points emerging from chapter VII as a whole as the principal characteristics of philosophy:

1. Philosophy as the active exercise of wisdom is the fulfillment of the natural function of human beings, which is defined as “telling the truth about existing things” (42.16).
2. Philosophy, in this sense, is the ultimate end; it is not for the sake of something else.
3. Philosophy is not an art, insofar as it does not produce anything beyond itself.

The last two points are combined by Aristotle to argue that happiness should not be viewed as the *product* of philosophy as active wisdom. Philosophy in this sense *is* happiness (43.13–14). Therefore, philosophy as the active exercise of wisdom is not the process of the achievement of our nature either; it is our nature *achieved*. Philosophical life is the life of active identity with *noûs*. In other words, the task of *identifying* one’s self with “the divine” is already achieved *in* philosophy as the telling of the truth. It is tempting to understand this as the description of a *technê* completing nature; but Aristotle is pointedly insistent about it: philosophy as the telling of the truth has no other end than itself; it is not the completion of our nature, it is our nature *completed*. This notion of philosophy as expounded in chapters VII and IX is what I call “philosophy-epistêmê.”

The expectation of hearing about a *technê* bringing about this completion is still there, however, because it nonetheless emerges clearly from these chapters that something analogous to parenting is required to bring about philosophy-epistêmê. This brings me to a passage from chapter X that I regard as continuing the same spirit as the passage from chapter VI (38.14–39.6) where philosophy is described as an *epimeleia* and *technê* of the soul:

For just as in the other craftsmanlike arts the best of their tools were discovered by their producers from nature . . . in the same way the statesman must have certain norms taken from nature itself, i.e. from the truth, by reference to which to judge what is just, what is good, and what is advantageous. For just as in building these tools surpass all, so too the finest law is the one that has been laid down most in accordance with nature. But this is not something which can be done by someone who hadn’t done philosophy and become familiar with truth. And in the arts people do not generally know their tools and their most accurate reasoning by taking from the primary things; they take them from what is second, or third hand or at a distant remove, and get their reasoning from experience, whereas the imitation is of the precise things themselves only for the philosopher, for the philosopher’s vision is of these things themselves, not of imitations. So just as no one is a good builder who does not use a ruler or any other such tool, but approximates them to other buildings, so too presumably if someone either lays down laws for cities or performs actions by looking at and

imitating other human actions or political systems . . . neither is he a good law-maker nor is he an excellent man; for an imitation of what is not noble cannot be noble, nor can an imitation of what is not divine and secure in nature be immortal and secure. But it is clear that the philosopher is the only producer to have both laws that are secure and actions that are right and noble. For he alone lives looking at nature and at the divine, and, just like some good helmsman, ties the first principles of his life onto things which are eternal and steadfast, goes forth, and lives as his own master.<sup>46</sup>

This passage provides us excellent material to understand how philosophy can articulate with other practical or productive sciences. The philosopher is represented here in two respects: the philosopher as an original lawmaker and the philosopher as someone who leads a theoretical life observing nature and “the divine.” I want to focus on what it suggests about the intellectual activity of the philosopher behind the work of the lawmaker. I believe that reading this passage from this particular perspective will show us that philosophy articulates with the science of politics not only on the basis of the results it yields about truth but also as a *technê*. But central to my reading of this passage is how I understand the expression “nature and the divine.” Commentators tend to conflate “the divine” here with God or as the divine celestial phenomena. But I think it is equally permissible to see it as the *noûs* of an individual philosopher, and I believe this choice is sufficiently justified by the affinities I have observed between Aristotle's *Protrepticus* and Plato's *Alcibiades*. Actually, my reading would work even if we take it as God because “*noûs* is the god in us.” Other strong alternatives are to take it in the sense of divine *noûs* as the ordering principle of the cosmos; or in a vaguer sense, with some Anaxagorean or Heraclitean flavor (as in *Parts of Animals* I.5), as some kind of a reason inherent in nature. In all these alternatives, what the philosopher observes, alongside nature, is a principle of rational comprehension and explanation. In what follows, I opt for the alternative of taking “the divine” as the *noûs* of an individual philosopher.

I think this passage reflects the philosophy-*technê* and philosophy-*epistêmê* distinction, because it also describes the philosopher as looking in two directions at the same time: toward nature and toward the intelligence. The laws of the philosopher-lawmaker imitate nature in such a way that by her *technê* of lawmaking she helps nature complete its purposes. As imitations of nature, her laws allow human beings to organize their political life in accordance with the purposes that nature designed for them. But the activity of the lawmaker is dependent on the intellectual activity of the philosopher behind her. For her laws to imitate nature, the natural truth about the political existence of human beings must have been

<sup>46</sup> Iamb., *Prot.* X, 54.22–56.2. This is the 2005 translation by Hutchinson and Johnson. I changed “skill” to “art.”

discerned beforehand. Genuine lawmaking depends, therefore, on philosophy-epistêmê, since the latter is the bearer of the truth about nature. As emphasized in Plato's *Statesman*, however, philosophers' grasp of the genuine truth about the political existence of human beings requires a method that itself adequately imitates nature: the true structure of nature can only be discovered if one knows *how* to discover it. Therefore, such a discovery cannot be made only by observing nature. It seems rather that nature cannot be observed in a meaningful and comprehensible way without at the same time observing the noûs observing nature. The access that philosophy-epistêmê provides to truth requires the guidance and help of philosophy-technê.

## 5. Conclusion

I have observed here that in his *Alcibiades* Plato conceives of philosophy as a technê; and he describes the work of this technê as the epimeleia of the soul, which, in turn, consists in developing an access to truth and knowledge in the soul. I argue that this distinction between epimeleia of the soul and philosophy as its technê is reflected in Aristotle's *Protrepticus* in a passage (VI, 38.14–39.6) where he also describes philosophy as “epimeleia kai technê” of the soul and its virtue. In this passage Aristotle also conceives of two kinds of philosophical activity, one taking the truth of nature as its object and the other taking the soul itself as its object. On the basis of this distinction that I have observed in the *Protrepticus*, I claim that two notions of philosophy can be distinguished in the text: philosophy as epistêmê and philosophy as technê. The former has the function of contemplating the truth of nature, and Aristotle praises it as the natural telos of human beings. Philosophy in this sense is the accomplishment of human nature; whereas philosophy as technê helps nature to accomplish the end it designed for human beings. I claim that this technê notion of philosophy emerges from a joint reading of chapters VII and IX, on the one hand, and chapters VI and X, on the other hand, in Iamblichus's *Protrepticus*. I conclude that philosophy-technê is technê for two reasons: (a) It is for the sake of philosophy-epistêmê and (b) it helps and completes nature to bring about philosophy-epistêmê.

Sophie Van der Meeren offers this explanation of Aristotle's representation of philosophy as technê in *Protrepticus*: “Philosophy is natural, in the sense that it makes human beings coincide with their true natures; that is, with the use of their most essential faculties” (2011, 196, n. 30). I would put the emphasis, not on “natural,” but on “make coincide.” Because Aristotle repeatedly says that happiness for human beings consists, not only in using their most essential faculties *simpliciter*, but in using them *well*. In one of its senses, philosophy is the art of “making oneself coincide” with one's nature; it is the art of *identifying* oneself with one's nature. Using Van

der Meeren's expression, I would, therefore, rather say: "Through philosophy-technê, we arrive at philosophy-epistêmê."

*Department of Philosophy*  
*Middle East Technical University*  
*Universiteler Mah. Dumlupinar Blv. No: 1*  
*06800 Ankara*  
*Turkey*  
*rguremen@metu.edu.tr*

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